To: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

From: Jennifer Bowen, ALA Representative

RE: Bible uniform titles

General Comments

ALA (and especially the Association of Jewish Libraries) deeply appreciates efforts by LC to remove Christian bias from RDA. We believe the current proposal is well reasoned and contains excellent suggestions. However, the main provision for removing the bias is an alternative rule at 25.17A, and we are gravely concerned about the implementation of alternative rules within the context of our shared authority files. See the further discussion of this issue below.

ALA also notes that the alternative rule is an oversimplification of perhaps the most complex text that exists. In our comments below, we give some sense of how complex the question of names and canons can be, and suggest that an arbitrary simplification such as the present AACR2 rules may be preferable to the complexity it would require to deal with these texts in a truly appropriate fashion. The use of "Bible" for all biblical works and the canon of the Authorized Version as the standard for naming books and groups of books is indeed an arbitrary simplification and is indeed biased, but this may be a necessary evil.

Other aspects of the proposal, particularly the direct entry of books of the Bible under "Bible" and the discontinuation of the use of abbreviations, are definitely welcome.

Comments on specific revision proposals

1. Rule 25.17. ALA recognizes that the current rules result in access points that do not serve the needs of all communities. Because it is clear that no single access point (or set of access points) for biblical texts will serve the needs of all users, this alternative could be an improvement. However, we are equally concerned about the provision of alternatives in rules that are designed (so far as we know without seeing Part B of RDA) to result in a single consistent authoritative access point. Under current conventions of authority control, access points created following the alternative rule could not coexist in the same authority file with access points created following the general rule. Until we have developed practices and technologies that do not rely on a single "authorized" access points for each authority record, the alternative could only be implemented in separate authority files, and because we work in an environment of shared authority files, this is a serious limitation.

If an alternative is allowed, it would be helpful if it were more prescriptive. An example ("e.g." in the proposed text) is not sufficient to assure consistent application of the alternative. The alternative rule also is limited to the first element in the uniform title for a biblical work; alternatives are also needed for names of books and of groups of books. For example, if "Hebrew

Bible" or "Tanakh" were chosen as the first element of the access point, it should be possible to create the heading "Tanakh. Ketuvim" for the "Writings" group of books; other books and groups of books have Hebrew titles and using them should be an alternative. If the alternative is to be taken seriously, it must be as fully developed as the main rules.

In our discussion, we considered a possible set of alternatives to "Bible" based upon whether the cataloguing agency gave primacy to the Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant canon, or had no preference. However, it took very little research to determine that the identification of different canons of the Bible can become more complex than a general cataloguer should have to understand in order to formulate an access point. A sense of the complexity is conveyed by the following comment:

> Further, I am concerned that the alternative [in the proposed 25.17A] addresses the situation in an inaccurate fashion. The historical development of the biblical canons is complex. [My comments below are those of a tolerably well-informed lay person (who nonetheless had to bone up on some details) and subject to stringent correction by our specialists.] I am thinking of the development of the Septuagint, which as a Greek text could be argued to be distinct from the "Hebrew Bible" but nonetheless was the version of Sacred Scriptures available to Hellenized Jews. It is the re-establishment of the Masoretic canon for the "Hebrew Bible" in the earlier centuries of the Common Era which lies at the root of the differences between the Catholic and Protestant canons. The fact that the current uniform title structure separates out the Apocrypha (the books which make up the difference between the Masoretic and Septuagint versions) indicates not just a Christian bias but a Protestant bias … Not everyone therefore is well versed in the history of the development of the various canons (and I have not broached the possibility that various minor, early but still extant, Christian sects might have other canons, nor of the differences in structure between the Masoretic text and the King James Old Testament). This all argues for simplification, not the inclusion of poorly understood alternatives. It is possible that for situations requiring further elaboration that the rules for language and version under 25.18A10 and 25.18A11 may suffice, especially if Tanakh is identified as a version.

This call for a simplified rule merits consideration. The Bible is such a complicated text that it may be impossible not to resort to arbitrary conventions in order to avoid getting lost in the details.

2. Rule 25.18A2. ALA is in agreement with deleting these rules and treating testaments as "groups of books" under 25.18A4 (*old*) / 25.18A2 (*new*).

3. Rule 25.18A3 (*old*) / 25.18A1 (*new*). ALA agrees that books which are considered part of the Bible by any group using the Bible should be entered directly under "Bible." Books which are not part of the canon of any group using the Bible should be entered directly under their own title. This should make the headings more predictable and therefore more readily retrievable by users.

On the other hand, the revised rule maintains the identification of the Authorized Version as the reference source for the names of Biblical books; it is also the source for the list of books that

make up the Apocrypha in a later rule. Is not this tacit elevation of one version and canon over all others (Hebrew, Catholic, or whatever) as significant a source of bias as the designation of the Old Testament as a part of the (Christian) Bible? ALA is uncertain whether the complexity of the biblical text can be accommodated with a set of general rules, or whether some arbitrary simplification is required. However, if we really want to deal with the problem of bias, then we need to deal with this reliance on the Authorized Version.

4. Rule 25.18A4 (*old*) / 25.18A2 (*new*). ALA agrees that groups of books should be entered directly under "Bible" and that abbreviations should not be used.

The parenthetical under "Bible. Old Testament" is not exactly accurate; the Catholic and Protestant canons as well as the Masoretic and Septuagint canons for the "Old Testament" are not the same.

5. Rule 25.18A5 (*old*) / 25.18A3 (*new*). We are not certain that the Apocrypha should be treated in a separate guideline, rather than being treated as a group of books in 25.18A4 (*old*) / 25.18A2 (*new*).

It is also arguable that the list of books in this rule is based on a particular canon of the Old Testament (the Authorized version; see above) and that this narrow definition is inappropriate.

9. Rule 21.37A. This should probably be its own subsection of 21.37, not a footnote.