



U. S. Descriptive Standards for archives, historical manuscripts, and rare books

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Abstract

This presentation gives an overview of the descriptive and technical standards used in the archives, historical manuscripts, and rare books communities in the United States. It briefly examines the conceptual models underlying these standards and then describes how they have been implemented in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University.

Introduction

This presentation will provide an overview of the descriptive and technical standards used in the archives, historical manuscripts, and rare books communities in the United States. It will briefly examine the conceptual models that support these standards and will then discuss what the various standards for recording, transmitting, and displaying descriptions of our holdings are. It will conclude by describing how these standards have been applied in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University.

At the foundation of the standards used in the archives, historical manuscripts, and rare book communities are conceptual models that determine the entities to be described and their various attributes. For the library community, the current model is described in the *Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records* (FRBR) in combination with its companion/extension documents, the *Functional Requirements of Authority Data* (FRAD) and the *Functional Requirements of Subject Authority Data* (FRSAD).¹ These models were

¹ FRBR, http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/frbr/frbr_2008.pdf (accessed May 12, 2012); FRAD, <http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-series-on-bibliographic-control-34> (accessed May 12, 2012); FRSAD,

developed under the auspices of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), and finalized between 1997 and 2010. As suggested in their titles, each of these standards deals with a different segment of library description. One of the significant aspects of the FRBR model is its employment of four Group I entities for describing the object of description, separating it into the Work, Expression, Manifestation, and Item. This is an evolutionary step away from traditional cataloging practice, which focused primarily on the description of the item in hand. Uniformity in these earlier descriptions was accomplished through the *International Standard Bibliographic Description* (ISBD), which created a content model with separate areas and specific elements.

For archives and historical manuscripts, content models similar to ISBD were created by the International Council on Archives. These include the *International Standard Archival Description--General* (ISAD (G)), the *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families* (ISAAR (CPF)), and the *International Standard for Describing Functions* (ISDF), released between 1993 and 2007.² While there are similarities and borrowing between ISAAR (CPF) and FRAD, this is not the case for the other two archival standards. Unlike FRBR, ISAD (G) assumes that descriptions of archival aggregates are unique and includes all elements of description in a single entry. It also expects a series of hierarchical, whole-part relationships to be recorded in a multilayered description of a group of materials. ISDF has no equivalent among library models.

While FRBR states that it may be used with archival and manuscript materials, it also recognizes some of the difficulties of describing these aggregates using the different layers of Group I entities.³ Various efforts have been made by the library and archives communities to address these issues, including mappings of archival and manuscript descriptions to the *International Council of Museums' Conceptual Reference Model* (CIDOC-CRM)⁴ and the modeling of archives and manuscripts in *FRBR-object oriented* (FRBRoo).⁵ Despite these initial efforts, there is not yet consensus on how these materials might be modeled or how the different community models should relate to one another. This is seen

<http://www.ifla.org/files/classification-and-indexing/functional-requirements-for-subject-authority-data/frsad-final-report.pdf> (accessed May 12, 2012).

² ISAD(G), <http://www.ica.org/10207/standards/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition.html> (accessed May 15, 2012); ISAAR(CPF), <http://www.ica.org/10203/standards/isaar-cpf-international-standard-archival-authority-record-for-corporate-bodies-persons-and-families-2nd-edition.html> (accessed May 15, 2012); ISDF, <http://www.ica.org/10208/standards/isdf-international-standard-for-describing-functions.html> (accessed May 15, 2012).

³ FRBR, 21-22, 29.

⁴ Lina Bountouri and Manolis Gergatsoulis, "The Semantic Mapping of Archival Metadata to the CIDOC CRM Ontology," *Journal of Archival Organization* 9, no. ¾ (2011): 174-207.

⁵ Patrick LeBoeuf, "Modeling Unique and Rare Documents – Using FRBRoo/CIDOC CRM" (paper presented at *Old Book in the New Environment*, an International Seminar, L'Institut Finlandais en France, Paris, France, March 18-19, 2011).

with the IFLA FRBR Review Group's Working Group on Aggregates avoiding the question in their report last year.⁶

Overview

Pandora's Box

The archives, historical manuscripts, and rare books communities in the United States utilize a wide variety of descriptive standards based on the conceptual models described previously. The sheer number of descriptive standards and their interconnected use makes it a challenge to speak authoritatively about their implementation. The next part of this presentation will introduce you to the most commonly used descriptive standards for archives, historical manuscripts, and rare books. We will examine the core content and transmission standards for these communities. We will also begin to describe some of the additional descriptive standards available for use by these communities. We will then examine the types of discovery systems utilizing the records created according to these rules and we will conclude by discussing how we have chosen to implement these standards at Brigham Young University.

