Association for Library Collections and Technical Services
(A division of the American Library Association)
Cataloging and Classification Section
Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

Joint ALA/BL Task Force to Reconceptualize Chapter 9

Interim Report

March, 2003

Michael A. Chopey, Chair (ALA)
Stephen Bagley (BL)
David Baron (BL)
Nancy E. Lorimer (ALA)
Cynthia McKinley (BL)
Rachel Pitman (BL)
Ann Sandberg-Fox (ALA)
Adam L. Schiff (ALA)
Jay Weitz (ALA)

Background

This task force was formed mainly as a result of JSC discussions surrounding Recommendation 2 in 4JSC/ALA/36/Rev, and particularly as a result of the BL response to this document and the discussion. At the time the task force was formed (October 2002), it was thought that the 2003 amendments package would include revisions to 9.5 (and the footnote there) allowing for the optional addition of a physical description area to the description of a remote-access electronic resource.[1] This was to be done as an interim measure pending a longer-term reevaluation of electronic resources vis-à-vis the chapters of Part I. The task force was charged with proposing rule revisions in Part I to help the JSC with that reevaluation.

At CC:DA's meetings during the ALA Midwinter Conference in Philadelphia in January 2003, the ALA Representative to the JSC suggested that the task force not assume that the approach called for in *4JSC/ALA/36/Rev/BL response* is one that the JSC necessarily favors. He asked the task force to present in its interim report several options, both within the current scope of chapter 9 and outside of it, for dealing with the electronic resources issues that have been raised and discussed since the original *4JSC/ALA/36*.

So this report aims to summarize the various options that exist for dealing with electronic manifestations of various kinds of intellectual content in *AACR2*. We hope that this report is helpful to the JSC in its discussions of this important matter. In keeping with its charge, the task force will prepare rule revisions in its final report to demonstrate how **Option 4** below would play out.

Option 1: Status quo

As the original *4JSC/ALA/36* pointed out, and as all of the revisions, follow-ups, and responses to it over the past two years seem to confirm, there are problems with the current *AACR2* approach to describing electronic resources. Among the more significant problems that have been identified during this long discussion are the following:

- The current instruction in 0.24 to "bring out all aspects of the item being described, including its content, its carrier, [etc.]" and that "[i]n any given area of the description, all relevant aspects should be described" is vague and does not give clear instruction on how to apply more than one chapter when a resource has the content of one chapter and the carrier of another. The scope note in chapter 9 gives some further guidance ("Electronic resources often include components with characteristics found in multiple classes of materials so there will frequently be a need to consult other chapters. For example, in describing a serially-issued cartographic electronic resource, use chapters 3, 9, and 12"), but there is no indication of which chapter's rules should take precedence when two chapters' rules for a given area conflict.

---

[1] At the September 2002 meeting of the JSC in York, it was decided that an attempt would be made to revise the rules at 9.5, along with the footnote at 9.5, to allow that remote-access electronic resources optionally be given a physical description. After reviewing responses to *4JSC/ALA/36/Rev/ALA rep follow-up/* from LC, CCC, and ACOC in October 2002 on the drafting of the footnote and rules to accomplish this, ALA decided to re-draft the chapter 9 proposals (*4JSC/ALA/36/Rev/ALA rep follow-up/ALA response*). These will not be included in the 2003 amendments package.

- Catalogers are not allowed by *AACR2* to give physical descriptions for remote-access electronic resources. This information could be useful to library patrons. No convincing argument has been made for the exclusion of area 5 for remote-access electronic resources.

Option 2: Retain the current scope of chapter 9, but allow for the optional addition of a physical description area (e.g. new rules at 9.5B3 and 9.5C3, and revision of 9.5 footnote, as proposed in *4JSC/ALA/36/Rev/ALA rep follow-up/LC response*).

The task force is not clear on why this would be added only as an option. Is there an AACR constituency that is still opposed in principle to allowing a physical description for a remote-access resource? Is this meant as a compromise for the benefit of that constituency? Or is it felt that some cataloging agencies within the various constituencies will find this option too radical an approach to be a rule of general applicability?

Option 3: Retain the current scope of chapter 9, but eliminate the footnote at 9.5 that prohibits area 5 for remote-access resources. Give rules and examples in 9.5B, 9.5C, and 9.5D for the physical description of various classes of materials in direct-access and remote-access electronic manifestations.

