

CORE
(A Division of the American Library Association)
Metadata and Collections Section

Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

Report of the MAC Liaison

To: Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

From: John Myers, CC:DA Liaison to MAC

Provided below are summaries of the proposals and discussion papers considered by the MAC during virtual meetings scheduled on January 31-February 2, 2023.

Complete text of the MAC proposals and discussion papers summarized below is available via the agenda for the winter 2023 virtual MAC meetings on the MARC Advisory Committee web site: https://www.loc.gov/marc/mac/mw2023_age.html

Executive Summary:

Four proposals and four discussion papers were taken up. The four proposals passed, some with amendments. Two of the four discussion papers were referred out for fast-tracking. One of the discussion papers will return as a proposal. One of the discussion papers will return as a further paper, although it is unclear if that paper will be a proposal or another discussion paper.

Narrative:

From the Chair: The Chair opened each session with careful instructions regarding the logistics of holding the meeting virtually – how to signal to be recognized, how voting would be conducted, and a request for brevity. [There were no Fast Track approvals]

Business Meeting: Discussion of prospective dynamics for the summer meetings. The meeting will remain virtual. Is there a preference for 2-hour meetings spread over 3 days, or 3-hour meetings spread over 2 days? The 2-day arrangement would be Wednesday and Thursday following ALA Annual, in order to avoid impinging on members' Tuesday travel arrangements and meeting on Friday. Meeting immediately after ALA Annual avoids impacting members' preparations in the lead up to ALA Annual and minimizes the impact on vacation schedules if it were pushed into July. Consensus favored the 2 days of 3-hour meetings arrangement.

LC Report: MARC update 35 released in December, the embargo for it ends on 2/20/23.

Other Reports: [none]

Proposal 2023-01 would define a new field for the recording of archive and access information for online archives across all formats. Specifically, it would define new field 857 and its associated subfields to support recording the various elements to be recorded (persistent identifier, location, content date range, completeness of the archive, and the provider). It builds on the concepts explored in 2022-DP02 and 2022-DP06, pursuing MAC consensus that such information warranted a field distinct from the existing 856 field. In particular, it streamlines some choices and elements that currently exist in the 856 field as not applicable to online archives and adds some additional elements that are specific to online archives.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, with some requests for clarification and concerns with some of the specific subfields.

There was substantial conversation around the nature and format of the intended contents of \$d and \$f, echoing concerns from the discussion paper stage. There was also some discussion on the deployment of the second indicator values. Ultimately, a minor revision to the label of \$d was proposed, to change it to “Date Range of Archive Material”

The proposal passed as amended.

Proposal 2023-02 would add subfield \$3 to existing field 041 of the bibliographic format. It builds on concepts explored in 2022-DP07. In particular, once field 041 was made repeatable in order to support the recording of language codes from differing standards, it then was deployed in a repeatable fashion to record the language codes associated with distinct included works. To improve the utility of the repeated fields in this context, a “materials specified” element is warranted, which is elsewhere recorded in \$3.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, with some concerns including the need for best practices guidance in the case of multiple included components with the same language dynamics. There was minimal discussion on minor points.

The proposal passed.

Proposal 2023-03 would add various control subfields to fields 720 and 653 of the bibliographic format. Specifically, it would add subfields \$0, \$1, \$2, and \$5 (respectively: authority/control number, real world object URI, source of standard number/URI, and institution to which the field applies). While fields 720 and 653 are articulated in terms of uncontrolled terminology, as linked data is implemented across bibliographic data structures including MARC, there is a growing need to provide linkages to non-traditional sources that nonetheless deploy control numbers and real world object URIs.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, with some concerns, most significantly with the repeatability of \$2. Discussion took up the question of \$2, both its repeatability and appropriateness in this context. There was also discussion of the divergence in the presence of \$7 in the two fields. Consensus arrived at dropping \$2 from the proposal and then adding \$7 to field 720.

The proposal passed as amended.

