COLLECTORS, CATALOGS, AND LIBRARIANS

by

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Most public, school, and university libraries in the United States catalog their sound recordings according to the standards established in the <u>Anglo-American Cataloging Rules</u> (hereafter identified as <u>AACR</u>).[1] Although many libraries depart to some extent from the <u>AACR</u> style, it is in the nature of this cataloging code that it has wide ramifications in almost all libraries in English speaking countries. It is in the style used in bibliographic data supplied by the Library of Congress and distributed in the <u>National Union Catalog</u>, on MARC computer tapes, and on printed cards. In a very real sense, <u>AACR</u> is the natioanl standard for bibliographic and discographic control. The increased use by librarians of bibliographic networks and various systems of cooperative and central-ized cataloging at all levels (regional, national, and international) have made <u>AACR</u> even more pervasive. The likelihood of local variations are becoming increasingly less feasible.

Dissatisfaction with the library-style cataloging of sound recordings, and implicitly with <u>AACR</u>, has been expressed in the literature and at several of the ARSC meetings. Guides to the cataloging of archival collect-ions, such as Daniel Allen's directions for cataloging 78rpm recordings of jazz,[2] differ in several fundemental ways from the <u>AACR</u> style. Furthermore, the best current practices of discographers (or, if you prefer, of audi-ographers) often have only a slight connection with <u>AACR</u>. It is important that we understand why these differences exist and find a way to reconcile them. A second edition of <u>AACR</u> is now being prepared, and is scheduled for publication in 1977. For this reason, it is an appro-priate time for ARSC membership to formally consider <u>AACR</u> in some detail and for the editors of the new edition to make an effort to understand the interests and needs of sound recording specialists and collectors. The purpose of the present paper is to explain the general

function and structure of AACR and account for some of
its shortcomings and inconsistencies. I will also suggest
some steps that can be taken in order to provide catalog-
ing codes and discographic standards which will serve the
needs of both librarians and collectors.

At the start, I want to emphasize that this is in no
way an apologia for the library-style cataloging. As a
librarian, I find that the AACR has serious shortcomings
in providing systems of access to most types of recorded
music other than classical music. On the other hand, the
reader should keep in mind that AACR is one thing and its
application at the local level is another. Cataloging at
the local level could be improved considerably if librar-
ians would edit their catlaogs more carefully, learn some
of the fundamentals of discography, and make additions to
the data they acquire from centralized cataloging sources.

The code now in use was published in 1967. Since then,
it has been continually up-dated and revised as various
issues and problems have arisen. It is the most recent
in a long series of cataloging codes that go back to the
early nineteenth century. It achieves its authority to-
day by virtue of the fact that it was prepared under the
auspices of and endorsed by several professional library
associations. It is, of course, not legally binding--
no library has to accept the code if it does not want
to. But in fact, it is so monumentally important in
national bibliographic control that few libraries can
ignore it.

The responsibility for drafting the code was assumed
by four organizations: the American Library Association,
the Library of Congress, the British Library Association,
and the Canadian Library Association. Any changes in the
code must be approved by a majority of the members of a
standing committee representing the four "authors" of
the code. The apparatus established for the preparation
of the second edition has been expanded to include repre-
sentation from the recently-founded British Library.

Specific problems in cataloging sound recordings are
dealt with in Chapter 14 of AACR. A revised version of

this chapter is scheduled for publication in 1975. This revision was necessary because of a previous revision of Chapter 12, "Motion Pictures and Filmstrips," which will be reissued as "Audiovisual Media and Special Instructional Media." It is not a major revision, for no fundamental principles were changed. Nor has this revision precluded the preparation of yet another revision for the new second edition of AACR.

   In the historical evolution of library cataloging codes, the most striking trend has been the gradual developement of systems designed first for local cataloging, then for national standards, and finally for international standards. AACR was very much influenced in its structure by an international conference on cataloging organized by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and held in Paris in 1961. This came about because of the realization that the international nature of research, scholarship, and information transfer created international bibliographic problems. The result of this conference was a document that has been crucial in the developement of modern cataloging codes, the Paris Principles.[3] The general principles enunciated in this document were, for the most part, incorporated into AACR. Certian principles which were not included at the time of publication, 1967, were subsequently introduced. Fifty-two countries were represented in the discussion which produced the Paris Principles. There is clearly a widespread interest in developing a truly international code. IFLA has had a further impact on international cataloging standards by authorizing the publication of a system known as ISBD (International Standard Bibliographic Description). This system was also introduced into AACR, resulting in a revised version of Chapter 6 in 1974.[4] An ISBD system has now been developed for serial publications (e.g., magazines and the like), and a new IFLA committee has been charged with developing an ISBD system for printed music and sound recordings. Here, it is only necessary to point out that the ISDB systems were designed to insure compatibility for the international exchange of national bibliographies issued on computer tapes.

