

**TO:** Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

**FROM:** Mary Lynette Larsgaard, Chair, CC:DA Task Force on SMDs

**RE:** Report of Task Force on draft of part I, AACR3

## Introduction

The Task Force welcomes this opportunity to comment on the draft of part I, AACR3. The Task Force has made the decision to follow these guidelines for this report:

1. The report will be composed of general comments, which because of the way in which SMDs are inextricably combined with other physical details and dimensions will in some cases extend to all of Area 5.
2. Comments concerning specific rules will appear in the Confluence Web site, except when they are used as examples in the report; or in the report of the Task Force on Consistency across Part I, AACR3.

## General comments

While the Task Force is pleased to see that intellectual content is included in SMDs in the draft, the direction that part I takes for SMDs is not helpful either to general users or to catalogers. There is good reason why the Consistency Task Force noted that it is in Area 5 where there is the least repetition of rules from one chapter to another. That “good reason” is that each different “format/genre/type” needs to be treated differently — and equally — in Area 5. The current draft for Area 5 is a backwards step both for end-user comprehension and for cataloging simplification.

It is intellectually very appealing to our catalogers’ logic to have complete consistency across all formats in this critical area. But when we move from the beauties of logic to the practicalities of description, we find that this consistency cannot be justified. Rather, we find that consistency of Area 5 within records created for specific communities is far more useful for library patrons and catalogers alike, than is Area 5 consistency across records for all formats.

For a few years now, we have been wrestling with Area 5 statements and trying to make them more logically consistent, and have — however sadly — continually come to the same conclusion. Each time we arrive at a statement that satisfies our desire to achieve logical consistency within the cataloging code from, e.g., a data modeling perspective, we have to surrender clarity from a catalog user’s perspective.

In Area 5, the draft seems to be straining toward an unnecessary, even obfuscating, consistency, rather than working toward recognizing:

- ✓ the differences between the various kinds of resources;
- ✓ how persons — users and catalogers alike — think about them; and
- ✓ how these resources “describe” themselves.

Although some of the Task Force members have railed in the past against the trend toward so-called “terms in common usage,” it is strange – and inconsistent — that within A1.5B alone the range of practices goes from the relatively commonsensical resort to “the specific name of the unit” in cases where there is not a standard term in Table 1 (“3 hand puppets”), to the option of “common usage” (“1 DVD-video”), to such convoluted examples as “1 sheet (1 map)” and “1 v. (1 vocal score).” “1 sheet (3 maps)” or “5 sheets (5 maps)”, etc., does nothing to make the catalog either user-friendly or cataloger-friendly, and the draft for area 5 is in itself inconsistent in how it applies its rules.

Just how important is it that each SMD unit be of the same class of unit? The logic and consistency of the idea is as previously noted attractive on first glance, but how important is what it ultimately accomplishes, compared to how it adversely affects comprehensibility from a catalog user’s perspective? When this Task Force worked with deconstructing area 5 and data-modeling it, our initial thoughts were that this would make the data more parsable, machine-processable, etc.; but looking at the results, this has not happened.

It is impossible to make SMDs and indeed all of Area 5 completely logically consistent and still serve library users in the best way we can. It is therefore not worthwhile — we sadly concede — to force all statements into the “[number] + [SMD] ([number] components)” pattern, at the cost of clarity and user comprehensibility, when there are statements not fitting that pattern which work well. Area 5 statements are just not always going to follow the pattern of “[number] + [SMD] ([number] components).” For example, statements may very usefully begin with “ca.” or a preposition, or a noun — e.g., statements like: “p. 241-450,” “leaves 51-71,” “on sheet 3 of 4 sheets,” “on 1 side of 1 sound disc”, “on cassette no. 3 of 4 microfilm cassettes.” And then there are Extent phrases that are two separate statements combined — e.g., “2 feather headbands, 1 pair beaded moccasins.” Sometimes there is a modifier — e.g., “identical” — between the number and the SMD, sometimes there is an intervening phrase — e.g., “sets of.” These currently existing statements in AACR2R are from a catalog user’s perspective very good.

If either content or carrier must be primary in area 5, then content should be primary. The SMD should immediately and unambiguously define the nature of the item in terms that the catalog user understands, which means that in all cases, the content term should be the primary and first-occurring SMD. Here are some Extent statements that are confusing from a catalog user’s perspective; these statements are accompanied by a more clear statement formulated without regard to whether the clearer statement is logically consistent from a data modeling perspective:

<b>AACR3 proposed statement</b>	<b>Clearer statement</b>
1 sheet (1 map)	1 map [and, if necessary, “on sheet __ x __ cm.” in dimensions portion]
1 sheet (3 diagrams) [3.5B1]	3 diagrams [and, if necessary, “on sheet __ x __ cm.” in dimensions portion of statement]
4 sheets (1 map) [3.5B1]	1 map [and move “on 4 sheets” to dimensions portion]
2 v. (1 score) [5.5B1]	1 score (2 v.)
1 v. (1 vocal score)	1 vocal score [perhaps no mention is needed that it’s in one volume]
1 v. (4 parts)	4 parts [probably no mention needed that it’s in one volume, but if so, we opt for 4 parts (1 v.) instead of 1 v. (4 parts)]
1 game (1 board, 50 cards, 5 role cards, 2 dice)	1 game (58 pieces) [The breakdown of what those 58 pieces should appear in a contents note.]
2 v. (2 identical scores, 20 p. each)	2 identical scores (20 p. each)

One way to ease this transition to content as being primary in Extent statements would be for catalogers accustomed to AACR2R rules for extent for texts in book form to use “book” or “volume” as the primary physical-unit SMD for single-volume monographs — e.g.: “1 book (ix, 323 p.)” — instead of immediately progressing toward “1 text (ix, 323 p. in 1 volume).” This would have the additional very important effect of being one step toward making the code less text/book-centric. For digital texts, “electronic text” for the primary physical-unit SMD for monographic electronic documents would be a good move, e.g. “1 electronic text (ii, 125 p.)” We would like to see “website” added as an SMD.

Mixed/hybrid materials still seem to be overlooked in Area 5 throughout this draft of part I; for example, how one would catalog a disc formatted as a DVD on one side and as an audio CD on the other. Realia is being glossed over or even ignored; at the very least, it would be advisable to add a term such as “artifact(s)” or “three-dimensional object” to the 3-D medium section in Table 1. The treatment of multimedia/kit materials is not completely satisfactory either, and needs re-thinking.