Proposal 2023-04 would define a new field for the structured recording of ownership and custodial history across all formats. Specifically, it would define new field 361 and its associated subfields to support recording the various elements to be recorded. It builds on concepts and options explored in 2022-DP09 (and 2010-09). For those wishing to deploy it, the new field would support enhanced engagement with authority records and controlled vocabularies than currently available in the free-text field 561, with possible linked data applicability.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, but with repeated concerns with respect to the overlap in function for the Indicator positions, the use of \$0/\$1 to convey disparate entity types, the choice of \$i as one of the subfields, and the lack of examples for demonstrating some elements of the proposal.

The paper's authors immediately ceded the point regarding the selection of \$i as part of a \$i/\$j pairing for structured and unstructured dates, since \$i is regularly deployed elsewhere as a place to record relationship text. They will shift to a \$k/\$l (el) pairing.

There was substantial discussion around the concerns with the dynamics to be articulated by the indicator values and the nature of the vocabularies deployed by the two indicators. In particular, there was concern whether there was sufficient distinction between the dynamics to be addressed by the two indicators for reliable application, as well as whether that distinction was articulated with sufficient clarity. It was observed that there was closeness of terminology deployed for some values for the lists for the respective indicators. There was an additional concern that the rosters of indicator values were too closely tied to individual vocabulary sources and consequently too constrained, and thus a subfield solution might provide more flexibility.

Another major issue was the proposed deployment of \$0/\$1 to convey URIs for two different entity types – the name entity in \$a and the mark in \$f. The positioning of \$0/\$1 next to the corresponding subfields would not be reliable in a machine context, particularly in the case where a MARC record was transformed to BibFrame (and possibly then back to MARC). The ambiguity of the resulting associations of URIs with their corresponding terms is highly undesirable. Discussion coalesced around using \$7 to record the provenance of the \$f term.

There was a concern about the collapse of various agent name elements that are separately subfielded in the corresponding authority record into a unitary \$a in this field. In response, it was observed that a similar dynamic is in place in the linking entry fields (76X-78X block).

The question of bifurcation and duplication of data that could be recorded in \$s/\$y/\$5, which is also potentially recorded elsewhere in different formats was raised. To which it was observed that there are systems and agencies which may not have or use those other formats. It is necessary to provide these additional mechanisms in the pursuit of overall flexibility and utility of the field.

As a result of these conversations, significant edits were made to the proposal – the original articulation of the indicators was abandoned, with the original first indicator function moved to a newly included subfield (\$o), and then replaced with a new function to indicate if the field was private or not private, as is the case for field 541. The second indicator function was removed entirely from the paper, with the possibility of future development of its prospective function among the remaining subfields. With the changes to the functioning of the indicators, several concerns about the labels assigned to the previously articulated values were rendered moot.

Following submission of the amended proposal, there was additional discussion around the utility of \$x/\$z for non-public and public notes, with the revision of the 1st indicator position to incorporate a “private/not private” dynamic. Sufficient use cases were presented for several combinations that would justify the notes’ use.

The proposal passed as amended.

Discussion Paper 2023-DP01 explores the addition of a new subfield to field 264 of the bibliographic format for the recording of otherwise un-subfielded data. To that end, it suggests the use of a new \$s for this purpose. It explores further the concepts initially presented in 2022-DP10. While emergent from dynamics discovered in BibFrame-MARC conversion, it has wider applicability.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which expressed little support for the concept. There was a theme that Bibframe needs to solve this. If implemented, it would have adverse effects with little value other than roundtripping between MARC and BibFrame.

There were numerous rebuttals to the assertions made in the discussion paper, both to its underlying premises and to the impact on the usability of the data in question. These included the divergence in guidance between the Original RDA and Official RDA (including the ability to “break” a standard 264 \$a\$b\$c string into a triplet of 264\$a/264\$b/264\$c fields), the harm to faceting and retrieval (including the introduction of excess noise in searches on name or place), the place of the value of transcribed data vs controlled data, and the deployment of MARC without ISBD punctuation. The authors countered with the challenge of reliably mapping complex combinations of MARC data into BibFrame and then back to the corresponding complex combinations. This is particularly the case under the dynamic of bibliographic file maintenance. There are considerable challenges in addressing the evolution of practices represented in the existing MARC records.