Under this option, chapter 9 would still be used in conjunction with other class of material chapters for electronic manifestations of resources with content covered by those other chapters. If this option were chosen, the task force would recommend the following:

- Revise the scope note in each of the other class of materials chapters that might have materials in electronic manifestations. In the scope note for each of those chapters, explicitly direct the cataloger to consult chapter 9 in conjunction with the rules in that chapter for electronic manifestations.
- Give references where appropriate in each of the other chapters' .5B, .5C, and .5D rules to 9.5B, 9.5C, and 9.5D, respectively. This parallels the approach taken for paper-carried items in *AACR2*'s 5.5 rules, where there are references like "add the pagination or number of volumes as instructed in 2.5B."
- Greatly expand the controlled list of SMDs in 9.5B to include all of the possible content/electronic carrier combinations in Part I, possibly, but not necessarily, dividing the list into direct-access and remote-access SMDs. When the footnote and optionality are removed, the need for this dichotomy between direct-access and remote-access (cf. the 9.5A1 proposal in *4JSC/ALA/36/Rev/ALA rep follow-up/CCC response*) goes away.
- Include a paragraph in the SMD rule that parallels the one at 3.5B1: "If an electronic resource is not comprehended by one of the above terms, use an appropriate term taken from subrule .5B of one of the chapters of part I [possibly insert here: "preceded by *electronic*" or "preceded by *digital*"].
- Terms like "electronic" or "digital" (one of them—to be determined) should be included/required in all physical descriptions of electronic manifestations of other-chapter materials. This should be accomplished either by:
    - Giving the chosen term "electronic" or "digital" as a qualifier in a .5B term derived from another chapter's list of SMDs or supplied by the cataloger; or by
    - Giving "electronic" or "digital" as part of the other physical details portion of the physical description.

- Make it clear that statements combining content and carrier are valid (e.g. "maps on 3 CD-ROMs" or "1 electronic document on 2 computer disks").
- Statements of extent for electronic documents should include pagination when applicable.
- Prescribe "Web site" as an SMD in cases when it is appropriate as the basis of description (i.e., when the Web site itself is the basis of description, not the components that make it up).

Issues that would have to be resolved with this approach (and with the Option 2, 4, or 5 approach) include:

- Should the chosen term "electronic" or "digital" be included/required as a qualifier before the other-chapter .5B term or as part of the other physical details portion of the physical description? (i.e., which of those approaches should be taken.)
- How to resolve the problem of variable pagination when an electronic document is issued in an electronic print format where the pagination will vary depending on the viewer's client application settings?
- How to resolve the problem of variable pagination when an electronic document is issued in more than one electronic print format (e.g., PDF and HTML and Word) where the pagination will vary depending on the format chosen?

(The task force will address these issues in its Option 4 rule revision proposals in its final report.)

This approach has the following drawbacks:

- The scope of chapter 9 would still be primarily carrier-based, which impedes the progress toward a more logically consistent *AACR2*. A more logically consistent *AACR2* would contain chapters based more purely on intellectual content (language material, cartographic material, musical notation, recorded sound, moving image, graphic materials, computer files) and other (secondary) chapters based on carrier and issuance, or would have chapters based more purely on intellectual content which would cover all of the possible carrier and issuance scenarios for that content.
- Catalogers would have to flip back and forth between chapter 9 and the relevant content chapter, like music catalogers now flip back and forth between chapters 5 and 2.
- Maintaining a controlled list of electronic SMDs in chapter 9 would be unwieldy, given every possible content/electronic carrier combination that can occur in part I. It would be less unwieldy and easier to maintain if these controlled SMD lists were in their appropriate content chapters.

Option 4: Redefine the scope of chapter 9 to include only computer software (including programs, fonts), numeric data, computer-oriented multimedia, and online systems or services; remove carrier-based rules to the other class of materials chapters in part I where they may be applicable; redefine scope and title of chapter 2 to make it applicable to textual materials carried on paper or electronic formats.

This is the option that the task force is charged with demonstrating through rule revision proposals. This option was proposed in *4JSC/ALA/36/Rev/BL response*, and it is the option supported and recommended by this task force.

