Crystal Mills (Mailbox 209)
LIS 9200: Prof. Grant Campbell
April 14th, 2010

Cataloguing Realia with AACR2 Chapter 10 and CCO

Introduction: 3D Holdings in Libraries and Museums

Chapter 10 of AACR2, Three-Dimensional Artefacts and Realia, arguably spans the most diverse set of materials with a minimalist set of rules. Items catalogued under this category "are 'three-dimensional' in the sense that all three dimensions are needed to convey the artistic or intellectual message of the medium" (Frost, 1989, p. 212), and among public, special, and academic libraries might include such miscellanea as "craft equipment, tools and household items, costumes, natural history collections, […] live animals," (Frost, 1989, p. 212) "globes, furniture, puppets, math and musical instruments, and college archival memorabilia such as keys, eyeglasses, pens and inkwells, etc." (Bierbaum, 1990a, p. 8). Though libraries have always held objects in some capacity, it was not until "the development of AACR2 in 1978" (Olson, 2001, p. 140) that a standard for including this media in the public catalogue was established, "making library object collections accessible to patrons" (Bierbaum 1990b, p. 291). This late inclusion was due in part to the Library of Congress not collecting or cataloguing 3D items, and additionally because there was minimal demand from patrons and little interest from museums in participating in national record sharing (Bierbaum, 1990b, p. 291).

A survey of academic library holdings by Bierbaum (1990a) demonstrated that the majority do collect realia, with 61% of respondents cataloguing 3D items, and 77% of those doing so with AACR2 (p. 8). Bierbaum predicts accelerated awareness and emphasis on 3D holdings, particularly in school and public libraries, as we cater to

different learning styles and cognitive models: “As more is discovered about brain function and learning modes, the value of multiple approaches to subject matter becomes increasingly apparent” (Bierbaum, 1990a, p. 7). However, with such diversity in 3D objects and potential uses, the level of information encoded in the record may not meet the needs of all users: “Documentation of objects tends to fall between the cracks. […] Even when records exist, they may omit important information, because they were constructed according to guidelines designed for describing information objects” (O’Keefe, 2007, p. 86). Though AACR2 purports impartiality toward mediums, many cataloguers of non-book formats note a bias toward traditional publications, and while the rules of Chapter 10 may be satisfactory for making record of items such as children’s toys or laptops for loan, a meaningful description of museum or art objects that facilitates finding and identification within a research context is more complex.

Notably, museums as the primary collectors of art and realia infrequently employ AACR2 and, unlike libraries with their “long history of uniformity”, instead have records which are “largely local and idiosyncratic” (Bierbaum, 1990b, p. 291). Institutional policy for museum cataloguing is acceptable because with unique or limited-production artefacts, record-sharing and copy-cataloguing becomes irrelevant, and emphasis can be placed on other valuable criteria such as materials, provenance, other documentation, or “such collection management tasks as maintaining donor files, tracking exhibit locations, and documenting valuation, appraisal, and insurance” (Bierbaum, 1990b, p. 296). With the formal release of the Cataloguing Cultural Objects (CCO) standard in 2001 by the Visual Resources Association, an alternative or complement to AACR2 is available for libraries and museums seeking greater depth in cataloguing rules. By examining select

specific rules within Chapter 10 and contrasting them with those of CCO, this essay will discuss the challenges in cataloguing 3D resources and the degree to which there can be successful resolution.

Cataloguing Cultural Objects

The CCO standard was developed for "communities engaged in describing and documenting works of art, cultural artefacts and their visual surrogates" (Lanzi, 2004, p. 26), from prints and photographs to sculpture and architecture, in order to provide adopters with a manual specific to their needs in descriptive cataloguing, subject analysis and "what librarians refer to as holdings data" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 86). Users note that while AACR2 has been infrequently used, the rules "fall short of meeting the specific and idiosyncratic need for describing works of art, architecture, cultural objects and images" (Lanzi, 2004, p. 30). Thus, while CCO is a distinct standard that "does not seek to conform" to AACR2, CCO can be adapted to fill gaps and "expand upon rules in AACR2 that are just too brief or insufficient to be very helpful" "without jeopardizing adherence to AACR2" (Lanzi, 2004, p. 30).

