

To: Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

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Re: Incorporating FRBR Terminology in AACR2 : Review of
4JSC/Chair/76/Chair follow-up/3

We've reviewed *4JSC/Chair/76/Chair follow-up/3*, as well as the more recent responses by ACOC (*4JSC/Chair/75/Chair follow-up/3/ACOC response*) and LC (*4JSC/Chair/76/Chair follow-up/3/LC response*).

As a background, JSC agreed with several of the points made in *4JSC/Chair/76/Chair follow-up/2/ALA response* and decided provisionally (a) that "bibliographic resource" was not an appropriate alternative to "item" in AACR, and (b) that "manifestation" in most cases was a suitable replacement for "item." JSC constituencies (including ALA) indicated agreement with the provisional decision. Pat Riva was consulted for her opinion on the decision before being asked to revise her proposals.

Pat responded in *4JSC/Chair/76/Chair follow-up/3* with a strong disagreement with the provisional decision. She argues that "manifestation" is **not** equivalent to "item" as it is used in AACR. In this, she agrees with one of the positions expressed in the original ALA response. She offers additional reasons why it is necessary to distinguish "manifestation" from "item" in the AACR sense. These reasons involve a series of decisions that a cataloger needs to make before applying the rules: Should a new record be made? At what level of granularity (monograph vs. series, volume vs. multipart set, etc.)? She points out that manifestation in FRBR is not a particularly sophisticated tool: **any** difference in **any** attribute constitutes a distinct manifestation. This is quite contrary to our conventional practices that determine which differences are sufficiently significant to merit a separate description and which can be handled as variations in a single record that explicitly covers multiple manifestations. "Item," on the other hand, is defined in AACR2 as what the cataloger has decided to describe, after making all of the pre-cataloging decisions referred to above.

Pat further disagrees with the point made by ALA (which some JSC members found compelling) that the term "bibliographic resource" is a "class of materials" term and thus perpetuates that particular logical muddle in the rules. Pat argues that the use of "resource" in "class of materials" terms such as "continuing resource" and "electronic resource" is not sufficient to make "bibliographic resource" such a term. However, the use of "bibliographic resource" as the *genus* term in the definition of "continuing resource" very clearly places it at the top of the "class of materials" hierarchy. Therefore, there may be reason to disagree with Pat's argument that "bibliographic resource" is an appropriate alternative to "item" although so far ACOC and LC have signaled that they are ready to go back to "bibliographic resource."

We considered 5 options:

1. CC:DA might choose to support Pat Riva's position against "manifestation" and in favor our "bibliographic resource." Note that this would be reversing our previous position in favor of the use of "manifestation," a position provisionally endorsed by JSC as a whole.
2. CC:DA might choose to continue to support the provisional JSC decision in spite of Pat's objections, either because we do not agree with her or are not convinced that it matters.
3. CC:DA might choose to agree with Pat Riva's position against "manifestation" but not her position in favor of "bibliographic resource." This would not require that CC:DA suggest an alternative, but certainly nothing will happen until there is an alternative. Thus far, none of those considered have been found acceptable.
4. CC:DA might choose to continue to support the provisional JSC decision to use "manifestation" in the rules, on the grounds that the General Introduction to AACR will contain rules outlining all of the pre-cataloging decisions listed above and can make it clear that the term "manifestation" in the rest of the rules is to be interpreted **as the result of those decisions**. In other words, we can choose to give our own AACR spin to the term "manifestation"; it won't be **exactly** the FRBR definition, but will be based on that definition, modified by specific rules and decisions. More on this below.
5. The Library of Congress proposed a different compromise, which also gives an important role to the General Introduction. They suggest that (a) "bibliographic resource" is appropriate as a generic term covering various types of material, and that (b) "item" may continue to be used when it refers to a single exemplar, as this is appropriate FRBR usage. We would add that, in a shared cataloging environment, catalogers compare their "item" with other "items" that have been described and determine whether a new record needs to be made; this takes place before the cataloger begins applying the rules in Part I and does not rely solely on the concept of "manifestation."

