To: ALA/ALCTS/CCS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

From: Robert Maxwell, ACRL Representative
John Attig, CC:DA member

RE: Report on the *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials* Conference

Background

The rules used by most rare book catalogers in the United States are *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books*, published by the Library of Congress in 1991. Those rules were a revision of the earlier *Bibliographic Description of Rare Books*, written and published by LC. *DCRB* was a joint production of the Library of Congress, in the person of Ben Tucker, and the Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL.

The Bibliographic Standards Committee is currently engaged in a revision and expansion of *DCRB*. The revision is based on over ten years of experience with the rules. The expansion is based on an increasing desire to apply a comparable set of rules to books from the machine-press period, as well as to non-book materials. The plan is to produce a set of guidelines for specific formats under the general umbrella title *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials*. The scope of *DCRM* is roughly printed and manuscript materials in special collections, but with the scope of "printed" broadened to include materials produced by engraving, as well as letterpress, technologies. A set of rules for *Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Early Modern Manuscripts (AMREMM)* is currently in the press for ACRL. Rules for rare serials and for rare music have been drafted. The new revision of the manual *Cartographic Materials* includes rules for rare maps, and these rules may be extracted for publication as a separate document. Last, but certainly not least, *DCRM* will include a new edition of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books* [designated *DCRM(B)*].

It can be seen that considerable work has already been done. However, that work was progressing slowly, relying on e-mail, a group discussion list, and meetings at ALA conferences. These methods were not conducive to productive collaborative work, and it was proving difficult to resolve some major issues that affected the rules for all of the formats under consideration. In June 2002, several Bibliographic Standards Committee members casually mused about a "working retreat," gathering key people and locking them in a room together until the key decisions were made. The idea took hold; a working group was appointed to plan such a conference. Their plan was submitted to the administrators at Yale University and the Beinecke Library; the latter agreed to host and fund the conference.

The conference was limited to 25 invited participants. Six sets of issues were identified for discussion, and each participant was asked to choose two Working Groups. A moderator was appointed for each group, and other participants were asked to draft preliminary discussion papers. The conference was organized as a series of plenary meetings, alternating with Working Group sessions. Most of the preliminary papers were distributed before the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia and were discussed there; some of them were revised prior to the Conference, which took place at the Beinecke Library on March 10–13, 2003.

The Conference was extremely productive. Each of the Working Groups produced and/or revised drafts of their respective documents. These documents, along with the pre-conference discussion papers, are posted on the *DCRB* Revision Web page at http://www.folger.edu/bsc/dcrb/dcrbrev.html. The various pieces are being combined into an *alpha* draft for *DCRM(B)* and an editorial team is being appointed to produce a *beta* draft this coming fall. The team will be chaired by Manon Théroux of Yale; John Attig, Robert Maxwell and Joe Springer of the Memmonite Historical Society are members; Deborah Leslie of the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Chair of the Bibliographic Standards Committee, will serve *ex officio*.

Members of CC:DA are welcome to participate in the revision process. Information is posted on the *DCRM* Revision page noted above. Robert and John will keep CC:DA informed of relevant developments.

In this report, we would like to describe each of the Working Groups and their conclusions. It will be noted that several of these groups were dealing with issues all too familiar to CC:DA. Dealing with these issues in such a distinctive context was not only interesting for its own sake, but may also shed some light on aspects of the ongoing *AACR2* revision process.

Working Group #1: General Principles for the Cataloging of Rare Materials

In general, the Conference dealt with the rules for rare *books*, although many of the issues discussed and resolved had implications for rare serials and rare music. The first Working Group, on the other hand, was charged to come up with a set of principals that could be generally applicable to *all* types of rare materials and could be included in the introductory matter to each of the components of *DCRM*.

Joe Springer prepared an excellent discussion paper. He described some of the framework provided by the *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records*, and noted that the special requirements for rare materials involved characteristics of **manifestations** and **items**. In an early comment, John Attig noted as well that description of rare materials concentrated particularly on the **identification** user task. Joe also outlined the principles underlying bibliographic languages identified by Elaine Svenonius and also included in the draft statement of principles for AACR2 (*4JSC/Chair/74*). He stressed issues involving the principles of **user convenience, representation, accuracy,** and **standardization**.

