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

From: Peter Fletcher (chair), Lowell Ashley, Ann Caldwell, Michael Chopey, Ellen Crosby, Brad Eden, Laurel Jizba, Nancy Lorimer, Ann Sandberg-Fox

Re: Response to the proposals on Treatments of Publications in Multiple Formats, initiated by the IFLA Section on Cataloguing ISBD Review Group

Document available: http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/pubs/multiplefrm.htm

This response is organized in three sections that correspond to the three items proposed in the above mentioned document: 1) the use of multiple ISBDs and the use of multiple general material designations (GMDs), 2) the order in which elements for multiple formats should be treated, and 3) the number of bibliographic records to be created for multiple versions.

Four people responded to the proposals. The comments are summarized here; no consensus was reached by the group, and the comments reflect individual opinions except where agreement is noted (i.e., where two or more had the same comment).

1. **The use of multiple ISBDs and the use of multiple general material designations (GMDs):**

   It was noted that the first proposal seems to be similar to AACR2 revised rule 0.24, which calls for describing all relevant aspects of an item, except that 0.24 deals with AACR2 Part I & II, and the ISBD proposal deals with only those aspects related to the description. Also in contrast to AACR2 0.24, the proposal formalizes the order of elements.

   It was further noted that the outcomes of multiple GMDs could be troublesome, in that the present GMDs are an inconsistent mix of content/carrier terms, and IFLA assumes we will be using those GMDs in combination. Examples of GMDs: a serially issued digital map would have [map & electronic resource]; an electronic continuing resource: [electronic text]. Another thought the use of multiple GMDs in itself might be confusing for a patron when confronted with something like: [map & electronic resource]. Two also noted that other areas of the record such as notes can usefully indicate other format aspects of an item.

   In addition, the SMD could also be used to indicate multiple formats, but it pushes the same issues further down the record. Also, specific details about format holdings, it is thought, have to be in the item record, since the MARC/AACR/ISBD record is essentially designed for describing one format. Consistency may not be possible in the way that different libraries decide what an item's predominant feature/format is, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

   There was some concern over the use of an ampersand between the GMDs: one person thought an ampersand might be subject to misinterpretation and be indicative of two or more separate entities, and implied that a plus sign "+" might be clearer. However, another thought a plus sign more confusing due to its current use in describing accompanying material. One thought it might be helpful to know why an ampersand was chosen.

On the positive side, another felt that multiple GMDs would give the patron a "heads up" that they are looking at multiple format holdings in the library. The example of Michigan State University catalog was given (the search under "Atlantic Monthly" at http://magic.lib.msu.edu)

2. **The order in which elements for multiple formats should be treated:**

As mentioned above, in contrast to AACR2 0.24, the proposal formalizes the order of elements.

One comment: the proposal seems logical, if not completely clear with respect to the physical carrier, since a publication such as an electronic continuing resource could possess physical aspects, but not a physical carrier. Another felt that the order proposed was also logical.

3. **The number of bibliographic records to be created for multiple versions.**

Discussion was mostly limited to the use of multiple GMDs. In the case of multiple bibliographic descriptions for a publication, one raised the concern about how useful the assignment of GMDs are for the purpose of identification, since in the case of an electronic publication on the Web and on CD-ROM, the GMDs would be identical for both records.

On the specific ISBD group proposal of allowing cataloging agencies to decide whether to use a single bibliographic description or multiple descriptions for publications available in more than one physical format, one person commented that the proposal is practical, especially in times of limited resources.