   In all of these developements, information sources

other than books and serials have not figured prominently.
Sound recordings have as yet been treated rather casually,
if at all. Nevertheless, because the code deals with
certain general principles it has a profound impact on
the cataloging of sound recordings. Why this is the case
will become clear when we examin the structure of AACR.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK

It is not possible to consider only that section of
AACR which relates specifically to sound recordings
(i.e., Chapter 14). AACR is a set of standards for the
uniform cataloging of anything existing in printed,
written, or recorded form. This is to be taken quite
literally: anything ever printed, written, drawn, photo-
graphed, or recorded at any time, in any place, and in
any language must somehow find its method of cataloging
in AACR. The diversity of material with which AACR must
deal, however, is not what creates the problems. The
problems emerge from the fact that AACR is based on
general principles which provide uniform rules which are
applied to all types of materials. AACR is not a col-
lection of cataloging codes (i.e., a code for books, a
code for sound recordings, etc.), but a unified set of
principles calculated to integrate all materials into
one system. We have, then a rather formidable volume
written in a dry, legalistic language which runs to over
400 pages with a total of 272 rules. Moreover, many of
the rules contain long series of sub-rules, directions,
and exceptions. It is indeed awesome. Much of the
material in AACR is clearly of little interest to most
collectors of recorded sound, yet there is little in
this document which is not absolutely essential if it
is to serve the needs of the thousands of libraries which
use it.

What we are dealing with is the question of how sound
recordings are dealt with in a system established for
the developement of massive integrated files of millions
of items issued in both print and non-print media. One
of the assumptions underlying the code is that consistent
structural principles will indicate unequivocally where
any specific item is located in the file; if one knows
the system and knows what one wants, then its location

in the file can be predicted. It is also basic to some
of the diverse functions of <u>AACR</u> that it provide for an
open-ended system, for each year this system has to absorb
at least a half-million new entries.

   The above comments should indicate to ARSC members some
idea of the complex framework in which library-style cata-
loging must be considered. These seem to be the two most
fundamental functions of the code: (1) to provide central-
ized sources of bibliographic data which can be used to
construct catalogs of local library collections and (2) to
provide a standard for national bibliographic control and
exchange of bibliographic data at the international level.
The first point certainly seems to make sense. Why should
the thousands of libraries that purchase copies of the
same LP recording each pay to have them cataloged locally
when they can be cataloged better and faster at some cen-
tralized source (such as the Library of Congress)? As to
the second point, why should the Library of Congress cata-
log the endless flow of books it acquires from France,
Germany, Russia, and a hundred other foreign countries,
when these countries are themselves cataloging the same
books? Why not adopt an international standard so that
foreign cataloging can be accepted and integrated with
the files of U. S. libraries? This international
dimension obviously makes the work of code revision more
cumbersome, but it is generally agreed that a national
approach is too narrow and would be self-defeating in
the long run.

   These, then, are some of the factors which place
certain restraints on the amount of flexibility avail-
able to the editors of <u>AACR</u> and the libraries which use
it. The decision not to adopt <u>AACR</u> or to deviate from
it is to set the library on a course of action which will
probably increase the costs of cataloging and will limit
the extent to which the library can make use of central-
ized sources of bibliographic data. This is certainly
the case with books, and the major U. S. source of
centralized cataloging (all of which is based on the
standards of <u>AACR</u>) is the Library of Congress. LC does
catalog large quantities of non-book material, but its
coverage of this area has never been as thorough as it
has been with books. Because of the high costs of local

cataloging, LC is constantly under pressure from librarians
to increase its coverage of non-book materials; and in this
as in most everything else it does, LC has been responsive
to the needs of libraries.

BASIC STRUCTURE OF AACR

In cataloging books and other materials, there are
a series of decisions which must be made. AACR is designed
to answer questions that may be grouped into three broad
areas: (1) what shall the item (e.g., the book or record-
ing) be entered under in the file, (2) what form of head-
ing is needed for the proper filing of the item, and (3)
how shall the item be identified and described so that it
is distinguished from all other items in the file? Three-
fourths of the rules in AACR are devoted to these three
areas: entry, heading, and description. The other rules
are devoted to specific problems related to materials
other than books.

The answers to the first two questions (those of
entry and heading) are essentially the same regardless
of whether one is cataloging a book, a sound recording,
or anything else. Chapter 14, "Phonorecords," does not
deal substantively with entry and heading, but only with
description and minor points not covered in the other
chapters. The cataloger turns to Chapter 1 for entry
decisions and Chapter 2 for the structure of headings,
etc. Chapter 13, "Music," must also be used, since
some of the principles used in cataloging printed music
(e.g., uniform titles) must also be used in cataloging
recorded music.