Ultimately, there emerged some clarity around some fundamental issues that may be more about the underlying dynamics of the source cataloging codes and the implementation of BibFrame, namely, what is the nature of the data articulated in the cataloging codes, what is the nature of the data that is conveyed in BibFrame (that is, to what extent will it be “controlled”/standardized/cleaned up), and how will these natures intersect? Also, there are two competing visions for the data – its characterization through the persistence of the subfields vs. the preservation of the source strings as coherent statements.

It is unclear if the next iteration of this paper will be another discussion paper or a proposal.

Discussion Paper 2023-DP02 explores the addition of \$0 and \$1 to field 658 (Index Term-Curriculum Objective) of the bibliographic format. There are emergent thesauri of such terms with control numbers and URIs that should be supported with these subfields.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, with several calls to Fast Track the paper. There were some concerns with particulars in the arrangement and content of the examples. There was a suggestion to consider holistically the question of \$0/\$1 for other uncontrolled fields.

In response to a concern about the repetition of the \$1 entries in the examples, the text strings reflect different language renderings of same registry entry – hence the same \$1 paired with different term; Norway has five official languages, require two Norwegian orthographies and one Sami language.

There was a motion to advance the discussion paper for Fast Track treatment.

The motion passed.

Discussion Paper 2023-DP03 explores the renaming and redefinition of field 368 \$d of the authority format. Field 368 \$d is presently defined as “Title of Person” – royalty, nobility, ecclesiastical rank, or religious vocation – to support the scope in the early development of RDA. Subsequent refinements expanded the concept to incorporate other terms of rank, honor, or office. The current “Official RDA” explicitly labels the element as “Term of Rank or Honor or Office.” It is necessary then to update the MARC format to align with the RDA-MARC mapping and current practice.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, with a few comments/concerns.

There was minimal discussion, quickly citing RDA’s guidance in response to the pre-comment regarding the exclusion of Mr./Mrs. from the subfield -- as part of the preferred name they are recorded in \$a or \$c rather than \$d; and that there is “nothing ‘simple’ about gender and marital status, hence the preference to substitute ‘only’ (regardless of the language in RDA).”

There was a motion to advance the discussion paper for Fast Track treatment.

The motion passed.

Discussion Paper 2023-DP04 explores a mechanism for recording various attributes of families. To that end, it proposes new and revised fields and subfields for accommodating address of family, field of activity of family, and occupation of family, and considers two options for recording other attributes of families in the MARC 21 Authority Format. It explores various options to address the means to record additional attributes of families.

The Chair summarized pre-meeting comments, which were generally supportive, but with no consensus on the Options. Other prospective changes for fields 371 and 374 were generally acceptable. There was a preference to change “person, family, corporate body” to “agent” if Option 2 were pursued.

Discussion took up the point of applicability of “Profession” to an entire family, to which it was observed that RDA applies “Field of Activity” to an entire family, as an analogous structure. There was an observation that there are families with generations-long engagement in a profession, and that this identification is useful for differentiating them from other families of the same name.

There was considerable deliberation on the question of the choice between the two options. The natures of the various fields in question were examined, along with use cases beyond those in the paper for the suitability of one field over the other. A straw poll favored Option 1 of enhancing the existing field 376 for attributes of families.

There remains a lingering concern about the privacy and cataloging ethics dynamics that arise when recording “address” as an element. RDA does include “residence” as a possible data element for address. Pre-comments regarding the pragmatic constraint to notable residences – castles, manor houses, etc., or seats – was re-articulated as the likely information to be used. Best practices would be highly desirable to further address this concern.

The question of the change in terminology from “Person, Family, Corporate Body” to “Agent” was discussed. As field 376 under Option 1 is explicitly for families, the immediate question of “Agent” was determined to be moot. Concerning a review of the wider context with respect to this change, a straw poll indicated consensus that it should not be pursued.

The paper will return as a proposal.