An important part of the original discussion that led to the BL response and to the formation of this task force was the suggestion that the *AACR2* concept of "electronic resources" as a class of materials is outdated in terms of how real-world cataloging of electronic manifestations is conceptualized and performed at present. In real life, catalogers certainly do divide resources into classes, but for the most part they now do so more on the basis of intellectual content (and issuance, in the case of serials or manuscripts) than on the basis of physical carrier.[2] This has been recognized by (or perhaps led by) the MARC maintenance agency and bibliographic utilities for a number of years as regards electronic manifestations. The first decision that almost all *AACR2* catalogers need to make, practically speaking, is what "workform" to use when creating a new record. When cataloging a score, whether it is issued on paper or in electronic format, the cataloger uses a "scores" workform. When cataloging a published textual resource, whether printed on paper, burned onto a compact disc, or issued remotely via WWW, the cataloger uses a "language material" workform ("serial" or "books") and secondarily considers the carrier. Given this reality, the *AACR2* concept of electronic resources (defined by carrier) as a class of materials in their own right seems like an artificial construct, and probably serves to confuse some catalogers who are attempting to catalog electronic manifestations using *AACR2* and MARC21 bibliographic format.

There still is a legitimate reason to have a chapter 9 in *AACR2,* because there is still a legitimate intellectual-content-based class of materials that could be called "electronic resources" and that would still merit its own chapter in *AACR2*. This class of materials, which includes computer software (including programs, fonts), numeric data, computer-oriented multimedia, and online systems or services, should be familiar to any cataloger who has used a "computer files" workform in the major utilities in the past 5 years, and the distinction between this class of materials and another class which may occur in electronic format should be familiar to anyone who has cataloged an electronic manifestation according to MARC bibliographic format standards.

Exploring the possibility of making part I of *AACR2* more intellectual-content-based, and less carrier-based, might also be a step toward making our cataloging code more logically consistent. As it stands now, chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are mainly intellectual-content-based chapters that are meant to allow for the description of a given type of intellectual content no matter what type of carrier that intellectual content occurs with. At present, these chapters do not have rules that allow for the description of a given type of intellectual content when it occurs in an electronic format, which seems to be a shortcoming and a logical inconsistency. Chapter 11 is a purely carrier-based chapter, and that may be an issue for another task force to examine in the future. Chapters 4 and 12 are based around issuance, which is clearly a necessarily separate facet to consider in the cataloging of any kind of intellectual content. Considering how the issuance chapters fit into part I might be another worthy exercise for a different task force, but it stands to reason that they should stand as separate chapters to be used in conjunction with intellectual content chapters.

---

[2] Microform-reproduction cataloging according to LCRI-adapted *AACR2* and MARC21 standards bears this principle or tendency out, but microform-original cataloging in the U.S. and microform-reproduction cataloging according strictly to *AACR2* is an obvious exception to the principle that catalogers think first of the intellectual content and issuance of a resource and secondarily of the carrier. Evaluating chapter 11 is outside the scope of this task force's charge, but this task force will consider proposing in its final report that chapter 11 be examined for its appropriateness in a more intellectual-content-based cataloging code.

The task force plans to carry out the demonstration of how Option 4 would work in *AACR2* by proposing rule revisions in the following areas:

- A revision of the wording of 0.24 to specifically address electronic manifestations.
- A revision of the scope statement in chapter 9 to limit the use of the chapter to computer software (including programs, games, fonts), numeric data, computer-oriented multimedia, and online systems or services.
- Glossary definitions to support the new terms the chapter 9 scope statement.
- A revision of the scope statements in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and possibly 10 and 11, to specify that these chapters cover the description of that chapter's class of materials when they occur in electronic format.
- A revision to the title of chapter 2.
- Addition of rules in ISBD areas 1-8 in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and possibly 10 and 11, for electronic-manifestation-specific cases.
- Deletion of any rules in chapter 9 that would not apply given the revised scope of the chapter.

A drawback to the Option 4 approach that some have cited is that it is repetitive of similar rules across chapters.

Option 5: Redefine the scope of chapter 9 to include only computer software (including programs, fonts), numeric data, computer-oriented multimedia, and online systems or services; create a separate chapter containing all of the rules for the description electronic resources as carrier; this carrier chapter would be used in conjunction with any other part 1 chapter whenever applicable.

This is a possible approach to the electronic manifestations issue, and the carrier vs. content issue in general that has been suggested by John Attig. As the task force understands it, this would be part of an alternate reorganization of the part I rules whereby part one would contain:

- intellectual-content-based chapters
- carrier-based chapters
- form-of-issuance-based chapters

Part I would be set up in such a way that the cataloger would consider all of these facets in all cases. This would eliminate duplication across chapters since all the rules for a given carrier (e.g. paper, electronic, etc.) would occur only once in one place.