

Association of Research Libraries  
Rare Books and Manuscripts Section  
Bibliographic Standards Committee  
Task Force for the Review of the International Standard Bibliographic  
Description for Older Monographic Publications (Antiquarian) [ISBD(A)]

## Report

### General Comments

- The TF recognizes that much of the language and structure of ISBD(A) is taken directly from other ISBDs in the interest of consistency. The "Introduction to 2006 Revision," however, suggests that the ISBD(A) revision process has involved much constructive debate along the spectrum between the opposing principles of standardization and detailed, exact transcription, and also by extension upon the relation of ISBD conventions to ISBD(A)'s mission to provide bibliographic description for older publications. In order to contribute to this debate from the "rare materials" orientation of the BSC, the TF has focused mainly on ISBD(A)'s internal coherence and its relation to DCRM(B) rather than its adherence to ISBD conventions.
- An example of an ISBD convention that the TF would like to see ISBD(A) move away from is the reliance on the term "stipulations" to describe the rules themselves. The current draft of RDA replaces the sterner sounding "rules" of AACR2 and DCRM(B) with the less prescriptive terms "guidelines" and "instructions." Meanwhile the term "stipulations" remains more prescriptive even than "rules," connoting contractual or legal obligation. The TF suggests a global change replacing "stipulations" with "guidelines", "instructions", or "rules."
- The TF similarly recommends the use of the DCRM(B) phrase "grammatically inseparable" over all variants of its frequently appearing equivalent phrase in ISBD(A), "linguistically linked."
- Many of the divergences between ISBD(A) and DCRM(B) with regard to transcription of titles (including treatment of abridgement and abbreviation, ligatures, misprints or turned letters, expansion of marks of contraction, and conversion of case) will affect title access. ISBD(A) has

little to say about title access, but the complexity of title presentations in older publications mandate that rare books catalogers supply access points to many alternative title forms. DCRM(B) addresses this issue both within the rules for Area 1 and with a detailed treatment in Appendix F. The TF strongly suggests that ISBD(A) address title access more directly.

- In the judgment of the TF, the division of Area 4 into two consecutive rule sequences, Options A and B, is an unnecessary hindrance to ISBD(A)'s usability, readability, and interoperability (as neither option conforms to DCRM(B)). The vast majority of provisions presented as Option B (p. 62-68) are retained unchanged from Option A, so we see no need for these options to be presented consecutively. (Compare, for example, 4.1.2 and the provision it cross-references, B4.1.2—there are minor variations in their respective wording but no difference in transcription at all. What purpose does cross-referenced repetition serve?). Alternative provisions for the few rules affected by Option B could be easily integrated into a single rule sequence by placing them in footnotes (as some alternative rules are presented in DCRM(B)), thereby eliminating much unnecessary duplication and confusion.

Moreover, the principal rationale for Option B seems to be to allow exact transcription of original punctuation in Area 4 without the cosmetic disruption of prescribed punctuation. Given that an uninterrupted exact transcription of original punctuation can always be provided in Area 7, and that prescribed punctuation is important for interoperability, the TF believes that Option B is unfortunate.

If, against the TF's advice, the ISBD Review Group opts to retain the two consecutive rule sequences, their graphic presentation should be much clearer—the two sequences are not now sufficiently distinct to prevent the unintentional mixing and matching of provisions from both sequences.

- In the "Introduction to the 2006 Revision," it is stated that "the majority of the [ISBD(A)] study group would have preferred to keep the illustration statement as mandatory (not necessarily including minor illustrations, as noted in the previous edition" (p. v). The TF strongly agrees with this majority that the presence of non-minor illustrations in a publication is significant bibliographic information whose recording should be mandatory (and the same goes for the accompanying material statement,

also optional in ISBD(A)). The introduction goes on to say that the study group deferred to the new ISBD convention of making illustration statements optional. (See 5.2, p. 74-75). The TF believes that just as DCRM(B) departs on occasion from AACR2 in order to provide cataloging rules tailored to the unique aspects of rare materials and their use, ISBD(A)'s rationale for existing apart from ISBD(M) depends on its principled deviation from ISBD convention when necessary to support the full description of important characteristics of older publications.

- The TF found the extensive set of examples provided in Appendix C to be very helpful.