Most of our group preferred Option #4, although there was some support for Option #5. To some extent this reflects a compromise, for some at best a "least bad" option. One member commented on Option #1:

"I find Pat's arguments against replacing 'item' with 'manifestation' convincing only if we are speaking of doing so on a one-to-one basis and an 'always replace' mode. I believe within certain contexts, AACR is strengthened by the replacement. ... Riva's observations that the one-to-one replacement of the AACR 'item' with the FRBR 'manifestation' are well-founded and cover similar territory to what this group discussed in our initial deliberations. In the ALA response, we determined 'Further, an expanded

definition of “manifestation” would coincide with FRBR in ALMOST ALL CASES, since AACR term “item” does refer to a single physical embodiment of an expression IN MOST SITUATIONS.’ This says to me that we are NOT advocating the one-to-one replacement of terms, and indeed in phraseology like ‘item being cataloged,’ ‘bibliographic resource being cataloged’ or the more generic ‘resource being cataloged’ may indeed prove preferable.” Indeed, LC seems to be moving in this direction in its response.

However, that there is and continues to be controversy and confusion in aligning FRBR terminology with AACR seems to strengthen the case for articulating the relationship between FRBR terminology and AACR2 concepts and terms in the General Introduction. How should we think about “manifestation” in the context of actual cataloging practice? Some of us believe that once a decision has been made to catalog an AACR2 “item,” an element of generalization or abstraction inherent in the cataloging process would not be inconsistent with the FRBR term “manifestation;” although we are literally holding a particular exemplar, we are describing it and thinking about it primarily as a generalization of an aggregate of many similar items. In that sense, the AACR2 “item being described,” the item *as* generalized description, does not seem to be inconsistent with the FRBR “manifestation.” Not everyone (and Pat Riva, and perhaps ACOC and LC) would agree, based on some of the specific difficulties expressed on p. 3 of 4JSC/Chair/76/Chair follow-up/3. Do we expect catalogers to use the introduction of FRBR “manifestation” as a warrant to delegitimize traditional cataloging practices in determining what to catalog? We certainly hope not, but so far ACOC and LC are starting to pull back from JSC’s initial endorsement. How do we approach the thorny question of collections through the “manifestation” frame? Perhaps FRBR needs to be more explicit in some future revision, but in the meantime, how best to accommodate this limitation within the rules?

The General Introduction appears to be the place to address and resolve (or at least reach an adequate compromise) regarding these concerns. In the course of our discussion, John Attig suggested that “(a) [we need] to admit that ‘manifestation’ in FRBR is an insufficiently sophisticated concept to meet our needs, and (b) to insist that it needs to be defined contextually within the rules to EXCLUDE insignificant differences. The place where this might be done is the very place that Pat finds most problematic for using ‘manifestation’ – the General Introduction. As CC:DA noted in its discussion of the introduction, one of the important pieces that still needs to be added is a section (based on the new LCRI 1.0 and other sources) that goes through the decisions that a cataloger must make before beginning to apply the rules. In other words, this is an opportunity to describe the decision making process that takes us from a particular exemplar of a manifestation on our desk to what AACR has previously called the ‘item being described.’ If those introductory rules can make it clear what decisions need to be made and then state clearly that ‘manifestation’ as it is used in the rest of the rules needs to be understood to mean the particular set of copies/items that are the result of those pre-cataloging decisions, then we may be able to get away with using ‘manifestation’ somewhat imprecisely in the rest of the rules. All of the types of discrepancies that Pat

notes between ‘manifestation’ and ‘item being described’ can and should be covered in this section of the introduction. It will be very difficult indeed to word this section of the rules because we are bridging gaps in the logical rigor of the code.”

More optimistically, let’s recall that incorporating FRBR concepts into the rules was intended to enable us to have a more considered, consistent, and logical view of AACR. If nothing else, FRBR can be a key factor in causing us to examine and articulate rigorously the decisions catalogers make in determining what will be cataloged using AACR.