**Creating Metadata for Rare and Archival Materials: Standards and Practices**

**MLA Annual Meeting 2016, Cincinnati, OH**

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*Session presenters: Nancy Lorimer, Stanford University; Elizabeth Surles, Rutgers University; Maristella Feustle, University of North Texas; Elizabeth Hobart, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

In this session, descriptive standards were introduced and discussed, including Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Music) (DCRM(M)); Describing Archives: a Content Standard (DACS), with its use in Encoded Archival Description (EAD); and finding aids. Various cataloging options were demonstrated, along with suggestions for choosing the best descriptive formula for specific cataloging needs.

The slides from this session are available to download from the Music Library Association website, under “Annual Conference Materials” (http://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/?AnnualConferMaterial)

Nancy Lorimer (Head, Metadata Dept., Stanford University), traced the history of DCRM. AACR2 chapter two and ISBD(A) (“A” for Antiquarian), led to the publication of Bibliographic Description of Rare Books in 1981. This was followed by Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books (1991), and eventually led to Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Books) in 2007.

DCRM appears in six forms: for Books, Serials, Graphic materials, Cartographic materials, Manuscripts and Music. Procedures for describing notated music are applied to any resource that is rare in the cataloging agency’s estimation, and which need additional description for various reasons. These reasons could include the need to identify editions or impressions, for example, or the added language necessary to describe artifacts. The procedures in DCRM(M) allow for lengthier production or publication statements and permit catalogers to transpose the order of bibliographic elements for clarity.

Rare music is defined as music that is being cataloged according to DCRM(M). Although descended from AACR2, DCRM(M) is compatible with RDA, incorporating instructions in the PCC Bibliographic Standard Record (BSR) instructions for rare materials. Bibliographic records cataloged with AACR2 will contain field 040 $e dcrmm; those cataloged under RDA will contain a second $e rda.

Lorimer pointed out that DCRM2 is on its way and will likely be linked to the rules in the RDA Toolkit, in the way that MLA Best Practices are now.

Elizabeth Surles (Archivist for the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University), gave a crash course in DACS and its use in describing archival collections. Archival description may be more meaningful than bibliographic description when the desire is to focus on items that are unique, have lasting value, or need to be described in the context of a collection.

Surles pointed out that DACS, while providing the means to describe archival materials, includes instructions for the description of the creator(s) of archives as well, organized in Part II of the rules.

DACS can trace its background to AACR, when in 1967 rules for description addressed collections. The Society of American Archivists adopted DACS in 2004; another edition and revisions have since been released. Surles pointed out that DACS is “the de facto standards manual for describing archival collections in the United States.”

DACS is governed by eight Guiding Principles, ranging from the unique qualities of the collection and “respect des fonds” (provenance and original order), to hierarchical arrangement, levels of detail and descriptions of creators.

Descriptive elements under DACS are divided into the following sections: Identity; Content and structure; Conditions of access and use; Acquisition and appraisal; Related materials; and Notes and description control. As Surles said, “DACS is not output specific and provides guidelines and requirements for all levels of archival description, from the broadest to the most granular.” She said “DACS accommodates the uniqueness of archival holdings with an emphasis on the context and provenance of the materials being described.”

Maristella Feustle (Music Special Collections Librarian, University of North Texas), explained that EAD is the machine-readable framework for archival description. Originally a project at UC Berkeley in 1993, it is written in XML and resembles the conventional cataloging of MARC, but is arranged hierarchically to better serve archival needs. It is the companion to Encoded Archival Context (EAC), which is Part II of DACS.

To illustrate how EAD might be useful in organizing archival collections, Feustle contrasted general library collections with archival materials: the library can be thought of as one big collection organized hierarchically; while an archive is a collection of collections, each one organized into its own hierarchy. EAD addresses the DACS guiding principles: for example, to provide flexibility in description and arrangement, and to meet the need to describe the creators of collections.

EAD is made up of 146 elements. A document consists of three areas: the header, with information about the document; the front matter, with information about the collection; and the description, with actual contents of the collection.

Documents can be hand coded, but this may not be necessary. Institutional templates exist, as well as Library of Congress encoded examples. EAD may be exported from a variety of sources as well, such as Archon or Archivists’ Toolkit, among others.

Elizabeth Hobart (Special Collections and Humanities Cataloger, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), discussed cataloging choices for collections, pointing out that although DRCM(M), DACS and EAD had been discussed as popular standards for describing archival materials, it is possible to catalog special collections using more general rules such as RDA. Each standard has pros and cons, and so it’s important to understand the choices in order to select the right one for the job.

Items whose value lies in the content may be best described with general cataloging rules such as RDA or AACR2. When the value is artefactual, DCRM(M) is likely a better choice.

Collections may be approached in terms of the total, or from the perspective of individual items. Hobart said “archival description is the best choice for describing a collection as an aggregate. In cases where you need to differentiate between individual items, bibliographic cataloging is the best option.”

The nature of the collection will of course influence the decision of how to treat it. There are other concerns, for which it is wise to consult with colleagues: First, cataloging staff will want to consider the amount of staff time available to commit to the labor of processing and cataloging. Collection development or curatorial personnel will know whether additional information or access is to be included in the cataloging, and they will also know of any commitments made to the donor regarding cataloging, deadlines, housing, etc. Public services staff will have a good idea of how patrons use the catalog for special collections or finding aids, which may assist in informing the desired level of discoverability.

As Hobart stated: “There is no single right answer in selecting descriptive standards. In consultation with your colleagues, consider what will be best for your materials and for your patrons.”