

PRELIMINARY DRAFT 20021113
GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE CATALOGING OF RARE MATERIALS
*For discussion in preparation for the Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials
Conference to be held March 10-13, 2003 at Yale*

In 1981, when the Library of Congress issued the first set of rules for AACR2-related rules for rare materials under the title *Bibliographic Description of Rare Books* (BDRB), most of rare book cataloging took place in specific institutional environments, usually according to requirements and practices developed largely in-house.[Note 1] BDRB itself was perhaps more an amalgamation of traditional LC rare book cataloging practice and AACR2 scaffolding than a revision of rare book cataloging rules based on theoretical principles. In 1991, LC's Cataloging Distribution Service issued a revision of BDRB under the title *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books* (DCRB). That revision, produced in collaboration with the Bibliographic Standards Committee, aligned both form and content more closely with AACR2. As we approach the revisions that will go into *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)* we work in environments that, thanks to the groundwork of BDRB and DCRB, share a more uniform understanding and practice of cataloging rare materials than was true two decades ago. Residence of today's cataloging descriptions in a common machine-readable format, regardless of age, content or carrier of the item described, enhances that uniformity. Recent theoretical work helps us recognize that rare book cataloging rules can and should grow out of the same principles such as govern general cataloging rules. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1998) (FRBR) help us better understand the commonalities of efforts to meet user needs to find, identify, select, and obtain materials. In *The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2000), Elaine Svenonius synthesized and rearticulated principles that have shaped current Anglo-American cataloging practice. In both these works we find theory that serves us well as we approach revision of rules for cataloging rare materials. Our rules differ in matters of emphasis and degree as we seek to meet user needs and cover characteristics of material that differ from those met/covered by general rules.

In considering the need for specialized rules for cataloging rare materials, we can begin by examining IFLA's FRBR. [Note 2] This study set out to cover the full range of functions for the bibliographic record and produced a framework for relating the data that are recorded in bibliographic records to the needs of the users of those records. It examined three groups of entities that are of interest to users of bibliographic data:

- 1) entities that are the products of intellectual or artistic endeavor,
- 2) entities responsible for the intellectual or artistic content, the physical production and dissemination or custodianship of such products, and
- 3) entities that are the subjects of intellectual or artistic endeavor.

The study then proceeded to examine the attributes of each of the entities included in those groups, examine relationships between and among them, and assess the attributes and relationships from the perspective of user tasks.

Although the entities of all three groups are significant in the bibliographic record, it is in description of the entities of the first group, the products of intellectual or artistic endeavor, that rules for cataloging general materials inadequately meet the functional requirements of describing rare materials. FRBR includes four entities in that first group:

- 1) *work*, e.g. Copernicus's *De revolutionibus*
- 2) *expression*, e.g. the Latin text of *De revolutionibus* or C.L. Menzzer's German translation thereof
- 3) *manifestation*, e.g. the 1543 Nuremberg ed. of the Latin text or the 1879 Thorn ed. of Menzzer's translation of *De revolutionibus*
- 4) *item*, e.g. Saxonus's copy of the 1543 ed. in the Beinecke Library or the Mudd Library's copy of the 1879 ed. of *De revolutionibus*

Of these four entities, rules for describing rare materials necessarily place particular emphasis on guidance for descriptions of manifestations and for descriptions of items.[Note 3] Users of rare materials routinely pursue identification of specific manifestations, and at times information specific to an item rather than a manifestation. Under standard provisions of general rules of description such as found in AACR2, various factors (differences in production practice, lack of standardized presentation, etc.) render adequate description of the attributes of manifestations and items difficult or impossible. Rules for describing rare materials seek, through proper description of relevant attributes, to enhance the ability of users to successfully identify and distinguish among such manifestations as well as retrieve information about specific items as necessary. In addition, particularly in guidance on notes, specialized rules for describing rare materials serve to provide clearer access to information about specific relationships of those manifestations and items to other entities. Such relationships may be more difficult to ascertain in (and of greater significance to users of) rare materials, than is true of general materials.

Svenonius devotes one chapter of *The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization* to principles of description.[Note 4] Following a brief discussion of the use of "principle" to mean a directive that guides the construction of a bibliographic language, Svenonius (p. 68) notes that of general principles that govern the design of all systems, two have particular relevance in designing a bibliographic language: the principle of sufficient reason ("the grounds for each design decision [must] be defensible and not arbitrary") and that of parsimony ("where alternative ways exist to achieve a design goal, the way that best furthers overall economy is to be preferred"). She goes on to identify five principles (three with subprinciples) specific to the design of a bibliographic language. These principles, using Svenonius's exact wording, appear in boxes below, each followed by examples of specific directives those working on DCRM revision may derive from each principle.[Note 5]

<i>Principle of user convenience</i>	Decisions taken in the making of descriptions should be made with the user in mind. A subprinciple is the
<i>Principle of common usage</i>	Normalized vocabulary used in descriptions should accord with that of the majority of users.

a) DCRM rules should result in descriptions that allow users to distinguish clearly between different manifestations of an expression or work.