Core Content Standards by Community

The archives, historical manuscripts, and rare book communities have all developed core content standards to guide the description of materials in their holdings. The core content standards for rare books are *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)* or DCRM (B), *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Serials)* or DCRM (S), and *Resource Description and Access (RDA)*. The DCRM standards are specialized rules developed to meet the needs of expert researchers, while RDA is a set of general rules aimed at creating a description for a wider audience. The differences between these two approaches are best illustrated in their physical description guidelines.

DCRM (B) "provides guidelines and instructions for descriptive cataloging of rare books, that is, printed textual monographs receiving special treatment within a repository."⁷ It is meant to apply to printed monographs of any age or type of production. The rules are designed to allow catalogers to provide rich enough descriptions to readily identify copies of printed publications and to more accurately describe those publications as artifacts. These might include characteristics such as pagination, binding details, or signatures. DCRM (S) "provides instructions for cataloging printed serials whose rarity, value, or interest make special description necessary or desirable."⁸ *Resource Description and Access (RDA)* is a cataloging

⁶ Working Group on Aggregates, *Final Report of the Working Group on Aggregates*, International Federation of Library Associations, <http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/frbrwg/AggregatesFinalReport.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2012): 3.

⁷ Association of College and Research Libraries. Rare Books and Manuscripts Section. Bibliographic Standards Committee. *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books)* (Washington, D.C. : Cataloging Distribution Service, 2007), 11.

⁸ Association of College and Research Libraries. Rare Books and Manuscripts Section. Bibliographic Standards Committee. *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Serials)* (Washington, D.C. : Cataloging Distribution Service, 2008), 11.

standard that provides a “set of guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery.”⁹ Unlike DCRM (B), the guidelines in RDA are based on the principle of common usage, to the point of deprecating the use of Latin terms and abbreviations such as “circa.”

RDA is the successor to *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition* (AACR2) and was initially released in June 2010. AACR2 was organized around the ISBD content model. RDA represents a significant departure from ISBD and is based on FRBR. RDA is based on a different conceptual model than DCRM (B) and DCRM (S) and the rare book community has not fully embraced the new standard. The Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the American Library Association has advised

“catalogers using Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (DCRM) for books and serials—DCRM (B) and DCRM (S)—to continue for the time being to follow the rules, options, and alternatives as written. Do not attempt to incorporate elements or practices based on Resource Description and Access (RDA) into descriptions based on DCRM.”¹⁰

Turning our attention to the archives and historical manuscripts communities, the core content standard is *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS). DACS is the successor to *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts* (APPM). Developed under the auspices of the Society of American Archivists, DACS “is an output-neutral set of rules for describing archives, personal papers, and manuscript collections, and can be applied to all material types. It is the U.S. implementation of international standards (i.e., ISAD (G) and ISAAR (CPF)) for the description of archival materials and their creators.”¹¹ It is primarily used to describe aggregates of archival and manuscript materials. With its focus on aggregates, DACS-based descriptions are significantly different from those produced using rare book rules. The guidelines for recording the physical description, for example, include the option of recording extent in terms of the space the materials occupy on the shelves. At the file or item levels, DACS can also be applied in conjunction with companion standards specific to the material type. The multi-level descriptions that result from DACS are called finding aids.

Core Transmission Standards

Once materials are described information about them needs to be shared. The archives, historical manuscripts, and rare book communities have either developed or adapted

⁹ American Library Association; Canadian Library Association; Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (Great Britain); Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA. “Introduction” *Resource Description and Access* website (accessed April 23, 2012).

¹⁰ Rare Books and Manuscripts Section. “Bibliographic Standards Committee DCRM-RDA Task Force,” http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/rda/dcrm-rda.html. (accessed April 23, 2012).

¹¹ Society of American Archivists, “Describing Archives: A Content Standard,” <http://www.archivists.org/governance/standards/dacs.asp> (accessed April 23, 2012).

transmission standards to help them share information about the resources that they have described.

