

Proceedings of the 6th Annual Federal Depository Library Conference

April 14-17, 1997

Bibliographic Access to Electronic Resources: International Standards Summary of Remarks

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CONSER Guidelines for Online Versions

In August 1996, the CONSER (Cooperative Online Serials) Program issued its "Interim Guidelines for Online Versions" that gives participants the option for creating separate records for remotely-accessed versions of printed (or other format) serials or noting the existence of the online version on the record for the original. The latter has been dubbed the "single-record" approach.

The need for the single-record approach encompasses both economics and access. While online versions are proliferating and potentially doubling the workload of institutions such as GPO, the same institutions are losing staff, particularly professional catalogers, and are being forced to do more with less. At the same time, reference librarians, frustrated with the proliferation of records created for microforms, favor a single-record approach that will tell patrons what the library has and in what format.

One of the problems, however, is the divergent needs of shared and local databases. For the shared database, such as OCLC, the record must represent what exists and be free from local data in order to be useful to all libraries. Locally, libraries must contend with the varying abilities of their automated systems, including how information displays to the users. Because each local system differs, national and international standards cannot be written that will address their individual needs. Instead, standards are written that will accommodate the national-level record.

The single-record approach is an alternative to cataloging. The provisions for giving a note (field 530) and added entry (field 740) for a related version are accommodated by rules in the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd ed. (AACR2). The only departure from traditional practice is in providing the electronic location (field 856) and in not creating a separate record for the online version. The single-record approach is possible for online versions because there is generally only one version and it is produced by the same publisher as the original. The ability to directly access the publication from the 856 field in

the cataloging record also means that less information about the version may be needed. However, information regarding access restrictions and variations in title is considered necessary.

CONSER libraries have been using the guidelines and find them to be adequate for the present. During a discussion at ALA Midwinter, CONSER representatives made it clear that they wish to continue the policy for the near future. The Library of Congress is also in the process of developing guidelines for internal use that will provide criteria for when to apply the single-record option and how to construct the note. These guidelines will be issued as part of the Library's Descriptive Cataloging Manual.

For more information on the CONSER guidelines:

CONSER home page: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/acq/conser/>

The CONSER home page includes CONSER Cataloging Manual, Module 31, Remote-Access Computer File Serials and the Interim Guidelines for Online Versions.

Journal of Internet Cataloging

I have written an article on this topic that will appear in v. 1, no. 2 of this new journal from Haworth Press.

Issues Related to Seriality

While online versions are one problem, a potentially more difficult problem for catalogers is the fact that many serials are changing their form when they go online. Rather than being issued in a succession of numbered parts, many serials are turning into databases of searchable data or articles. The change from multiple issues and chief sources to an updating work with a single chief source has important ramifications for our cataloging rules.

Crystal Graham (UC San Diego) and I have been invited to address these problems and how they might be addressed in AACR2 at a conference to be held next October in Toronto. The Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR is sponsored by the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) on the Revision of AACR and is by invitation only.

Our paper considers ways in which we might redefine "serial" in order to accommodate differing forms of multiple versions of the same work and how such redefinition would impact on the cataloging rules used to create bibliographic records for serials. We will address the possible return of latest entry cataloging for updating works and look at the ways in which change is accommodated in our records. The paper also introduces the concept of the "ongoing publication" and offers principles that should be applied when cataloging ongoing publications.

The final papers will be posted on a Web site for world-wide review this summer.

For more information:

The JSC Web site is at:

<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/jsc/index.htm>