Chief Source of Information

In preparing a bibliographic record, the chief source of information for artefacts is the item itself including "permanently affixed labels", and where the item is unrevealing, the cataloguer is to prefer "any accompanying textual material and container issued by the publisher or manufacturer of the item" (10.0B1). For multipart items, information on "container that is the unifying element" (10.0H1) is preferred. While these rules are unproblematic for print sources, and less challenging for items which have been published in some sense or have accompanying documentation, such as board games or

microscope slides, the vast majority of art objects and realia do not have a chief source of information. The direction to supply or create critical information such as title proper can be difficult where the object defies traditional means of self-description such as title page.

Title

Chapter 10 instructs the librarian to transcribe the title according to the general rules, and where the item lacks a chief source of information, a title is to be supplied "from the rest of the item, or a reference source, or elsewhere" (1.1B7), and failing that, a "a brief descriptive title" (1.1B7) is to be provided. As 3D objects more commonly lack proper titles than bear them, realia cataloguers will spend the bulk of their time navigating the vague direction toward reference sources, or "elsewhere". Here, CCO is able to supplement the general rules by providing guidance toward "12 authoritative sources for titles beginning with catalogues issued by the museum or other repository in possession of the work" (Lanzi, 2004, p. 31). This list of preferred references should minimize decision-making where variations of the title appear, and expand on the concept of authority in naming: "Titles for works are typically assigned by artists, owning institutions, collectors, or scholars" (1.1.1). Variant titles in AACR2 are provided in the record where found on the item itself, but otherwise linked through authority files. "CCO recommends recording former titles and title variants" on the bibliographic record, since "variant titles are the rule rather than the exception for objects" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 89) and may include "owners' titles, creators' titles, inscribed titles, descriptive titles, titles referring to the work type, titles referring to the owner, location or history of the work, names of buildings, numbered titles, multiple titles and collective titles" (Lanzi, 2004, p. 31). Further, CCO offers a large number of examples spanning multiple object types for

use in creating a title where none exists, as well as the advice regarding subject titles – "descriptive phrases that refer to the iconographical subject or theme of an art work" (Harpring, 2004, p. 38) – to be "broad and accurate rather than specific and incorrect" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 89). A significant point of difference between CCO and AACR2 is their position on inscriptions. Cataloguers under the latter may adopt an inscription on an object as a title simply because it exists on the chief source of information; however, "in many cases, as in prints or other visual works, is simply an inscription that was never intended as the title of the work" (Harpring, 2007, p. 38). CCO advises cataloguers "distinguish between an inscribed title and an inscription that is not intended to be a title", and does not have a strict "title from item rule" (Harpring, 2004, p. 38). Though this demands a higher level of expertise from the cataloguer in employing "a certain amount of scepticism" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 88), the record ultimately will better represent the work as it represents itself. Finally, while AACR2 requires libraries place titles in square brackets derived from a source other than the chief source of information, the upcoming RDA standard "decrees that for unpublished material, titles may be supplied from the best source, not necessarily the item itself, and that the brackets are not needed when cataloguing non-published items", ultimately bringing "the two cataloguing traditions a little closer" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 89).

General Material Designation

Various authors claim the general material designation (GMD) to be "the potentially most useful feature of MARC" (Bierbaum, 1990b, p. 295) for cataloguing 3D objects, as it allows a concise description of the type of object placed prominently following the title and typically displayed in results lists for users. Though it is

