

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

FROM: Hugh Taylor, CILIP representative

SUBJECT: Editor's follow-up to constituency responses on focus of the description and sources of information

CILIP's discussion of this document found it quite difficult to separate some of the issues from questions surrounding the various publication models that might be proposed for RDA. In particular we became increasingly conscious that there might well be a distinction between the full(est) text of RDA and what any individual user might choose to select for his/her view of the Web version. It may even be that nobody would ever look at the entire set of rules; but the function of any master database would be to contain the fullest level of detail necessary for the intellectual underpinning; this may even require (or justify) apparent repetition on occasion.

There is a distinction, therefore, between clarity of language – an aim which we wholeheartedly support, whilst aware that any standard is likely to have to use terms unfamiliar to a general readership or to use common words in ways not always amongst the first in any dictionary definition – and the paring down of the rules themselves to the bare essentials. We are concerned that too much of the latter may result in lack of clarity of understanding of the rules themselves.

Even in our own discussion of this document CILIP became conscious that it was thinking very much in terms of a print product. What seemed to us dense and wordy may, in fact, be appropriate for the fullest level of detail of a rule; the user of a Web version might choose simply to see a “concise” summary of what the detail is saying, and might only choose to view the full text in order to seek further guidance for a particular instance.

In response to the editor's specific requests for feedback:

a) adequacy and clarity in 1.2

Some sort of numbering structure is needed to facilitate reference to particular parts of these rules.

1.2.1 & 1.2.2. Whilst we recognise that it is important, for the process of rule writing, to separate intellectually these two aspects, we wondered whether, for the user of the rules, they might be better combined.

1.2.1. The use of the term “set” seems unusual.

b) simplification etc. of 2.0.2.2

CILIP feels that this section doesn't “read” well. But, as our preamble indicates, we were concerned that we were looking at it very much from the perspective of a printed product. It may well be that the content contains everything required for the master database to

support a Web product. However, some sort of simplification would seem to be both feasible and desirable.

c) location of instructions on preferred sources of information

Organisationally, it would be preferable to give all the instructions on preferred sources of information in one place, and this would have, therefore, to be at the beginning of chapter 2. However, if very detailed instructions are required for a particular area (as seems unavoidable for title proper), then there may be a case for referring forward to a section specific to this area. But again, this is taking a linear, print-centric view of things which simply wouldn't need to apply to a Web version.

d) changes affecting bracketing

CILIP supports any effort to reduce the use of square brackets. It's unclear, though, whether this might lead to fewer records being made to cover substantive differences amongst manifestations (the question for a cataloguer on occasion being not so much "when is a new record required?" but "how can I tell if a new record is required?"). Even if it did, would that necessarily be a bad thing?

e) order of preference for sources of information for various areas

The proposed order of preference for the edition statement is both adequate there and suitable also for all of the other statements, with the exception of series. For series statements, some allowance needs to continue to be made for the special role a series title page plays, in order to ensure that this is preferred to other sources in which variant forms might (and often do) appear.