### Specific Comments

p. v, 2nd paragraph: re: "A very detailed description ... will reveal all editions that deviate ..." Change "reveal" to "help identify."

p. v, 3rd paragraph: This paragraph requires a sentence or two of clarification on the "much misunderstood" concept of the ideal copy and how it differs from a complete copy. Otherwise it is hard to reconcile the statements that the entire concept of "ideal copy" has been removed and that the "main aim of ISBD(A) is still the description of copies that may be assumed to be complete." At the least, the parenthetical reference to Bowers should be placed at the end of the sentence, so that the shift of emphasis from "ideal" to "complete" is stated more directly.

0.1, p. 1-3 : There is surprisingly little in the "scope, purpose and use" section about the specific aspects of rare materials and their use that provide the rationale for a separate ISBD devoted to the topic. The bulk of Section 0.1.2, "Purpose," is devoted to the importance of standardization and interoperability embodied by the ISBDs collectively. ISBD(A)'s purpose is an afterthought: "the specific purpose of ISBD(A) is to provide a sufficiently precise transcription of title pages, etc., to enable different works and different editions of the same work to be readily identified." The TF recommends expanding this statement to include more contextual information about rare materials, as is done in the "Objectives and Principles" section and rule 0A of DCRM(B).

0.1.1, p. 1, 1st & 2nd paragraphs: The title of the ISBD(A) defines its scope as "older" publications, though the second paragraph acknowledges that ISBD(A)'s

scope extends to “later publications produced by hand”; DCRM(B) addresses this issue by adopting the term “rare materials” rather than “older publications” and adding in a footnote that the designation can reflect an institution’s treatment decisions, rather than deriving solely from the scarcity of the material. Though “ISBD(A)” isn’t likely to become “ISBD(RM)”, a sentence or note alluding to the professional evolution away from “antiquarianism” toward “special collections” would help update ISBD(A).

0.1.1, p. 1, 1st paragraph: Change “—referred to hereinafter as the ISBD(A)” to “(ISBD(A)).”

0.1.2, p.1, last paragraph: Change “provide the stipulations for compatible descriptive cataloguing worldwide” to “provide a set of specific guidelines for descriptive cataloguing.” “Worldwide” is redundant as the sentence includes the word “international” twice.

0.1.3.2, p. 2-3: This section on the “Use of ISBD(A)” would be improved if it were: 1) more forceful in advocating the use of all of ISBD(A)’s applicable mandatory elements in “definitive records”; and 2) less forceful in listing scenarios where the use of ISBD(M) would be preferable to ISBD(A) for cataloging older publications.

0.1.3.2, p. 3, 1st complete paragraph: re: “ISBD(A) is concerned with the description of ideally perfect copies of library materials, and makes no provision for situations where no conclusive evidence as to the intended extent of publication exists or when an imperfect copy is catalogued without the help of a bibliographic description.” This statement appears to contradict the claim on p. v that the concept of the ideal copy has been removed from the text. Moreover, the assertion here that ISBD(A) “makes no provision” for such cases is contradicted by the paragraph’s third sentence, which explains how to proceed: “However, when no description of a complete copy can be found, the imperfect copy must be described.” (A similarly imprecise use of “make no provision” is found in 0.12, p. 21).

0.2, p. 3-8, Definitions: The TF would like to see more detail or examples, where appropriate, added to some of the definitions. It would also be helpful if definitions for all the terms listed in 0.5.1, paragraph 6 as potential title page substitutes were included, particularly those closely associated with older

publications, such as “incipit” and “explicit.” “Chronogram” (0.8) and “tete-beche” (1.1.3.2.3) were also mentioned as candidates for definitions.

*Accompanying material:* Add “(i.e. maps, manuscript materials, extra illustrations, etc.)” to the end of current definition.

*Area:* This should be more ISBD-specific, as in: “One of the eight major sections of the ISBD bibliographic description ...”

*Bound with:* Suggest: “A designation used for a bibliographic item arranged and bound together in a volume with one or more different bibliographic items by an owner subsequent to publication.”

Move *Colophon* after *Collective title* to restore correct alphabetic sequence

Add a line of separation between *Common title* and *Cover title*

*Issued with:* Transpose “different other” to “other different” for clarity.