Comment: In general cataloging practice, one assumes that most manifestations readily distinguish themselves in the edition area and the publication, distribution, etc. area. In working with rare materials, these two areas are also critical, but abbreviated transcription of information, especially in the publication, distribution, etc. area can impede accurate identification. Additionally, information in the physical description area may be critical when distinguishing manifestations. Transcriptions in the title and statement of responsibility area also provide information that distinguishes manifestations much more frequently than is routine in general materials. The two latter areas assume even greater importance in the absence of (or presence of minimal or misleading information in) either the edition area and/or the publication, distribution, etc. area. On occasion, further description in the note area of various anomalies serves to distinguish among otherwise unidentifiable manifestations.

b) DCRM will use existing AACR2 vocabulary in a manner consistent with AACR2 usage/definition; use of additional or specialized vocabulary necessary for description and access of rare materials will occur in a clear and consistent manner in DCRM text, appendices, and glossary.

<i>Principle of representation</i>	Descriptions should be based on the way an information entity describes itself. A subprinciple is the
<i>Principle of accuracy</i>	Descriptions should faithfully portray the entity described.

c) DCRM rules should promote accurate representations of the entity as it describes itself, notably through instructions regarding transcription, transposition, and omission.

Comment: These principles have particular relevance in the title and statement of responsibility area, the edition area, the publication, distribution, etc. area, and the series area, but should not be ignored in the physical description and note areas. Svenonius's statement on accuracy (p. 71) is worth repeating in the context of DCRM: "A description is inaccurate if it in any way misrepresents an entity, making it seem what is not."

<i>Principle of sufficiency and necessity</i>	Descriptions should be sufficient to achieve stated objectives and should not include elements not required for this purpose.
<i>Principle of significance</i>	Descriptions should include only those elements that are bibliographically significant.

d) DCRM rules should provide for inclusion of all elements of bibliographical significance.

Comment: General cataloging rules routinely strive for both brevity and clarity, principles not unrelated to that of sufficiency. In describing rare materials, too great an emphasis on brevity may become the occasion for insufficiency and lack of clarity. In rare materials cataloging, brevity of description may be measured best against the functional

requirements of the particular bibliographic record rather than against the average physical length of other bibliographic records in a given catalog. The tension between rules for rare materials that promote accurate representation of an item and yet do not exceed the requirements of sufficiency is great. Reference to the principle of user convenience may offer correct resolution of such tensions.

e) DCRM rules should provide additional guidance for the inclusion of manifestation-specific and item-specific information that permits users to investigate physical processes and post-production history and context exemplified in the item described (e.g. printing methods, binding, provenance, etc.)

Comment: Because such information is usually not integral to the manifestation, expression or work described, additional guidance on access points may also be necessary. Rules for item-specific information appearing in the note area may prescribe standard forms for presentation of information but application of most such rules is not prescribed. Application of such rules presumes both a user's need for such information and a cataloger's ability to properly describe such aspects.

<i>Principle of standardization</i>	Descriptions should be standardized, to the extent and level possible
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f) DCRM rules provide guidance for standardization through instructions on transcription, transposition, and omission (see d) above), but should also provide guidance in rules and appendices for standardizing representation of information in ways that enhance a user's ability to retrieve and interpret the information (e.g. transcription of early letter forms, presentation of information in the note area, etc.)

<i>Principle of integration</i>	Descriptions for all types of materials should be based on a common set of rules, to the extent possible.
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g) DCRM should conform to the structure and language of the latest revision of AACR2 to the extent possible; ISBD(A) will serve as a secondary reference point.

Comment: DCRM should not introduce (or continue from DCRB) rules that are not required by differences expected between rare and general materials. Follow the numbering of AACR2 wherever possible, especially in cases where AACR2 itself uses identical numbers to cover comparable concepts in different chapters. When an existing AACR2 rule satisfies the requirements of cataloging rare materials, include AACR2 text verbatim (revising examples as useful for illustration)—DCRM rules should cover the equivalent range of AACR2 Chapter 2 comprehensively. In cases where the language of AACR2 is not precise enough to cover necessary distinctions or may introduce confusion when dealing with rare materials, consider alternate wording carefully.

h) DCRM should conform to the pre-existing rules (DCRB) except in cases where correction (including correction to align more closely with current revisions of AACR2), deletion or addition is necessary.