ENTRY AND HEADING

A word needs to be said about the concepts of
entry and heading, since these two concepts have to
be very narrowly and previsely defined in a general
cataloging code such as AACR, whereas in discography
they lend themeselves to a large variety of different
approaches. The purpose and content of any specific
discography largely determines the system used to
organize the entries into a logical and consistent
sequence. Shall the entries be arranged chronologically

by dates of recording sessions, by matrix numbers, alpha-
betically by means of performers or composers? It all
depends: the discographer chooses whichever system is
appropriate to organize the body of material which he has
collected. Secondary access points can then be provided
by indexes (e.g., if the basic arrangement is by perfor-
mer, then title and composer indexes might be provided).
This freedom to vary the inner structure of the file is
simply not available to users of AACR. The code assumes
that the file is structured alphabetically with each
main entry filed under a heading which ia an "author"
name. If the "authorship" cannot be determined, if it
is diffuse, or if the cataloger is dealing with a col-
lection, the work is entered under its title. What this
mean is this: main entries in the AACR system can only
be the names of composers or the titles of works. Main
entry under performer is not permitted under any cir-
cumstance, and title entries are used only when, for
one reason or another, a composer entry is not possible.

   IN AACR parlance, the "author" is the "person or
corporate body chiefly responsible for the creation of
the intellectual or artistic content of a work."[5] By
and large, this system seems to work well for authors
of books, just as it works well when dealing with
recordings of classical music, in which case the "intel-
lectual responsibility" is assigned to the composer.
But in popular music, jazz, and related forms it simply
does not work. It does not work for the very practical
reason that, when dealing with LP recordings, it
frequently leads to title main entries which are
patently rediculous. Furthermore, 78rpm recordings of
popular music are entered under the names of composers
in practically all cases.

   Always, in the construction of cataloging codes,
there is this dichotomy between what appears to be
sound general or theoretical principles and the facts
of life. In the case of AACR, the definition of "author-
ship" assumes no difference between different types of
recorded music. To most collectors it seems to be self-
evident that an LP recording of popular music (say a
modern rock group) should be entered under the name
of the group; but AACR permits this only if the group

can be construed to be the "author" of the music recorded.
Jazz we would expect to find under the artist's name;
straight out pop music in the case of 78rpm recordings,
we would probably look for under the title of the song--
but, in any case, not under the composer. This problem
of entry, then, is a major difficulty in AACR. The
problem could be solved within the framework of AACR if
the concept of "authorship" were redefined so as to take
into account the unique type of "intellectual responsi-
bility" which is found in recorded performances of jazz
and popular music. Nothing even remotely comparable to
this is found in print media.

DESCRIPTION

Collectors do not need to be reminded by me that
most library-style cataloging does not ordinarily include
information on matrix numbers, takes, and reissues or
complete details about performers. Also, librarians
place little importance on the date of the recording
session; but, following the practice developed in book
cataloging, use the date of issue as an element of the
description.

I have no doubt that there are other details of
AACR that strike collectors as inadequate or unusual at
best. But the above should be enough to indicate the
source of the problems. The question, then, is: What can
be done about it?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Work on the revision of AACR is moving ahead rapidly,
and I am not optimistic that basic changes in the treat-
ment of sound recordings will be incorporated into the
second edition scheduled for publication in 1977. The
interests of librarians, principally school librarians,
who have developed general codes for cataloging non-book
media will have some impact on the rules for cataloging
sound recordings. But this will be largely the by-product
of changes in rules for films, filmstrips, transparencies,
multi-media kits, and the other parapheralia of educational
technology.

The 1977 edition of AACR will not be the last edition, though it may be the last to be identified as "Anglo-American." More than likely it will be replaced by a code with a much broader international base. If ARSC does indeed want to have some influence on how librarians catalog sound recordings, it will have to take some sort of formal action. The following are some suggestions:

Discographies and catalogs. Because of the different functions of discographies and catalogs, I doubt that one single code can serve as a standard for both. Discographies report the results of research, they are closed systems, and problems of entry and heading are quite different from those that must be dealt with in library cataloging codes. Library catalogs are guides to specific collections and their primary purpose is to serve the library user in finding specific books and recordings. I do not think it would be difficult for the ARSC membership to draw up and formally endorse standards for research discographies. But it will be much more difficult to define cataloging standards we can realistically hope for in public institutional collections. Some collectors will expect to find in a library catalog the same sort of detail they would expect to find in a good discography. Is this realistic? I do no know. The problem is not a new one, for librarians themselves have variously argued that the catalog is merely a finding list on the one hand and a reference-research tool on the other. In any case, ARSC should take some formal stand on the issue.

