

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

FROM: Sally Strutt, British Library representative

SUBJECT: Editor's follow-up to constituency responses on focus of the description and sources of information

Related documents: *5JSC/AACR3/I/Editor follow-up/1/LC response*
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5JSC/LC/1/Rev/CILIP response

In general, the British Library appreciates the clarity of the Editor's wording and the much more direct style adopted. We think this a more approachable and understandable text than that in the Draft of AACR3 Part I. Although we believe there is still room for greater clarity in some areas, this appears to us to be on the right lines.

However, we had the same difficulty as CILIP in separating our consideration of the Editor's draft (and the LC response to it) from the question of how the resulting "text" of RDA as a whole might be produced and used. This is an area of difficulty which we feel sure can be eased as progress is made with the development of RDA, but in reviewing any draft of RDA "text", we are mindful that this difficulty now exists. In the past, it was possible to review proposed updates to the AACR text purely as text and consider, amongst other things, readability on the page and as a text expected to be read in a certain sequential manner. Now and in the future we need to think of RDA draft text in three virtual dimensions, not just two. This affects our consideration of issues such as apparent textual repetition – which may read oddly but be necessary for the Web product to function well. We echo and support all the points made about this difficulty in the *CILIP response*.

In response to the Editor's specific requests for feedback (numbered as per the *LC response*, which we considered in parallel with the *Editor follow-up*):

1. The adequacy and clarity of the guidelines for "setting up the description" under 1.2

We prefer the Editor's wording of 1.2 to that proposed by LC. Although we are still wrestling with whether the repetition in the Editor's text is necessary for the production of the text in an online format or not, we feel more comfortable with the retention of sufficient detail to satisfy the fullest user requirements. We think there is a need to provide sufficient detail at the outset in order to create a Web product that can then be "simplified" locally. We want the same meanings expressed in simpler terms, not an abridgement or "stripping down" of meaning.

The style of the LC text reads well, but we wonder if that is because we are still thinking too much of the text as text and not considering the ways in which (we hope) RDA might be utilised and customised.

We support the use of simple English (as defined in the *ACOC response*).

If it is not to be included in chapter 1.0 *Purpose and scope*, we suggest the introduction of a paragraph as early as possible in chapter 1, written in simple English, which states what the guidelines are doing – to rid the user of the need to make assumptions at the outset, and to remove any possibility of hidden assumptions. This may mean stating the obvious but sometimes that is what is needed for absolute clarity. For instance, it would be good to start with the definition of a resource (e.g. “a resource is anything that may be the focus of a bibliographic description”). We think it would also be helpful to include somewhere the fact that the user of RDA needs to think of each resource in physical (technical) and in content terms. Further, we agree with ACOC that it would be useful to include a paragraph addressing the principle of changes in a resource which necessitate the creation of a new description.

2. The feasibility of simplifying and “homogenizing” the specifications for preferred and alternative sources set out in the table and footnotes under 2.0.2.2.

Would it be possible to provide a combination of the clear principled approach in the *LC response* at 1.2.4 along with a simplified version of the table in the *Editor follow-up* at 2.0.2.2? We see benefits in both approaches.

Traditionally, physical resources have been self-defining. But it is now increasingly common for libraries to describe at the aggregate or component level, particularly for digital media. Often these resources do not have traditional sources of information (title page, colophon, cover, etc.). The rules for each area of description need to cover description at any or all levels and not assume that description is at one particular level. There was a concern expressed among our reviewers that the table suggests that physical boundaries determine a resource. Identifying what the resource is and how to “name it” is the area where RDA should provide particular and clear guidelines, allowing for description at aggregate and/or component level and for “non-bibliographic” resources such as graphic materials or three-dimensional artefacts. A combination of the principled statements approach as in the *LC response* with a simplified table allowing easy pinpointing of a particular resource-type might address this need.

Definitions (“clickable” or otherwise) are essential (e.g. we were unsure what is meant by “analytical title page” in the table.)

3. The placement of instructions on preferred sources of information (at 2.0.2.2 or under 2.1.1.2)

We would prefer to give a general rule for the selection of sources of information in one place, at the beginning of chapter 2. Detailed instructions such as for title proper should be given wherever makes most sense (in a Web version) following this general rule.

4. Changes affecting current practices for bracketing information in the description

Square brackets are a code for the cataloguer, meaning little to the end user of the catalogue. They also play havoc with sorting. We would be glad to reduce their use. We support the ACOC suggestion to use a note to convey the source of the title proper, as a more effective way of communicating this information to both cataloguers and end-users of the description. (Our cataloguers of digital material always give a “title from “ note.)

5. The order of preference for sources of information for various areas

We agree with CILIP. We support the use of the order of preference for the edition statement for that area and for all the other statements except the series. For series, we agree on the need to make allowance for the special role played by the series title page.

Additional comments on the *LC response*:

We echo and support the CILIP comments in *5JSC/LC/1/Rev/CILIP response* regarding the LC proposed text. We just have one additional point:

1.2.2. Number of records: We disagree with having a section headed “Number of records” as we think this confuses the focus of the user. It is also difficult to think in terms of whole records, as modern library systems take and use data from different parts of the system to produce ‘records’ as seen by users of the system or for printed etc. products from the system. ALA’s suggestion “Number of descriptions” is better, but we would still prefer to move away from having any such heading at all. See also our comments above at 1.