In addition to this discussion paper, the Working Group also looked at the "Statement of Principles for the CUSTARD Project" (available on the Web at: http://www.archivists.org/news/custardproject.asp). CUSTARD is the Canadian-U.S. Task Force on Archival Description, which is working on a North American standard for archival description. Their statement of principles is a good example of applying Svenonius' very general principles in a particular context, and might usefully be consulted in the ongoing revision to the General Introduction to AACR2.

The draft statement of principles developed by the Working Group during the Conference consists of statements on:

- ✓ the **purpose** of rules for rare materials
- ✓ the **scope** of those rules
- ✓ the **background** or history of the rules for rare books
- ✓ a set of **objectives for rare materials cataloging** stated in terms of meeting user requirements (each begins "Users shall be able to …"), and
- ✓ a set of **principles** governing the design of the rules for cataloging rare materials (each begins "DCRM rules shall …").

This draft is available on the *DCRB* Revision page, and is worth reading for the light it sheds on similar issues in *AACR.*

Working Group #2: Transcription of Early Letter Forms in Rare Materials Cataloging

This Working Group dealt with what has always been one of the most difficult aspects of cataloging early printed books: the transcription of early letter forms. Specific issues included:

- ✓ Conversion of case: transcribing in lower case letters that appear in capital letters on the source; notoriously, this involved the letters IJUV;
- ✓ Whether to convert case in the other direction, i.e., whether the cataloger should ever transcribe in upper case letters that appear in lower case on the source;
- ✓ Transcription of punctuation symbols used to indicate abbreviation or contraction;
- ✓ Transcription of VV as VV or as W;
- ✓ Normalization of punctuation appearing on the source so that it will not be confused with ISBD prescribed punctuation

These issues proved as difficult and contentious as ever; some progress was made in resolving some of them, and work is continuing on wording to be incorporated into the text of *DCRM(B).*

Working Group #3: The Description of Machine-Press Materials

Since the publication of *DCRB* in 1991, there has been increasing interest in applying the rules to materials of the machine-press era. The discussion paper for this Group, written by Manon Théroux, listed the rules which would need to be revised or expanded:

- ✓ The scope statement for *DCRM(B)* would need to be expanded.
- ✓ The rules need to provide instructions for using information on a publisher's binding or wrapper.
- ✓ Place, name and date of manufacture in Area 4: the printing, publishing and bookselling functions became increasingly distinct during the nineteenth century, and it makes sense to use the distinct data elements provided by *ISBD* and *AACR* for printing statements.

✓ The rule for describing illustrations needs to be clarified, including a rather troublesome definition of "colored illustration."
✓ While series are almost non-existent for hand-press books, they become increasingly common in the machine-press era, and rules for series need to be added to *DCRM(B)*. A particularly thorny question was whether to transcribe an ISSN which does not appear on the same source as the series title and numbering.
✓ The question of when to create a new record (Working Group #6) is of particular significance for machine-press books. It affects what statements qualify as edition statements in Area 2, as well as whether printing information is recorded in Area 4 when it only applies to a particular printing.

Most of these issues were resolved, as least tentatively, and revised rules were ready to be integrated into a new draft for *DCRM(B)*.

Working Group #4: Collection-Level Cataloging

This Working Group was asked to consider whether *DCRM(B)* should include, as an appendix, instructions for creating collection-level records. This was inspired, not only by the prevalent use of this technique in archival collections, but by initiatives such as the ARL Task Force on Special Collections, which is seeking to promote access at the collection level to hidden resources within ARL institutions.

The discussion paper for this Group, drafted by Jain Fletcher of UCLA, reviewed the state of the art regarding collection-level description in archival and library practice. The Group decided that an appendix should be included in *DCRM(B)*, based on instructions published by the Library of Congress in *Cataloging Service Bulletin* no. 78 (fall 1997). The appendix will cover:

✓ the rationale for deciding to describe at the collection level;
✓ the importance of organizing and arranging the collection before it is described;
✓ the essential elements of a collection-level description.

The Group produced a draft of the Appendix on the final day of the Conference; it is posted on the *DCRM* Revision Web site.