Add a line of separation between *Numbering* and *Other title information*

Add a line of separation between *Series statement* and *Sheet*

Add a line of separation between *Title page* and *Title-page substitute*

0.6, middle of p. 16: re: “ligatures and other contemporary forms of letters and diacritics may be transcribed in their current forms when the contemporary form is not available to the cataloguing agency.” DCRM(B) 0F2 prescribes always separating the component letters of ligatures other than a few specific cases from Anglo-Saxon, French, and Scandinavian languages. This difference in transcription could affect record identification and retrieval.

0.7.1, p. 17: Here and in 1.1.4.1 ISBD(A) allows the abridgement of a lengthy title proper, but doesn’t include the same specification as DCRM(B) 1B7 to “never abridge the title proper before the sixth word.” Resultant differences in title transcription could affect record identification and retrieval.

0.7.6, p. 17: re: “when contractions and abbreviations in continuance of the manuscript tradition of abbreviating words ... are found, these may be left as

they stand or may be expanded wherever possible.” DCRM(B) 0J requires expansion in such cases. Besides the divergence, it is unclear how certain contractions and abbreviations using symbols not available for typing may be transcribed “as they stand.”

0.8, p. 18: re: “A final larger capital I in Latin words is a ligature representing ii or ij. It can be expanded as i[i] or it may be left as it stands.” DCRM(B) 0H forbids the conversion of a final capital I in Latin texts into lower case letters. DCRM(B) footnote 11 allows for the conversion only for added title access, but expands it as “ii” rather than “i[i]”.

0.8, p. 18: Bibliographic agencies creating “definitive records” are advised to reflect actual capitalization as found—other agencies are given the option to convert capitals following the usage of the publication. DCRM(B) 0H requires the latter option.

0.8, p. 19: The indented examples on this page are labeled as “Examples” instead of with the “e.g.” otherwise used throughout ISBD(A).

0.10, p. 20-21: The “Misprints” section does not address turned letters, which are covered in DCRM(B) 0G. Turned letters could serve as important clues for identifying bibliographic variants.

1.1, p. 23-30: Cataloger devised titles are not addressed in ISBD(A). DCRM(B) allows devised titles in 1B5.

1.1.1, p. 23: re: “The title proper is the chief title of a publication.” DCRM(B) defines “chief title” differently than as a synonym of “title proper,” and in a way that would be useful in ISBD(A) in 1.1.2.4. There the title proper is described as potentially consisting of two parts linked by the word “or”, with the second part defined as the “alternative title”. The first part is not named, but DCRM(B)’s “chief title” would fit it nicely.

1.1.4.1, p. 28: The example here of a title taken from the opening lines of a poem, beginning, “I am a jolly huntsman,” is written as two lines, which isn’t how it would be transcribed as a title. The same example appears in DCRM(B), with a comma separating the two lines rather than a line break.

1.5.4.6, p. 39: re: "Initials indicating membership of societies, academic degrees, etc. ... are transcribed when necessary linguistically." DCRM(B) 1E8 also allows transcription of grammatically inseparable qualifications, but includes transcription for the additional scenarios where they are "necessary for identifying the person or are useful in establishing a context for the person's activity" or if the statement of responsibility represents the author only by a pseudonym, a descriptive phrase, or no alphabetic symbols." Similarly DCRM(B) includes (in 1E7) but ISBD(A) doesn't mention titles and abbreviations of titles of nobility, address, honor, and distinction. Collectively ISBD(A) seems to require much less information that could be useful in identifying authors.

2, p.42-48: The following edition statement scenarios are addressed in DCRM(B) but not in ISBD(A):

- 2B11—multipart monograph with edition statements varying across volumes.
- 2D—statement relating to a named revision of an edition
- 2E—statements of responsibility relating to a named revision of an edition

2, p. 43: The only prescribed source given here for edition statements is the title page, whereas DCRM(B) 2A2 cites the "title page, other preliminaries, and colophon, in that order of preference." This divergence will result in different use of bracketing in edition statements between ISBD(A) and DCRM(B) records, which might negatively affect record identification and seem to suggest another extant edition, issue, or state.

