To: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

From: Jennifer Bowen, ALA Representative

RE: Abbreviations in AACR3 – Principles

ALA welcomes the discussion of the principles of abbreviation in descriptions based on AACR. The general direction of these principles and recommendations is consistent with positions previously adopted by ALA, particularly our response to the world-wide review of ISBD(G) [http://www.libraries.psu.edu/tas/jca/ccda/docs/chair15.pdf] and in 4JSC/ALA/58 [Designations of function (21.0D)].

Responses to specific recommendations:

1. Agree. The question of the international scope of AACR is particularly relevant to this issue. ALA does note, however, that in our modern internet world, English is a more international language than Latin ever was.

2. Agree.

3. Agree.

4. Agree.

5. Making the use of abbreviations optional introduces a level of inconsistency into records. In some parts of the description, this may be undesirable. For instance, if the use of abbreviations is continued in edition statements, with the objective of creating a concise but immediately intelligible display, then inconsistency in the use of abbreviations works against this objective.

    We hope that "retained only where the content is constrained within a handful of standardised forms" means that we could continue to use such abbreviations as "Dept." and "Div." in notes. For serials, these notes can become rather long, particularly when government hierarchies are given.

    The recommendation that use of abbreviations be discouraged in notes is also too sweeping. Further analysis of these issues is needed before a decision is made on this recommendation.

6. Agree.

7. Agree. The principle of user convenience should definitely be controlling in this case, and the use of dictionaries and reference sources is a good way to determine user understanding. We do note, however, that the implied limitation to English-language sources may need to be modified in the light of decisions on Recommendation #1.

    On the other hand, Recommendation #3 (to limit the use of abbreviations) seems to us to be a more important objective that justifying the use of abbreviations by checking dictionaries.

8. Agree.

9. Agree that this list should not govern citations of bibliographic sources. We are not sure exactly what should be used. We disagree that this recommendation would "break the link" with *Standard Citation Forms for Rare Book Cataloging*; rather, such standards for citation might be suggested as an alternative to the use of the general set of abbreviations now in B.13.

10. Although we generally agree with this recommendation, we suggest that the "regular usage beyond the library community" be tested in the same manner as suggested in Recommendation #7. It is not clear that all of these abbreviations are understood throughout the English-speaking world. Furthermore, we note that the use of abbreviations for geographic names, not only in access points, but also in descriptive elements such as place of publication, may work against the ability to use this information for retrieval.

    One member did some checking in this area. She discovered in dictionaries that Alaska does have a standard abbreviation (Alas.) and that other states have two letter abbreviations; and that postal code abbreviations were also given for all of the states as acceptable abbreviations. In consulting the latest edition of *Chicago Manual of Style*, she found that "two-letter, no period state abbreviations preferred by the U.S. Postal Service … may appear in any context where abbreviations are appropriate." It went on to say that some editors and writers might still prefer the older forms. It then had a list of abbreviations with the older (including some not abbreviated) forms and the postal abbreviations for the U.S. states. For Canadian provinces, it gave only the postal abbreviations. Perhaps we need to allow postal abbreviations?

11. Agree, although we are not sure what further internationalization is being suggested.

We are pleased to report that the representative from the Society of American Archivists noted the recommendations in this paper are consistent with the principles incorporated in *Describing Archives: A Content Standard.* Some key recommendations from DACS are:

- It is recommended that terms reflecting estimation be spelled out rather than abbreviated [examples would be "approximately" and "circa"]

- When recording date(s) for files and items … use "undated." Do not use the abbreviations "n.d." or "s.d."

- It is recommended, though not required, that terms reflecting physical extent be spelled out rather than abbreviated, as abbreviations may not be understood by all users.

Finally, we note that the use of numerals to replace words representing numbers, as directed by provisions of Appendix C, raises issues similar to those raised by the use of

abbreviations. We suggest that these provisions be included in any further work done in pursuit of Recommendation #2.