The rare book community uses the *MARC21 Format for Bibliographic Data* and *MARC 21 Format for Authority Data* to share information about their holdings. *MARC21 Format for Bibliographic Data* “is designed to be a carrier for bibliographic information about printed and manuscript textual materials, computer files, maps, music, continuing resources, visual materials, and mixed materials. Bibliographic data commonly includes titles, names, subjects, notes, publication data, and information about the physical description of an item.”¹² *MARC 21 Format for Authority Data* is “designed to be a carrier for information concerning the authorized forms of names, subjects, and subject subdivisions to be used in constructing access points in MARC records, the forms of these names, subjects, and subject subdivisions that should be used as references to the authorized forms, and the interrelationships among these forms.”¹³ Taken together these transmission standards allow the rare book community to share information about printed publications using a variety of discovery tools. These standards also allow for the utilization of standardized forms of names to help facilitate discovery.

The archives and historical manuscripts communities have developed transmission standards that are unique to their communities. Encoded Archival Description (EAD) is an XML-based standard for encoding finding aids. It is used to “mark up (encode) finding aids that reflect the hierarchical nature of archival collections and that provide a structure for describing the whole of a collection, as well as its components.”¹⁴ It enables the sharing of information about collections in networked and online environments. Encoded Archival Context – Corporate bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) is another XML-based standard for sharing information—this time about the creators of archival and manuscript materials. It “primarily addresses the description of individuals, families and corporate bodies that create, preserve, use and are responsible for and/or associated with records in a variety of ways.”¹⁵ The archives and historical manuscripts communities also use the *MARC21 Format for Bibliographic Data* and *MARC 21 Format for Authority Data* transmission standards to share information about their holdings—particularly when working in an environment that utilizes an integrated library system as its primary discovery tool. The bibliographic standard is used to create collection level descriptions of archival and manuscript collections while the authority standard enables the integration of information about creators of both published works and archival and manuscript collections.

¹² Library of Congress. “MARC21 Format for Bibliographic Data: Introduction,” <http://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bdintro.html> (accessed April 23, 2012).

¹³ Library of Congress. “MARC21 Format for Authority Data: Introduction,” <http://www.loc.gov/marc/authority/adintro.html> (accessed April 23, 2012).

¹⁴ Richard Pearce-Moses. *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2005) http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=1636 (accessed April 23, 2012).

¹⁵ <EAC-CPF>. “EAC-CPF homepage” <http://eac.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/> (accessed April 23, 2012).

Extending Branches

Beyond these core standards for describing rare books, historical manuscripts, and archives, there are a number of specialized cataloging codes for specific material formats. These include rules for photographs and images, for rare music and maps, for motion picture films, and for unique manuscript items. While some of these have been around for some time, others are currently in development and will likely be implemented in the next few years. In each case, as with the core content standards, specialized rules allow for more precise descriptions that meet the needs of an expert user community.

The current standard for creating specialized descriptions of images is *Graphic Materials: Rules for Describing Original Items and Historical Collections*, by Elisabeth Betz Parker.¹⁶ Initially developed at the Library of Congress and published in 1982, the rules were meant to supplement (i.e., replace) chapter 8 of AACR2. This allowed catalogers to record more specific information about a given item, while still resulting in compatible descriptive records. The most recent edition of these rules was released in 1997, and is available on the Library of Congress website. However, in 2008 the ACRL/RBMS Bibliographic Standards Committee (BSC) determined to revise the rules as part of the DCRM suite, to be released as *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Graphics)* (DCRM (G)).¹⁷ Work on the revised version of DCRM (G) is currently ongoing.

Rules for the cataloging of rare music materials are similarly in flux. The most common standard for cataloging these materials is currently Richard Smiraglia's *Describing Music Materials: A Manual for Descriptive Cataloging of Printed and Recorded Music, Music Videos, and Archival Music Collections for Use with AACR2 and APPM*.¹⁸ Originally published as *Cataloging Music: A Manual for Use with AACR2* in 1982, these rules are now being revised as the basis of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Music)* (DCRM (M)).¹⁹ In this case, the work is under the direction of a Joint RBMS/MLA Task Group for Developing Rules for Rare Music Cataloging (JTG).

¹⁶ Elisabeth Betz Parker, *Graphic Materials: Rules for Describing Original Items and Historical Collections* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/gm/GraMatWP8.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2012).

¹⁷ Bibliographic Standards Committee, "DCRM(G): Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Graphics)," Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmg/dcrmg.html (accessed May 15, 2012).

¹⁸ Richard Smiraglia, *Describing Music Materials: A Manual for Descriptive Cataloging of Printed and Recorded Music, Music Videos, and Archival Music Collections for Use with AACR2 and APPM*, 3rd ed. (Lake Crystal, Minn.: Soldier Creek Press, 1997), <https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/smiragli/www/dmm3.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2012).