2.1.2, p. 43: Replace both instances of "prescribed source of information" in this paragraph with "title page," since that is the only prescribed source for this area.

2.1.2, p.43: Add an example of an edition statement consisting of non-numeric, non-alphabetic characters be given, as in DCRM(B) 2B4.

2.1.3, p. 44: The provision for a supplied edition statement in square brackets is not included in DCRM(B), but the explanatory note required by ISBD(A) will prevent confusion.

2.2, p. 45: In the event that the title page bears edition statements in more than one language or script, ISBD(A) rules that "the statement appearing first is given," while DCRM(B) 2B9 says to "transcribe the statement that is in the

language or script of the title proper." This divergence in preferred statement for transcription will affect record identification and retrieval.

2.3.2, p. 46: Move phrase "when there is a formal statement referring to them" for clarity, resulting in: "ii) when there is a formal statement referring to them in the publication (e.g. in the preliminaries or the colophon), provided a person or corporate body is named or otherwise identified as responsible for their creation."

2.4.3, p. 47: re: "Statements about unchanged impressions of an edition are given as edition statements, or additional edition statements." DCRM(B) does not require this, but provides an alternative to transcribe such statements in the edition area "if a decision has been made to create a separate bibliographic description for an unchanged impression."

3, p. 48: It would be helpful if more examples of particular kinds of rare materials or older publications that might fall within the scope of other special ISBDs were added to this note, naming in each case which ISBD would be appropriate.

4, p. 49, "prescribed source": In this paragraph the phrase "title page" appears four times in hyphenated form as "title-page." These hyphens should be removed.

4, p. 49, "form and order of elements": Replace "transcription is done following one of the following options" with "there are two available options for transcription."

4, p. 49, "form and order of elements": Neither Option A nor Option B allows the transposition of grammatically separable elements that appear out of order, as DCRM(B) 4A3 does. This makes divergence between ISBD(A) and DCRM(B) transcription in many records inevitable.

4, p. 49, "form and order of elements": re: "It is not recommended that cataloguing agencies implement parts of option A with parts of option B on a single bibliographic record." The TF recommends against the use of option B generally, and agrees that mixing elements of both options is to be avoided. The widespread inclusion of cross references between the two options makes such mixing more likely, unfortunately.

4.1, p. 50: The header for 4.1 should be preceded by another bold header identifying the salient aspect of option A, i.e., “Rules for option A (transcribing with prescribed punctuation),” paralleling the existing header for option B on p. 62, which should also be given some identifying aspect, i.e., “Rules for option B (transcribing with original punctuation).”

4.1.2, p. 50: re: “If the information in the publication is known to be incorrect.” Insert “fictitious or” before “incorrect.” The arrangement of seven examples in three groups set off by the marginal word “or,” is confusing. The TF suggests retaining the two London examples and two Tripilo examples, both pairs providing an example with supplied correction in square brackets and note versus an example with note only. The other three examples could be omitted. The last example (top of p. 51) has a typo—change “fictious” to “fictitious.”

4.1.2, p. 50: Here and in the corresponding rule for the publisher element (4.2.3.2) ISBD(A) permits the omission of the correction of fictitious or incorrect information in square brackets mandated by DCRM(B) in 4B9 and 4C5.

4.1.4, p. 51: This is a very long, unwieldy sentence that yokes together rules for two distinct scenarios involving multiple publication places. The TF recommends splitting the rule into two sentences: one addressing multi-part publications that undergo a change in publication place; and another sentence about publications containing individual title pages featuring different publication places than the main title page. This problem recurs in the rule extending this scenario to the publisher element (4.2.3.4) and the same remedy should be effected there too.

4.1.8, p. 52: When publication place name appears in more than one language, “the form of name that appears first is given.” In this situation DCRM(B) 4B13 calls for the transcription of “the statement in the language of the title proper.” This divergence could affect record identification and retrieval. The same divergence occurs with respect to the publisher element in 4.2.5 and DCRM(B) 4C11.

4.2.3.3, p. 56: The two sets of examples at the top of the page are not aligned correctly and the second set is in a lighter font. Once the examples’ layout has been corrected, one of the two iterations of the “prostant in Coemeterio D. Pauli” example should be deleted.

