

Date: 22 January 2003

To: Ann Sandberg-Fox, Review Group investigator

From: Kristin Lindlan, Chair, ALA/ALCTS/CCS Committee on Cataloging:
Description and Access

RE: ALA Response to the ISBD(ER) revision proposals initiated by the IFLA
Section on Cataloguing's ISBD Review Group.

CC:DA asked the Joint ALA/British Library Task Force to Reconceptualize Chapter 9 to prepare for CC:DA's consideration a response to the draft Revision of ISBD(ER) that was prepared by Principal Investigator Ann Sandberg-Fox and released for worldwide review on November 14, 2002. Members of this task force included: Michael Chopey (ALA), Chair, Stephen Bagley (BL), David Baron (BL), Nancy Lorimer (ALA), Cynthia McKinley (BL), Rachel Pitman (ALA), Ann Sandberg-Fox (ALA), Adam Schiff (ALA), and Jay Weitz (ALA). As you know, you excused yourself from input on this response.

CC:DA endorsed the response of the ALA/BL T.F. to the eight recommendations in the draft, with some commentary by CC:DA members incorporated:

Recommendation 1: Revision of the first paragraph of 0.5.1 only.

Disagree. The consensus of the task force is that for direct access electronic resources, the physical carrier or its labels should be given equal status to internal sources. This recommendation would cause a new point of disharmony between ISBD(ER) and AACR2, which says in chapter 9 to consider the entire resource (remote or direct) the chief source, and which actually says in chapter 12 to prefer the physical carrier or its labels as the chief source of information for direct access electronic serials (12.0B2b).

For sources of information, AACR2 does not contain in chapter 9 the dichotomy of direct vs. remote that this recommendation proposes, and this task force is not likely to support the need for such a dichotomy since the task force is likely to recommend that many of the remote-access resources currently described using chapter 9 be described instead using their content chapters, meaning that chapter 9 would be less used for remote-access resources.

Editorially speaking, the task force makes the following three observations:

1) the comma which now follows the new wording "encoded metadata" should be moved to after the closing parenthesis of "(e.g. TEI header)," so it reads " ... encoded metadata (e.g. TEI header), or ... " instead of " ... encoded metadata, (e.g. TEI header) or ... "

2) it seems a little strange to consider encoded metadata "prominently displayed." Encoded metadata is most certainly formally presented, to say it is prominently displayed is a stretch. (The task force does not question that encoded metadata should be consulted -- just whether it's ok to include that among the other sources "prominently displayed."). However, a couple of people in CC:DA discussion did not agree with the task force that this read that encoded metadata were meant to be considered "prominently displayed." The phrase may still need to be clarified to eliminate any confusion.

3) the positioning of "home page" here seems very strange. Wouldn't it be better moved to directly before or after "title screen" in this list? This wording seems to imply that a home page is part of "a header to a file."

Recommendation 2: Elimination of Area 3 from the ISBD(ER) with the information relocated elsewhere in the bibliographic record. This results in the deletion of the entire text and examples.

Agree. The consensus of the task force is that Area 3 should be eliminated, and the information carried there be carried instead in Areas 5 and 7 when deemed important or necessary.

By way of historical perspective, one member of the task force, who was a member of the group doing revisions to ISBD(CF) in 1996, points out the following background statement, written in 1996 by Ann Sandberg-Fox:

In the original Chapter 9 of AACR (1976), area 5 was identified as File Characteristics (in place of Physical Description) with the example of a data file. When the chapter was being revised, there were proposals (LC amongst them) to provide for 2 descriptions in this area: one for files on physical carriers and the second for remote files that had no carriers. These proposals were rejected for a number of reasons -- confusing, not correct in the sense of the material for which the area was defined, and so on. The compromise that resulted was the introduction of area 3 which was designed to provide for the description of remote access files, the way in which area 5 was defined to provide for describing local access files.

Recommendation 3a: An option to replace the second paragraph in the "Introductory note"

Agree. The task force strongly supports the spirit of this recommendation, which lifts the restriction on providing a physical description for a remote-access resource. However, the task force suggests that it is not necessary to make the introductory note explicitly say that the physical description is allowed. Instead, the task force suggests that the wording restricting it simply be removed. Perhaps the entire paragraph can be removed, since

Area 3 will also no longer be applicable. Also, the wording and examples here do not make it clear that a “web site” is a “class of material” that can be given a physical description. If this indeed is the intent, the revision should give at least one example of such a physical description. (Not here necessarily – perhaps in 5.1.2 or 5.1.3.)