International discography. The fact that AACR is designed to serve both for the developement of local library catalogs and as a standard for the international transfer of bibliographic data in national discographies has to be taken into account. This dual function is not likely to be changed in future editions of AACR or whatever replaces it in years to come.

The question is whether or not it is even possible to have a cataloging code for sound recordings which can serve both these functions. In dealing with books, the system now seems to work quite successfully, for librarians in the Univted States can usually accept cataloging from

British, Canadian, and Australian national bibliographies
with only minor changes, and even use much cataloging
from national bibliographies from East Germany, France,
and other European countries. To begin to find out what
problems would emerge in structuring a system of inter-
national discography, ARSC should examine the current
treatment of sound recordings in all national bibliogra-
phic reporting systems. This will not be as formidable
as one would think because many countries do not even
include sound recordings in their national bibliographic
systems.

     In any case, the first steps toward international
discographic standards were taken by IFLA when it estab-
lished a committee to design a format for a system of
International Standard Bibliographic Description for
sound recordings. The ISBD systems do not deal with
entry or heading problems, but only with the contents of
the single entry and its structure: the choice of de-
scriptive bibliographic elements, their identification,
and their order in the entry.

     Recorded "incunabula." The 1967 edition of AACR
included a chapter for the cataloging of books published
before 1501, for librarians have always found that these
books create special problems. This chapter will be
retained in the second edition of AACR, but will be for
"early books," rahter than only incunabula. AnISBD
system is also being prepared for incunabula. If early
books present special problems requiring special methods
of cataloging that can be codified in AACR, I see no
reason why early soudn recordings cannot also be given
a special chapter in the next edition of AACR. In fact,
I believe that this is the only way that ARSC can get into
the code the sort of cataloging it wants to find in
archival collections.

     The basic chapter on sound recordings, Chapter 14,
can be structured to deal with all types of current disc
and tape formats and can be thought of as a code largely
for current materials in more-or-less general library.
A new chapter on early recordings could be the one
where we would get a type of research cataloging very
similar to a research discography. I would suggest that

this chapter deal with all pre-LP formats. If such a
chapter is to be written it should be a joint project
involving ARSC, the International Association of Sound
Archives, and possibly the Music Library Association
and the International Association of Music Libraries.
Such a chapter is completely in line with the stated
aims of AACR, which was drawn up "to respond to the
needs of general research libraries."[6] It may be easier
to get a new chapter such as this into the next edition
of the code than it would be to make extensive revisions
of Chapter 14.

    Chapter 14 of AACR. Keeping in mind the special
problems of entry and heading which are implicit in the
function of AACR and the assumptions on which it is
based, it should still be possible to produce a new
Chapter 14 which is more acceptable to serious collectors
of sound recordings. Clearly, there would have to be
compromises. In any case, it goes without saying that
ARSC should find a way of evaluating AACR within the
framework of its diverse national and international
functions. From this, we can identify those specific
aspects of the treatment of sound recordings which are
inadequate.

    An ARSC Code. Another way for ARSC to get more
involved in the developemnt of library cataloging codes
would be the preparation of an ARSC Cataloging Code for
sound recordings. I see this as a preliminary version of
a code, a working paper for negotiation and discussion.
In preparing such a code, ARSC could set aside the
massive problems that are imposed on AACR because of
its vast scope and deal specifically with the most
logical and best type of cataloging for current sound
recordings. Certain parts of AACR could be accepted
(e.g., the chapters on headings, uniform titles, and
music), but the central issues of entry for jazz and
popular music could be dealt with, as could the area of
description. Although such a preliminary code would
probably best serve as a means of influencing future
editions of AACR, it is not beyond the realm of pos-
sibility that it would influence the developement of
general non-book media codes and might even be adopted
by some public and academic libraries which still do

enough original cataloging to justify their breaking
away from the AACR system of entries.

   CONCLUSION

   Most of the basic services performed by libraries
require systems of bibliographic organization. Without
these systems, few libraries could operate effeciently
enough to justify their continued public support. Thus,
we can be sure that for a long time to come cataloging
will be a central activity of the library profession.
As in the past, cataloging policies and practices will
changes as librarians try to adapt to new technologies,
new services, and new groups of users. ARSC can have an
influence on these changes if it will formally involve
itself in the work of preparing cataloging codes. It
is my impression taht the various national library
committees and editors involved in revising and up-dating
AACR want to produce the best possible general code
within the framework of the functions of the AACR. I
do not believe that the interest of collectors and
students of recorded sound and the interests of librarians
are so different that some workable solution is not
possible.

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