IFLA Cataloguing Section's Working Group on FRBR

Status report of activities

The FRBR Working Group had its first meetings in Glasgow in 2002. These meetings resulted in a list of 8 deliverables to be produced and 3 actions to be launched. None of the 3 actions — create experimental records; compare teaching methods; gather real examples of queries by real users to assess how FRBR might help them — was achieved, but we were more successful with our planned deliverables:

— "The Group will have a listserv": done. The frbr@bnf.fr list currently counts 215 subscribers from more than 30 countries, including, in South America: Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Peru; in Africa: Algeria, South Africa; in Asia: China, India, Iran, Japan, South Korea. The most represented country is by far USA, with over 90 subscribers, followed by France (15), Norway (14) and Italy (13). It should be noted that 3 subscribers also are active in the CRM community (CRM is the OO model developed for cultural information in museums).

— "The Group will have a Web site": done. It is hosted by IFLANET at http://www.ifla.org//VII/s13/wgfrbr/wgfrbr.htm. An updated version has recently been made available. This updated version includes an archive of the discussion list.

— "The Group will produce a bibliography": done. It is available on the Group's Web site.

— "The Group will assess and produce reports on practical experimentation": nothing has been done in that direction so far.

— "The Group will clarify the model through examples at the Expression level": these examples have not been prepared, but the Expression entity has been discussed in a number of messages on the listserv.

— "The Group will state recommendations to the ISBD Review Group": well…

— "The Group will produce a manual for teachers": still to be done.

— "The Group will translate FRBR into an OO model": Dan Matei has made some suggestions in that direction; further investigation is required, especially once the FRANAR model has been approved by IFLA and made publicly available. FRBR+FRANAR will then be turned to OO formalism in order to be interoperable with ABC, CRM and other similar ontologies and to play a role in the Semantic Web.

One of the main features of the FRBR Working Group is that it has no definite membership roster: the two Glasgow meetings were open to anyone interested in FRBRical activities. This was at the same time a good thing and a weakness. We should perhaps consider having a stabilized core working group, which might result in a "three-tiered" structure: the core working group; a "fuzzy" set of attendees freely admitted to take part in the WG's meetings during the IFLA Conferences; and the wider set of subscribers to the WG's listserv.

Two meetings are scheduled during the Berlin Conference: on Monday 4 August 10.45-12.45 and on Wednesday 6 August 10.15-12.15. During the Monday meeting, Dick Miller (Lane Medical Library, Stanford University) will make a short, informal presentation of the XOBIS project, a radically new conception of catalogues and cataloguing. Further projects for 2003-2004 include a joint meeting between the FRBR and the CRM Working Groups, in order to achieve interoperability in cultural information between libraries and museums.