

To: Adam Schiff, Chair CC:DA

From: Elizabeth Mangan, MAGERT liaison

Subject: MAGERT response to 4JSC/ALA/36

As the Map and Geography Round Table liaison to CC:DA I must make a formal response on 4JSC/ALA/36 for the cartographic community. It is apparent that the text-bias of the cataloging rules has affected the analysis of the descriptive needs for electronic resources both in the methodology used and the resulting analysis of the responses to the survey.

The surveys focused on obtaining the opinions of catalogers who primarily deal with text-based electronic resources, even though the cataloging community now recognizes that information in various formats is available in electronic form. The recent changes to 9.0A1 explicitly expands Chapter 9 to include all information types in electronic form, even those which previously were considered not to be covered, such as music CDs and movie DVDs. While the task force made some effort to query catalogers experienced in handling non-textual materials to identify aspects important or necessary in describing and using those materials, the task force did not use the collected information to examine the essential needs for each format but rather aggregated these responses with those from the text-based catalogers to develop a homogeneous approach for all electronic resources, irrelevant of the content.

I cannot speak for other formats, but the cartographic community believes that as a result of the methodology, some of the conclusions and recommendations made in the interim report, particularly those dealing with Area 5, are not accurate for cartographic materials, and are thus unacceptable.

B.3 and B.7. Because the physical description for a cartographic item always reflects the content and sometimes the carrier (e.g., “1 map”; “2 maps on 1 sheet”), the lack of a “routine” description of extent for a remote resource is an insufficient reason to exclude this information when an appropriate SMD reflecting the content is available. Additionally, since content does not always have to be blended with carrier (e.g., “1 map”) when the content can be identified there should be no reason to restrict the use of Area 5 to direct resources only.

B.5. The statement that file size is “of lesser descriptive importance” again demonstrates the narrow, text-biased view of this report. When dealing with some types of materials, the file size is extremely important and is essential information for the user. It should not be buried in a note but should be part of Area 5, whether direct or remote. How can something such as the number of bytes be essential for a cartographic file on a CD but not be essential for the same file that is located on a remote computer? For example, a user needs to know that the file for a map being viewed is 300Mb before he decides to download it, since its size may very well affect how he can use the file or even if he has room to store it.

B.11. Again the text-bias is apparent by the statement that “(the rule that eliminates extent for remote resources), is useful to patrons.” How can a lack of information be more useful than a statement of content? Wouldn’t a user be better served if there was an SMD identifying text rather than providing no information whatsoever?

B.13. Text-bias was also evident in the conclusions concerning color. It is extremely important to a user to know if a cartographic item is in color. This is especially true for thematic maps which use color to communicate subject information since, if such an electronic resource is not provided in color, which does occur, the subject information may be lost or distorted. The argument that it is not necessary to include this information because “the patron can just click on the URL and see the resource” would be very time-consuming and frustrating for large files. Using that reasoning, there’s no point in including the number of pages for a book in Area 5, because the user can just go to the shelf and look. Again because of the importance of this information it should not be buried in the notes but should be retained in Area 5 for consistency.

Since Chapter 9 will often be used in conjunction with another chapter in part I which provides guidance in cataloging the content of the electronic resource, Chapter 9 should allow for the appropriate description of all types of materials. This could be accomplished with rules that provide for cataloger’s judgement by including the phrase “if considered to be important.”

The revision of 0.24 now instructs the cataloger to describe all aspects of an item. With this change, as well as the revision of 9.0A1, more descriptions will be attained through the use of multiple chapters, so non-content chapters — which Chapter 9 predominately is — must allow for the needs of all types of materials and not prevent a cataloger from including information that is important to the users of any specific item type.