Having considered the above functions and principles, we can reiterate the basis for differences in emphasis between general cataloging rules and those for cataloging rare materials as follows:

- Rules for cataloging rare materials assume the presence of specialized user needs and characteristics of materials described that differ from the user needs and characteristics of materials provided for in general cataloging rules.
- Most users of rare materials place a high value on identifying a specific manifestation of a work or expression. Users routinely seek to locate specific manifestations that differ (physical form, date of issue, etc.) from other expressions of the same work. In a more general user population, emphasis is often placed on locating a particular expression (e.g. any English-language edition). General instructions for distinguishing between manifestations rely largely on explicit evidence presented in standard form (e.g. a formal edition statement) that may be lacking or inadequate to distinguish among different manifestations in rare materials.
- In rare materials, that which is bibliographically significant is frequently that which is non-standard. The principles of representing material in the way in which it presents itself and of presenting it in a standardized fashion stand in greater tension with each other than is the case with general materials. Faithfulness to both principles may require both descriptive and annotative treatment, necessarily exceeding the norms (and at times the vocabulary) established as sufficient for description of general materials.
- Some users of rare materials wish to locate items with features that are specific only to a particular copy or subset of copies (e.g. a binding). An environment of shared (or at least shareable) cataloging requires presenting such information in ways that clearly distinguish that which is common to a given manifestation from that which is unique to one item or subset of items within that manifestation. General cataloging guidelines provide minimal guidance for describing item-specific information.

[Note 1] Throughout this paper, AACR2 refers to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition (including, as appropriate in context, all subsequent revisions).

[Note 2] Please consult the full text of this document for a more detailed understanding. The text is available online at: <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf>.

[Note 3] Recognition that bibliographical records deal with all four of these entities is part of the ongoing evolution in understanding of the role of cataloging, a shift prompted among other things by the rise of shared cataloging and by the increasingly complicated relationships between content and carrier. In 1977, G. Thomas Tanselle in "Descriptive Bibliography and Library Cataloguing" (*Studies in Bibliography* 30:2-57) distinguished

between the tasks of cataloging and bibliography as follows (pp. 5-6): "One kind of record of books—which it is convenient to call a 'catalogue'—is concerned with the particular copies of books that happen to be in a given collection Another kind of record of books—which it is convenient to call a 'bibliography'—is concerned with books which are related in some way, but not with specific copies of those books. In other words, an entry in a catalogue refers to a particular copy of a book; an entry in a bibliography refers to any copy of that book. ... A description of an ideal copy sets a standard against which individual copies can be measured; a catalogue entry describes or records an individual copy with all its peculiarities." While FRBR's "manifestation" and Tanselle's reference to Fredson Bowers's "ideal copy" are not synonymous there is much overlap. Tanselle's "copy" and FRBR's "item" are essentially coterminous. Tanselle was fully cognizant of the way in which Lubetzky and others were thinking about the relation of book [i.e. copy] and work in cataloging. He also noted (pp. 24-25) the weakening of "the concept of a catalogue entry as an accounting of a specific copy" due to the distribution of Library of Congress printed cards. But, not surprisingly, his 1977 essay did not anticipate the way in which subsequent developments, including FRBR, have continued to elevate the importance of describing manifestation over that of describing item. Tanselle's statement (p. 7), that "it is not the quantity of detail or the extent of research which distinguishes [a bibliography entry from a catalogue] entry but solely the nature of the copy which each aims at recording," loses clarity in a cataloging world that now focuses more on manifestation than item. It remains a challenge to those working on cataloging rules for rare materials to draw lines between cataloging and bibliography, shifting perhaps from Tanselle's primary distinction of nature of recorded copy to the vaguer distinctions between reference and physical bibliography. (Vague because in rare materials physical form often serves a reference function.) Questions Tanselle raised concerning the rationale for AACR rules on recording pagination, go largely unanswered in AACR2 and even in DCRB.

[Note 4] Chapter 5 (pp. 67-85). Though AACR2 itself does not provide (yet!) an explicit statement of underlying principles, the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (JSC) has been working toward inclusion of such a statement for several years. Svenonius's articulation of principles has been part of JSC's discussions (cf.: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/jsc/prin.html>). JSC continues vigorous work in this area, but has not announced a specific date for completing a statement of principles.

[Note 5] By extension, all Svenonius's references to "descriptions" in the principles below address the development of controlled forms of access as well as general descriptions. DCRM's predecessors have not addressed authority practices, assuming that controlled forms of names will conform to those established according to nationally-established guidelines (e.g. AACR2/NACO). When guidelines for controlled forms of access have not covered specialized needs of rare materials cataloging, catalogers have addressed the issues through existing authority channels. A recent example is the expansion of the Library of Congress Rule Interpretation for AACR2 Rule 22.2 to provide instruction on establishing names for printers' widows.

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