4.3, p. 58: re: "Not used." The TF recommends giving the name of the element here ("statement of function of distributor") along with a brief explanation why it is not used in ISBD(A).

4.4.6, p. 60: re: "Note: Privilege to print granted in 1719, according to [source for info.]" Replace "[source for info]" with the sample reference source missing from the example.

B 4.1.1, p. 63: re: "Information taken from a colophon is preceded by "[Colophon:]" Following this provision in Option B would result in dramatically different publication statements than those found in DCRM(B) records. The TF would strongly prefer that citation of sources of information such as this remain in Area 7.

5.1.2.4, p. 70: re: "When the numeration in arabic numerals continues that of the roman numerals, the numeration of the whole sequence may be given in arabic numerals. Alternatively the arabic and roman sequences may be given." DCRM(B) 5B6 says to "record each differently numbered part of the sequence." The DCRM(B) instruction results in a more granular statement of pagination and a more informative and useful record.

5.1.2.6, p. 71: re: "Blank leaves are included in the pagination statement and noted in ( ) following the pagination statement." DCRM(B) 5B7 instructs that information about blank leaves can be put in a note if desired.

5.1.2.9, p. 72: re: examples. Why do the examples here all use a semi-colon between the numbered sequence of pages and of plates (i.e., "248 p. ; 24 leaves of plates)? Does the semi-colon not precede the format/dimension element only?

5.1.4.1, p. 73: re: "Peculiarities in the numbering of the separate physical units are given in area 7." The first example shows the extent element as "5 vol." and the accompanying note says "volumes numbered 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3." In DCRM(B) this situation is addressed in 5B16, which instructs that "if the number of bibliographic volumes differs from the number of physical volumes ... give the number of bibliographic volumes followed by 'in' and the number of physical volumes." So the extent in the example in question would appear in a DCRM(B) record as "3 v. in 5."

5.2.1, p. 75: re: "133 S., [4] p.; 8 ill." The "S." is not a standard abbreviation in Anglo-American cataloging and appears to have come from a German record. The accompanying notes in this example are in English, so the description and abbreviations should be as well.

5.2.4, p. 74: re "Illustration statements (optional)." The presence of non-minor illustrations is a matter of great bibliographic significance for older publications, and therefore illustration statements should be mandatory if applicable in ISBD(A) as they are in DCRM(B).

5.3, p. 75-77: The format/dimensions element in ISBD(A) prioritizes format over dimensions, viewing dimensions as most often copy-specific information due to the rarity of publisher's bindings for older publications. Two format abbreviation schemes are provided, one of which mostly corresponds with that used in DCRM(B). The TF regrets the use in ISBD(A) of the anomalous "1mo" and "2do" instead of the more common "1" and "fol." preferred by DCRM(B)).

The resulting format/dimension statement (i.e., 4:o (18 cm, publisher's wrappers)) reverses the order of information presented in DCRM(B), where dimensions appear first, followed by a parenthetical format statement. The TF believes that notwithstanding the rarity of publisher's bindings among older publications, dimension information is of value and should be recorded.

5.3.3, p. 76: re: "When the printed lines run parallel to the longer side of the paper, the designation "oblong" may be given in parentheses following the format." Presumably this represents ISBD(A)'s treatment of books whose width is greater than their height, which in DCRM(B) 5D2 is handled by giving the height followed by the width, separated by a multiplication sign. Again, the TF supports the provision of specific measurements over a generic designation of shape.

6.4.1, p. 80: Unless the title proper of a series or sub-series is a generic term, transcribing the first and subsequent statements of responsibility relating to the series or sub-series is not mandatory in ISBD(A). DCRM(B) 6E1 requires that such statements of responsibility be transcribed if present.

6.6.1, p. 81: re: "Standard abbreviations may be used. Arabic numerals are substituted for other numerals or spelled out numbers." In contrast, DCRM(B) 6G1 instructs to "transcribe the numbering as it appears in the publication. Do

not use any abbreviations not present in the source and do not convert roman or spelled-out numerals to Arabic." Allowing for standard abbreviations and substitutions makes ambiguous what is actually on the printed page.

7.0, p. 82: re: "The note may contain more than one citation." DCRM(B) 7B14 does not provide for multiple citations to be placed in one note, a practice which is problematic for electronic records.

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