¹⁹ Bibliographic Standards Committee, "DCRM(M): Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Music)," Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmm/dcrmm.shtml (accessed May 15, 2012).

Rules for the descriptive cataloging of rare maps and similar materials are also under development. The current specialized rules are held in *Cartographic Materials, a Manual of Interpretation for AACR2*, first released in 1982.²⁰ However, these are also being revised for publication as *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Cartographic) (DCRM(C))*, with work being completed under the direction of the RBMS BSC.²¹

For motion picture film, the standard to be used is *Archival Moving Image Materials: a Cataloging Manual*, first published in 1984.²² Now in its second edition, the standard provides specialized guidance for the cataloging of both individual motion pictures and collections of associated materials. While the code is no longer available in print, it is available through the Library of Congress' Cataloger's Desktop tool and does not appear to be planned for revision.

While most of these standards deal with printed or published materials, there are also specialized cataloging codes available in the United States for manuscript materials. For older materials, RBMS has developed the *Descriptive Cataloging of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern Manuscripts (AMREMM)*.²³ For more recent materials, RBMS is also working on the development of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Manuscripts) (DCRM (Mss))*.²⁴ Both standards build on AACR2 chapter 4, providing additional options for the description of these two types of materials.

Discovery Systems

Description is done in order to facilitate access to rare books, historical manuscripts, and archives. A variety of discovery systems aid patrons in discovering our holdings. The primary access method for descriptions of rare books and other published materials is through a catalog—typically as part of an Integrated Library System (ILS). These materials are often included in the index alongside other books and publications, which may have been described using more general use cataloging codes such as RDA or AACR2. In the United States there are a limited number of standalone ILS vendors, with the most common systems being SirsiDynix's Symphony, Biblionix's Apollo, and the Library Corporation's

²⁰ Anglo-American Cataloguing Committee, *Cartographic Materials: A Manual for Interpretation of AACR2* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982).

²¹ Bibliographic Standards Committee, "DCRM(C): Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Cartographic)," Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmc/dcrmc.html (accessed May 15, 2012).

²² Wendy White-Hensen, *Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1984).

²³ Gregory A. Pass, *Descriptive Cataloging of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern Manuscripts* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2003).

²⁴ Bibliographic Standards Committee, "DCRM(MSS): Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Manuscripts)," (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/dcrm/dcrmmss/dcrmmss.html (accessed May 15, 2012).

Library.Solution. Open source products such as Koha and Evergreen also continue to grow and develop. Online service platforms such as OCLC's WorldShare Management, Innovative Interface's Sierra platform, and ExLibris' Alma also represent a significant segment of libraries' online catalog services.²⁵

For historical manuscripts and archives, a local interface is typically the primary means of accessing descriptive information. At some institutions, this interface is provided as part of an integrated archival management system such as Archon, Eloquent Archives, or Cuadra STAR/Archives. In other cases, institutions produce EAD files either manually or as an export from management systems. These EAD files are then presented in a separate display tool, such as XTF or Pleade.²⁶ These descriptions are generally presented as large, hierarchical documents, though some system designers are beginning to use linked component-level displays instead.²⁷

In addition to local management and display systems, many American libraries and archives participate in large union databases. For rare books and other cataloged materials, descriptive records may be included in OCLC's WorldCat.²⁸ Among archival repositories there are a number of regional EAD databases, such as the Online Archive of California or the Northwest Digital Archives.²⁹ OCLC has also developed ArchiveGrid as an international union catalog for archival holdings, combining descriptions from MARC records with EAD content.³⁰

Provenance-based search systems using authority record content provide an alternate means of searching for historical manuscripts and archives. Instead of searching for materials by content descriptions, researchers can search biographical data on the creators of the records as a way of finding particular record groups. In the historical manuscripts and archives communities, the Social Networks and Archival Context Project (SNAC) has

²⁵ Marshall Breeding, "Automation Marketplace 2012: Agents of Change," *Library Journal, The Digital Shift*, <http://www.thedigitalshift.com/2012/03/ils/automation-marketplace-2012-agents-of-change/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

²⁶ Lisa Spiro, "Archival Management Software: A Report for the Council on Library and Information Resources," Council on Library and Information Resources, <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/spiro> (accessed May 15, 2012).

²⁷ J. Gordon Daines III and Cory L. Nimer, "Re-Imagining Archival Display: Creating User-Friendly Finding Aids," *Journal of Archival Organization* 9, no. 1 (2011): 4-31.

