

To: Mary L. Larsgaard, chair
ALA/ALCTS/CCS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

From: Robert L. Maxwell, chair, ALCTS/ACRL Task Force on Cataloging Rules for
Early Printed Monographs

RE: Response to *5JSC/Chair/5*, Special rules in Chapter 21 for academic disputations
(rule 21.27)

The proposal to simplify or eliminate AACR2 21.27, the rule controlling entry of academic disputations, is of concern to the rare materials community as represented by the ALCTS/ACRL Task Force on Cataloging Rules for Early Printed Monographs and the membership of the DCRM-L list, a discussion group whose main focus is the forthcoming revision of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books*.

AACR2 21.27 concerns entry of academic disputations, a not uncommon genre previous to the nineteenth century. Academic disputations were a sort of precursor to the modern thesis examination, in which a student is examined by faculty previous to being granted a degree. However, although the academic disputation involved questioning on a (usually book-length) written work, this work was not equivalent to the modern thesis because it was not usually written by the student. Rather it was normally written by someone else, often the examiner himself, and the student (or students) were expected to defend or contend with its positions during the examination.

The title pages of these works are often confusing. One feature common to almost all of these disputations provides a solution to this confusion, however: each name on the title page is normally accompanied by a term indicating the person's role in the disputation. The person being examined may be called the respondent or the defendant, or sometimes even "auctor", a Latin word usually translated as author, but in this case perhaps more accurately rendered "spokesman" or "agent." Title pages of academic disputations also name the person who is presiding over the examination, the "praeses." This person may or may not be the author of the text being used as the basis of the examination.

The cataloger needs help in interpreting these title pages. If—at least for purposes of work citations—RDA continues to maintain the authorship principle, a bedrock of AACR2, consistent guidance is needed to determine who will be considered the author in these cases. Since title pages of academic disputations do not explicitly say who the author is, the editors of AACR2 simply made a decision, based on experience with these books and the research reflected in the studies cited in footnote 6, that the praeses is to be designated the author in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary. The rare materials cataloging community as polled at this time is comfortable with maintaining this presumption.

We do not see how the rule could be simplified much further than it already is without making a confusing situation more confusing. A minimum of explanation (as found in the parenthetical phrases in the body of the rule) of what these works are is needed to help the cataloger understand what is going on. The rule clearly states who is given the primary access points and who is given other access points. And the rule gives guidance for what to do in the unusual case where no one is named praeses. It might be a good idea to bring the first sentence of the footnote up into the rule itself, since this is an obvious pitfall.

We note that although this rule would pertain almost exclusively to early printed materials cataloging, RDA cannot depend on the main specialist manual to give guidance on this matter since DCRM(B), the successor to DCRB, deliberately does not include rules on choice of access points or formation of headings. Rare materials catalogers understand and accept the need to integrate their records into catalogs (and authority files) containing records prepared under the general cataloging rules, and therefore do not wish to introduce specialist rules for access points.

We also note that although the rule covering academic disputations may seem to catalogers of 20th century and later materials to apply to a minor problem, there is a large body of these works in existence and catalogers will continue to encounter them under RDA.

The task force and others suggested that the works cited in the footnote are valuable and that, as they are in the public domain now, it might be useful and feasible to create PDF files of these articles/chapters and link them to RDA.