TO: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

FROM: Hugh Taylor, CILIP representative

SUBJECT: **Levels of description, access, and authority control**

CILIP held two discussions on issues surrounding "levels" – the first, prior to the appearance of the document under consideration was, unsurprisingly, focused on issues of principle; the second took a more detailed look at the document itself. It is interesting to note that members' views changed little.

In essence, CILIP's response can be summarised (albeit rather glibly) as "no, don't bother!" But the first point that this reaction needs to acknowledge is that we could not have been so definite in our response if the ACOC representative's paper hadn't been do thorough and clear. It's a sad fact of life (especially for the person doing the work!) that there are times when the only way of being sure whether or not something is or isn't acceptable is by doing all of the work and then making up your mind on the basis of what is, to all intents and purposes, the expected finished result. All that work just to reject something – it seems a painful (and expensive) way of proceeding, but on this occasion CILIP feels it was justified, as without the detailed work carried out by the ACOC representative we wouldn't have been so confident in our views.

The CILIP view is that the need for RDA to include such levels is not proven.

1. Data is more "transitory" now than it's ever been previously – records are constantly being "improved" and it's increasingly difficult to define a standard (or multiple standards) that can adequately reflect this reality.
2. The idea of "fixed" levels ignores the way that records often grow organically.
3. Different communities will have different needs and requirements; this leads them to define their own standards (and, as we know, there are already many of these in existence).
4. The proposal is about the context into which records have to fit, not about the provision of description and access per se.

We do not, therefore, feel that the case for prescription of specific levels of access, comprising both rationale and listing of data elements, is made. It is a useful document in its own right, but isn't something we would expect to see in RDA.

What, if anything, would CILIP members expect to see? We believe there's possibly a case to be made for the inclusion of something rather more theoretical that would help users to develop their own levels, by enabling them to understand the rationale of what it is they are doing. Equally, such a document would assist those who seek intellectual justification for levels that they have been instructed to follow ("levels of authority control" might well be of direct interest to a NACO participant, for example). But even

here CILIP is by no means persuaded that such documentation needs to be placed with RDA (or even belongs there).

Clearly, if levels were to be excluded from RDA, then some broad statement is required making clear that what's in the rules isn't all to be regarded as mandatory when preparing a description or an authority record.

However, if JSC decides to proceed with proposals along the lines of those presented in 5JSC/ACOC rep/1, CILIP wishes to make a number of specific points.

1. It is far from clear to us that these levels all "work" for archival resources (cf. 5JSC/LC/3). Our initial perception is that different elements would have to be defined for such material.
2. In 0.X – and again this is perhaps because we were considering this document at much the same time as 5JSC/LC/3 – we were unhappy about the use of the term "library".
3. In sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2 we felt that the connections between the proposed levels and FRBR tasks wasn't as clear-cut as the document suggested.

Again, if JSC retains the concept, then our responses to the specific points on which comments are sought are as follows:

1. This is covered by our comments above.
2. We feel these would be better placed as a single block (presumably 0.X). If the concept is worth retaining, then we think it preferable that it be covered all in one place rather than being distributed amongst the different parts of RDA.
3. The general instructions seem adequate – although, as noted above, such general instructions could apply to more or less any attempt to define levels in almost any environment.
4. This choice seems right.
5. Relationship and choice seem ok; at this stage we don't, of course, know what the final version of FRAR will look like, so changes may be necessary; but we have no qualms about the choice itself.
6. Yes, if at all possible.
7. No. We feel this would be over-prescriptive.
8. The tables were warmly welcomed, and could possibly have a future independent of the document they were compiled to accompany. If they were to be retained for any purpose, then we could suggest adding PCC Core to the table (whilst recognising that this would involve some editorial input since there is currently no single PCC document defining a core record for all formats, but rather a number of separate core record definitions).