²⁸ OCLC, "WorldCat," OCLC, <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

²⁹ Online Archive of California, "Online Archive of California," California Digital Library, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/> (accessed May 15, 2012); and Northwest Digital Archives, "Northwest Digital Archives," Orbis Cascade Alliance, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

³⁰ OCLC, "ArchiveGrid -- Open the Door to History," OCLC, <http://www.archivegrid.org/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

developed a prototype system for this form of searching.³¹ Similar tools for the library community include the entity attributes search in the current version of the OCLC Connexion Client, or more generally in the WorldCat Identities product.³²

Practical Applications at Brigham Young University

The final section of our presentation will discuss how the various descriptive and transmission standards that we have been discussing are applied in our institution, The L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. Brigham Young University is a private university sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, located in Provo, Utah. The special collections are a division of the Harold B. Lee Library, and hold rare and unique printed and manuscript materials. The collections are managed by the Perry Special Collections, with cataloging work performed by the Special Collections and Formats Department. Descriptions of these collections are recorded in archival finding aids and other specialized tools, though the catalog records are held in the main library catalog. How the different standards are used varies somewhat by format, so we will look at their application to an archival/historical manuscript collection, to a photograph collection, and to a rare book.

Archival/manuscript collection

We use a hybrid system at Brigham Young University when describing multi-level archival and historical manuscript collections. The content and authority standards used vary depending on the transmission standard that will be used and the discovery tool that the information is meant for. In the L. Tom Perry Special Collections we produce two principal access products—a catalog record and a finding aid.

The catalog record is a collection-level description of the archival or historical manuscript collection. It relies heavily on *Resource Description and Access* (RDA) as a content standard for both the bibliographic and authority data. This information is encoded using the MARC 21 bibliographic and authority formats so that it can be shared through our integrated library system. The catalog record is based on the finding aid for the collection and so much of the information in the record is derived using *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS).

The finding aid is a multi-level description of the archival materials being described. DACS is the basis for these descriptions. DACS is supplemented by RDA depending on the type of material being described and the level that the description is occurring at. Both RDA and DACS are used at the collection level. At the series- and file-levels DACS is the content standard of choice. RDA is used when the type of material described merits its use. At the item-level both DACS and RDA can be used. However, other descriptive standards are also

³¹ Social Networks and Archival Context Project, “SNAC: Prototype,” University of Virginia, <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/prototype.html> (accessed May 15, 2012).

³² OCLC, “Searching Tips for OCLC Z39.50 Authorities,” OCLC, <http://www.oclc.org/support/documentation/z3950/searchauthorities/default.htm#entityattribute> (accessed May 15, 2012); OCLC, “WorldCat Identities,” OCLC, <http://www.worldcat.org/identities/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

used depending on the material format. Finding aids are delivered to the public using the BYU finding aids database.³³ The finding aids are also aggregated and discoverable through the Mountain West Digital Library (MWDL), a regional consortium.³⁴

Photograph collection

In most cases, we also use archival principles and practices for the management of photographs. As with other forms of archival and historical manuscript materials, these are cataloged in the ILS and documented in a finding aid.

The catalog record for the collection is based on DACS, with some additional fields based on RDA requirements. In the finding aid, the collection-level description is the same as in the catalog record. At the series- and file-levels, DACS is the primary content standard used. However, at an item level, DACS is used with elements of both RDA and Graphic Materials. The finding aid is output as an EAD document that is discoverable in the BYU finding aids database and in the MWDL.

Rare book

Rare books and other publications, in most cases, are treated as separate items and are not under archival control. These materials are cataloged in the ILS only, with their descriptions based on DCRM (B) or other appropriate standards for their format. As with all the catalog records described above, these descriptions are available through OCLC's WorldCat.

Conclusion

As suggested in this review, descriptive practices in American libraries, historical societies, and archives are complex, involving a wide range of standards. This complexity allows for the creation of rich descriptive records, capturing the unique nature and characteristics of the materials. However, institutional decisions on how to implement the standards often depend on user needs, potentially placing them at odds with efforts to improve the interchange of standardized descriptions. It is hoped that future standards development efforts will address the need for cross-community sharing, and the challenges of implementing common discovery tools. Perhaps by developing modular standards with a common core that allows for sharing of information, as well as extensions to meet the needs of different user communities, we would be able to meet both goals.

³³ The BYU finding aids database can be accessed at <http://findingaid.lib.byu.edu/> (accessed May 22, 2012).

³⁴ The Mountain West Digital Libraries finding aids portal can be accessed at http://mwdl.org/ead_portal.php (accessed May 22, 2012).