convention for libraries to include a GMD for non-book items, the list of permissible terms for 3D, "art original, art reproduction, diorama, game, microscope slide, model, realia, toy" (1.1C1), is woefully short and often unclear to users: "Unfortunately, 'manuscript' is the only term that object cataloguers would be likely to select from the list authorized for the GMD field. The other terms on the list that might be relevant are too broad ('art original,' 'picture') or too obscure ('realia' conveys nothing to non-librarians)" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 88). The collections of AACR2 libraries are clear when one observes the distinction made between "toy" and "game" or "model" and "diorama" while noting the absence of museum pieces such as "sculpture", "painting", or "architecture". Commonly, libraries use "realia" for 3D items, the broadest applicable heading, similar to the British GMD choice "object". Paralleled by the Work Type in CCO, "the Work Type is the single most important piece of information for an object" and it "establishes the logical focus of the catalogue record" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 87). The Work Type of GMD can alternately be presented in the MARC 655 field (Index Term – Genre/Form), although when collocated, "it mixes these with terms for non-physical genres, e.g. 'Sermons,' 'Sales catalogues,' 'Satires'" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 88). Similarly, the specific material designation (SMD), MARC field 300 $a provides flexibility for describing the number of units, but "mixes pagination and volume counts, which refer to extent, with terms for Work Type" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 88) while also concealing the information within the body of the record itself, rather than in a major display field. As with title, RDA brings significant changes to the GMD, eliminating the field in favour of MARC 336, 337, and 338, which will provide improved description of content, media and carrier. As implemented under AACR2, the GMD for diverse object collections holds

much unrealized potential, and the local policy to adopt CCO rules in choosing "the most specific, appropriate term" (O'Keefe, 2007, p. 87) meaningful to users, perhaps combined with a searchable MARC field 245 $h in the OPAC, would improve visibility of realia in the library.

Conclusion

> "Realia! How do you catalogue a swarm of bees, an ants' nest, or an educational kit with 500 golf tees, 20 kilograms of putty and assorted lengths of dowel?" (as cited in Bierbaum, 1990a, p. 8)

Cataloguing an infinitely diverse set of materials for library discovery is challenging in all respects, and developing a set of rules which suitably accommodate all circumstances is idealistic. That said, the rules provided in Chapter 10 of AACR2 are unnecessarily brief, often referring to the general rules of Chapter 1, and conceiving of library realia as traditional materials with known publishers, distributors, dates, titles, and a chief source of information, and falling within a restrictive subset of object types. Implementation of AACR2 creates a functional record which can be used for holdings and circulation, but any richer information such as provenance, additional measurements or materials, specialized dates, or even an observed physical description is relegated to uncontrolled notes. Where AACR2 is sparse or vague, CCO provides enhanced detail for libraries seeking to provide access to materials through records capable of facilitating research by users. While the subject expertise necessitated by CCO is much higher, the final result is a more complete surrogate. In both cases, record finding hinges on insightful development of the OPAC interface, and allowance of access to description in the record not typically searchable. Finally, in cataloguing 3D objects, *a picture is worth a thousand words*, and wherever possible, the record be related to image records under

CCO or link “finding aids and scanned images directly to the bibliographic records” (Crosby, 2001, p. 173) under AACR2.

References

Bierbaum, E.G. (1990a). Beyond print: object collections in academic libraries. *Collection Building, 10*(1-2), 7-11.

Bierbaum, E.G. (1990b). MARC in museums: applicability of the revised Visual Materials format. *Information Technology and Libraries, 9*(4), 291-299.

Crosby, E. (2001). Technical Services in Twenty-First Century Special Collections. *Cataloguing & Classification Quarterly, 30*(2), 167-176.

Frost, C.O. (1989). *Media access and organization : a cataloging and reference sources guide for nonbook materials*. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Harpring, P. (2007). CCO overview and description. *Visual Resources Association Bulletin, 34*(1), 34-44.

Lanzi, E. (2004). Cataloguing Cultural Objects: new guidelines for descriptive cataloguing. *Art Libraries Journal, 29*(4), 26-32.

O'Keefe, E. (2007). The best of both worlds: using CCO for object cataloguing in libraries and special collections. *Visual Resources Association Bulletin, 34*(1), 86-96.

Olson, N.B. (2002). Cataloging Three-Dimensional Artefacts and Realia. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly, 31*(3), 139-150.

Visual Resources Association. (2006). *Cataloguing Cultural Objects*. Retrieved from http://www.vrafoundation.org/ccoweb/index.htm