TO: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

FROM: Hugh Taylor, CILIP representative

SUBJECT: **Numbering for serials: alternative instruction**

CILIP notes that the JSC April 2006 decision, that numbering for serials should be recorded instead of transcribed, assists in providing the user with a consistent, intelligible statement. It also recognises that there are situations in notes are unavoidable, given that the institution preparing a description may not hold copies of the first or last issues of a serial, and may not be in a position, therefore, to complete the numbering element.

However, CILIP does not support the LC proposal, which seems to undermine that consistency, and whose sole rationale seems to be do with display and presentation
… allows for more flexibility in presenting this information
Users of such records are often confused by the formatted field 362 information
Since "display" is something with which RDA is supposed not to be concerned, CILIP feels no valid justification has been offered for the proposed alternative of giving numbering information as a note when the description is based on first and/or last issue. Whilst not having such issues to hand does indeed raise problems and lead to inconsistency, CILIP doesn't feel that this is any justification for adding yet further to this state of affairs by allowing or sanctioning alternative ways of recording (as opposed to *presenting*) numbering information in *all* situations.

Where it is available, the recording of first/last issue numbering is fundamental for interoperability. Having this data recorded in a preferred style and in a preferred element is crucial. If JSC allows the distinction to be elided, it may be unclear to others what the original cataloguer had to hand at the time the description was prepared (or last updated). Ultimately, the proposal removes a distinction that some categories of user may find offers them assistance.

CILIP notes that the same issue of distinguishing an institution's holdings from the "complete" publication arises with multipart publications. It's not unique to serials. And numbering isn't the only place where users might be confused by a particular catalogue display if they were to put their minds to it (or, more likely, didn't bother).

However, recognising that RDA needs to structure data in a way that offers maximum flexibility for display purposes, CILIP wonders if it might not be advantageous for the "start" and "end" parts of a numbering statement to be separate sub-elements. This would allow OPAC designers, for example, more easily to generate displays such as this:
Began publication with: Vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 2005)
Ceased publication with: Vol. 2, no. 6 (June 2006)
Of course, the precise wording is up to a local system to determine – a flexibility denied if the alternative of fixing the wording in a predetermined note were to be adopted.