Building International Descriptive Cataloging Standards:

The Role of the American Library Association's Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

CC:DA and Cataloging in the United States

Libraries across the world have long been faced with the need to organize their collections in order for users to retrieve the resources they need. International standards have been developed for describing the resources and the ideas contained in them. These standards are used to describe books, manuscripts, musical scores, cartographic resources, electronic resources, and other types of resources held by libraries. As more and more resources are available digitally from libraries and other online sources, the need for commonly shared standards for describing such material becomes even more important.

Resource Description and Access (RDA) has been developed to replace the earlier Anglo---American Cataloguing Rules as an internationally accepted standard for descriptive cataloging. It provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery covering all types of content and media. Underlying RDA are the conceptual models Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD). The RDA Steering Committee is the international body responsible for developing and maintaining RDA.

The American Library Association's Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) was established in 1979 to formulate the official ALA policy on descriptive cataloging issues. The ALA representative to the RSC is an ex-officio member of CC:DA. The Committee also works closely with the Library

of Congress on cataloging policy and problems in the use and interpretation of cataloging standards. Representatives from CC:DA work with other ALA committees to coordinate descriptive cataloging policy with developments in the MARC 21 format and in subject cataloging.

The Committee is composed of nine voting members, four non-voting ex-officio representatives, and approximately 30 non-voting liaisons from ALA units and non-ALA organizations. The members, representatives and liaisons have a wide array of experience in cataloging all types of library materials. Additional non-voting members include the committee's webmaster and two interns. CC:DA is a committee of the Cataloging and Metadata Management Section (CaMMS) of the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS).

CC:DA invites collaborative efforts with other American and international organizations to develop descriptive standards for expanding the scope of the traditional library catalog to include emerging technologies that have not hitherto been covered by cataloging standards.

Roles of CC:DA

- To make a continuing assessment of the state of the art and suggest the direction of change in the field of descriptive cataloging.

- To recommend solutions to problems relating not only to bibliographic description but also to choice and form of access points, other than subject access points.

- To initiate proposals for additions to and revisions of the cataloging code currently supported by ALA and to review proposals initiated by other groups or individuals

- To develop official ALA positions on such proposals in consultation with other appropriate ALA units and organizations in the United States.

- To instruct the ALA Representative to the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA regarding the official ALA position and to suggest acceptable bases for negotiations.

- To develop official ALA positions on proposed international cataloging policies and standards pertaining to the committee's area of responsibility and to advise the official ALA representative to the organization developing such policies and standards; or, if there is no official ALA representative, to act as the clearinghouse within ALA for review of these policies and standards and to serve as the formal liaison between ALA and the originating organizations.

- To encourage the United States library and information services community to express opinions on issues under consideration through timely dissemination of information in relevant media.

- To keep the profession informed by reporting committee actions promptly through appropriate communication channels.

How to Participate in Cataloging Issues or Questions:

- Subscribe to CC:DA's read-only e-mail list "Rules."

- Follow developments on CC:DA's website.

- Attend meetings of CC:DA at ALA Midwinter Meetings and Annual Conferences.

- Respond to a call for volunteers for a new CC:DA task force. These are periodically announced on the Rules list and other cataloging lists.

- Volunteer within another ALA unit or another library organization to serve as its liaison to CC:DA.

- Volunteer to serve as a CC:DA intern or voting member using the ALCTS Committee Volunteer Form.

- Submit an RDA revision proposal following the instructions in How to Submit a Revision Proposal to CC:DA.

CC:DA Welcomes Your Suggestions:

- In proposing changes to cataloging standards.
- In streamlining the revision process.
- In applying standards for bibliographic control to new and emerging technologies.

How to Contact a CC:DA Member or Liaison:

- Contact the committee or an individual by e-mail using one of the addresses listed on the CC:DA roster.
- Contact ALA's ALCTS office by phone toll-free at 1-800-545-2433 extension 5037.