Working Group #5: Problems and Lacunae in the Draft Revision of *DCRM(B)*

Working Group #5 concentrated on "nuts and bolts" issues, considering proposed changes throughout *DCRB* and drafting language for revised text in *DCRM(B)*. Among its more important recommendations are:

1. Require a note indicating transposition of any title page areas or elements when transcribing (a proposal to disallow any such transposition was rejected).
2. Add examples to make it clear that Latin place names in the place of publication should be qualified with modern names.

3. Require the transcription of roman numerals in the date element as roman numerals, with bracketed arabic equivalent.
4. Disallow the combining of data from different sources in the publisher statement.
5. Clarify the use of transcribed fields in copyright dates; i.e., copyright statements will be transcribed if they are to be included in the 260$c.
6. Deliberately encourage use of the manufacturing subfields in the Publication &c. area, by allowing publisher priority to be reflected in transcribing data when the books themselves give priority to publishers over manufacturers; and, to use the manufacturing subfields for early books to record printer data from colophons that supplement chief source data.
7. Allow the structure and characteristics, rather than content, of the book's collation to drive the formatting of the statement of extent; e.g., to count inserted engraved plates as plates even if they're illustrated title pages.
8. Describe books in which plates comprise the main sequence in terms of "leaves" rather than "leaves of plates."
9. Disallow abbreviation in area 2 when recording statements taken from prescribed sources.
10. Promote the use of standardized vocabulary in the notes area.

Working Group #6: Editions, Issues, and States, or, When to Create a New Record

This Working Group was a late addition to the plan. Not only did it allow an even number of Working Groups, but the decision about the level of granularity (when to create a new record) turned out to be a critical issue for the entire Conference, particularly for Working Group #3.
    The preliminary paper for this discussion was written by John Attig. It included:

✓ a description of the current state of *AACR2* with regard to (a) the concepts and terminology introduced in *FRBR* and (b) the CC:DA Task Force's draft guidelines on when to create a new record. John pointed out that there is a tension between the *FRBR* entities and the bibliographic concept of *edition* which has traditionally been the key concept in determining when to make a new record. He also noted that the *AACR* definition includes aspects of both *expression* ("embodying essentially the same content") and *manifestation* ("issued by the same entity");
✓ discussion the application of these *FRBR* and *AACR* concepts to the description of rare books;
✓ a recommendation that *DCRM(B)* state a default guideline on when to create a new record, to be applied when there are no mitigating factors, and some principles or factors which might justify varying from the default;
✓ the observation that consistently following a standard set of guidelines is most important in shared-cataloging, master-record databases (i.e., OCLC), but less important in local catalogs.

The Working Group spent considerable effort analyzing authoritative definitions of *edition*, *issue*, *impression*, and *state* taken from the literature on descriptive bibliography (Fredson Bowers

and G. Thomas Tanselle, in particular). The Group observed some uncertainty in this literature about the relationship of *issue* and *impression*, particularly during the machine-press era, and resolved that catalogers should **not** be forced to understand and apply this literature.

In the end, the Group came up with a one-page rule, to be placed in the preliminary rules. The draft combined elements of LCRI 1.0 and the Basic Guidelines from the CC:DA Task Force's draft, with factors specific to rare books. The basic rule states: "Separate bibliographic records are normally made for distinct publication units, which are referred to in AACR as 'editions' and in bibliographic scholarship as 'issues'," thus relating this rule to both *AACR* and to terms used in descriptive bibliography — but not relying on either. The more detailed default guidelines call for a new record to be made whenever there is a change in content or when there is evidence of an intent to create a distinct publishing unit. The rule notes that, when a new record is *not* created, information may be included (in notes) that is applicable, not to all copies, but rather to a specific impression (printing), state or copy. Finally, the rule provides for the possibility that a new record might be created for a specific impression, state or copy and lists factors relevant to making this decision.

This draft is also available on the *DCRB* Revision page, and is worth considering in conjunction with the work of the Task Force on Major Changes.

As the revision of *DCRM(B)* continues, it is likely that revisions to *AACR* may be suggested. In fact, the first such proposal — on the definition of "coloured illustrations" — has already been submitted to CC:DA. At the end of the process, the Bibliographic Standards Committee will want to look at the rules for early printed books at the end of Chapter 2 of *AACR* and recommend whether those rules still serve a useful purpose and, if so, whether revisions are needed to bring them more closely in line with *DCRM(B)*.