Recommendations 3b & 3c: Revision of 5.1.1; addition of second paragraph and examples to 5.1.2

Some objections. The task force will have much to say about this in its final report and rule revision proposals, since this is very much at the heart of the task we are undertaking. A final consensus on many of these questions has not yet been arrived at, but here are some of the objections or issues for further discussion that these two recommendations raise:

the use of “electronic” in some of these SMDs is problematic; in some cases, it sounds strange or obscures what is actually being described (e.g., “electronic tape cassette”; “electronic disk”). An opinion of some of the task force was that for many kinds of physical carriers, “computer” (a la AACR2) is a better modifier than “electronic,” though some task force members point out that this may not work as a blanket rule for SMDs for physical carriers, since some discs/disks can be played by electronic devices like phones that are not computers per se, and this may become more common in the future.

“electronic” or “digital” may be a better modifier for some of these items, and also for many remote-access materials. As it appears that the list of SMDs in Appendix C is to be retained, perhaps a selective list of SMDs for remote resources could be added?

Some examples in the recommendation as currently written contain SMDs with no modifier at all to indicate their electronic-ness (e.g., “3 maps” “1 photograph”; the task force believes some indication of the electronic-ness should be contained either in the extent statement or in the other characteristics statement. E.g.:

1 electronic photograph
3 electronic maps
1 electronic score

--OR--

1 digital photograph
3 digital maps
1 digital score

--OR--

1 photograph : electronic, col.
3 maps : electronic, col.

--OR--

1 photograph : digital, col.

3 maps : digital, col.

Not only "electronic resources" can be digital--audio cassettes, DVD-videos, and compact discs, etc. are also all digital.

The task force would recommend that SMDs for websites be included also, either in Appendix C or in 5.1.x. E.g.:

1 website

1 Internet resource

The discussion of these details will of course be continued within this task force with the goal of reaching a consensus on these physical description statements for various kinds of remote- and direct-access ERs.

A CC:DA member responded that "although the head notes state that there is no consensus, the last bullet does appear to suggest "digital" is a more comprehensive term than "electronic" (much less "computer") and may ultimately be the preferred term. Two members agreed that they understand "digital" to be a "common usage" term for "computer-generated." Another person expressed a preference for the examples using the word "digital" because they were "clearer and closer to standard terminology."

Recommendation 3d: Revision of the first paragraph and examples, and deletion of the second paragraph in 5.1.3.

Agree. The consensus of the task force is that conventional terminology is preferable where applicable, although two dissenting opinions were in favor of parenthetical use of the conventional term following the standardized term like in the existing 5.1.3 rather than dropping standardized SMDs altogether, e.g.

"3 computer optical discs (CD-ROM)"

A CC:DA member responded to this with " This recommendation preserves a distinction between standard terminology (specific material designations) and "terms in common usage". Although ALA has not yet taken a position of this issue, the Joint Steering Committee is moving towards the position that, in general, the physical description should include a specific material designation and that the SMDs should BE terms in common usage. The only exception to that general rule is when none of the existing SMD terms applies to a new type of material." ALA would like to have this position be considered as a possible alternative approach.

Recommendation 4a: Revision of 8.1.1

Suggest revisions. The task force believes that the name of this area should be changed and should actually include the word "Identifier" in it. Perhaps something like: "Standard Number (or Alternative), Identifiers, and Terms of Availability."

Also, the abbreviation "e.g." should be added in the parentheses with ISBN, ISSN: (e.g. ISBN, ISSN). There are other international standard numbers that might be included in this area, for example, ISMN (International Standard Music Number), which might also be added after ISBN and ISSN within the parentheses.

Recommendation 4b: Revision of 8.1.2 and the addition of 3 examples

Agree. The task force agrees with this recommendation, although one member raised concern over whether this revision might be resisted by libraries with non-Web-based catalogs, and also over whether there might be a problem knowing when a protocol is a proper identifier. At what point is a new protocol valid enough to become an international identifier?

However, one CC:DA member commented regarding recommendation 4: "This revision is a band-aid approach to an increasingly difficult area. Identifiers have proliferated for both electronic and non-electronic materials and it is increasingly difficult to distinguish "standard" identifiers from other identifiers that are given in Area 7. The Joint Steering Committee at its last meeting agreed to propose to the ISBD Review Group that Area 8 be abandoned and that all identifiers be treated in Area 7." As a result, ALA would like to suggest this position as a possible alternative approach, even though another CC:DA member commented that she disagreed that all identifiers belong in area 7 because identifiers are critical access points that need to be in indexes and not just notes.