

TO: Library of Congress, Policy and Standards Division
CC: Barbara Tillett, Chief, Cataloging Policy and Support Office
Qiang Jin, Chair, ALA/ALCTS/Cataloging and Classification Section (CCS)
FROM: John Myers, Chair, ALA/ALCTS/CCS/Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA)
RE: Response to Revised (May 2010) romanization tables for Greek
ATTACH: *Report of the CC:DA Task Force for the Review of the Romanization of Greek*

OVERVIEW

CC:DA forwards the report of the CC:DA Task Force for the Review of the Proposed Romanization Table (2010) for Ancient and Modern Greek, with its unqualified endorsement. In its capacity as the approving agency for ALA with respect to this table, CC:DA approves the draft tables.

BACKGROUND

In the Summer 2009 issue of the *Cataloging Service Bulletin*, the Library of Congress published proposed tables, one each for the romanization of Ancient and Medieval Greek and of Modern Greek, to replace the current combined table. In response to a first round of feedback, the Library of Congress issued in May 2010 another draft, of a revised single table, addressing the romanization of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Greek. Feedback was requested by June 30, 2010. CC:DA authorized the formation of a task force with the general charge of “assessing draft romanization tables for Greek” and with the specific task of reviewing the May 2010 draft table. The membership of the previous task force to review Greek romanization was reactivated.

DISCUSSION

In approving the current draft tables, CC:DA is acceding to certain limitations in the current cataloging environment and in the U.S. community of Greek scholarship. CC:DA continues to be aware that the history of Greek orthography is lengthy and complex, and therefore introduces a number of challenges to a perfect solution to the question of romanization. While it can be argued that there is a certain arbitrariness to the demarcating date between the period for Ancient and Medieval Greek and the period for Modern Greek, an arbitrariness that does a disservice to the evolution of Greek on both sides of that date, the cataloging community has chosen to differentiate Greek in the different epochs by separate language codes. There is a certain inconsistency therefore, in maintaining a conjoined table for what the cataloging community has said are two separate languages. Furthermore, in maintaining the status quo with respect to establishing polytonic orthography as the norm for romanizing Modern Greek, U.S. cataloging will fall increasingly out of synch with both contemporary Greek practice and the practices employed in other research tools such as database products. While the history of Greek is indeed long, the history of Modern Greek is at present relatively short in comparison and there is every hope that its future is longer than its past. Maintaining the status quo, however well justified at present, only puts off the day of reckoning and increases the labor of our successors in eventually tackling and rectifying the issue.