



## THROWING LIGHT ON SERIALS STUFF: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BIBLIOGRAPHIC STANDARDS FOR SERIALS

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*Bibliographic standards for describing and accessing serials are changing to embrace new methods and forms of publications, often electronic resource. We are now harmonising the main bibliographic standards for serials, which have traditionally been rather divergent in their concepts and principles, to share principles and concepts. This can lead to more effective deriving and exchanging of records, enhanced bibliographic quality and control, and reductions in costs throughout the bibliographic continuum.*

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### Introduction

I consider here a topic which might at first glance seem rather arcane and technical, something that might be thought suitable only for technical processors or cataloguers, but I hope to persuade readers that it is important and significant for all those who are concerned with serials. The idea of this paper is to summarise the various changes in bibliographic standards for serials which are about to occur with the publication of revised editions of those standards. This follows a briefing session given at the UK Serials Group Conference earlier this year,<sup>1</sup> and a workshop at IFLA in Glasgow during August 2002.<sup>2</sup>

After this bold announcement you might wonder what has been going on in the world of serials standards recently. In many ways they have been attempting to keep up with the growing complications of proliferating serials media and formats. Some years ago, my British Library colleague Jim Vickery wrote: *For complexity and instability, serials take the bibliographic biscuit.*<sup>3</sup> I think we all know this is still the case, if not more so. We were very aware of this in the IFLA Cataloguing and Serial Publications sections when the time came to review the *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials*, or *ISBD(S)*, second edition, to see what sort of changes might be needed in it. It was very much in our minds that a number of significant developments were taking place in the communities dealing with serials matters, and also that the bibliographic standards as they were at that time did not, and could not, deal adequately with the emerging electronic, digital and other items with which we are all becoming more familiar.

I should explain that three main standards largely determine the approach to the bibliographic control of serials, and are as follows:

- the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition (AACR2)
- the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials (ISBD(S))
- the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) Manual.

The organising bodies or constituencies of the standards are:

- AACR(2) – the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (JSC)  
*Chair, Ann Huthwaite, Australian Committee on Cataloguing*
- ISBD(S) – the ISBD(S) Working Group (later the ISBD(CR) Working Group)  
*Chair, Ingrid Parent, National Library of Canada*
- ISSN Manual – the ISSN Manual Working Group  
*Chair, Françoise Pelle, Director of the ISSN International Centre.*

I think it would be true to say that ISBD(S) is not very familiar as an actual working tool in the UK, but it does support and underlie the other two standards. Moreover, in some countries it is quite readily used as a combined cataloguing manual and formatting guide as an alternative to more formal cataloguing codes. Those not familiar with the standards may be surprised to know that up to this point, the principles and concepts, and the guidelines promoted in each standard, differed from each other considerably. Enormous difficulty was, and is, caused as a result, not only in deriving and exchanging bibliographic records for serials, but also in other areas such as bibliographic identification, research and reference. The scope for improvement in the situation was substantial.

### Changing ISBD(S)

Apart from the differences between the standards, why would we want to take another look at ISBD(S), and try to change some of the concepts traditionally associated with serials cataloguing up to this point? There were many reasons, but perhaps I could deal here with three of the major ones – scope, integrating resources and title changes. Then I will take a look at how we sought to resolve the differences between the standards themselves.

### Scope

It was becoming clear that the scope of the standards needed expanding. Description of e-media is an increasing activity. Are these serials? Some of them certainly seem “serial”. Moreover, libraries, companies and bibliographic agencies and co-operatives in the UK (including the British Library and our partners amongst the UK copyright libraries and in the higher education and public library sectors) are rapidly developing their contribution to the discovery of and access to electronic resources. The same activity is taking place in several other countries. In other words, we need to deal with a whole new universe of electronic media: e-things, or e-stuff, as Brian Green has called it.<sup>4</sup> Much of this “stuff” does look serial in nature – that is, it definitely has a dynamic, continuing and changing life following first publication or issue. The broadening of the scope of the standard is therefore desirable and will be of vital assistance in our various projects and programmes, as well as in describing, managing and providing access to our collections. It is part of redefining what we are doing for the emerging e-world.

Those of us concerned with bibliographic standards therefore have a responsibility to try and provide a coherent and logical framework within which to approach the serials *and continuing resources* which it is desirable to acquire, capture, or link to. These resources might include databases, web sites and other recent or new forms of digital media. So, here we have a major piece of the jigsaw to tell us why we need to expand the scope not only of ISBD(S) but also of the other bibliographic standards. In addition, we need to be able to catalogue, or in other words provide metadata, or resource descriptions, for all of the following:

- traditional journals, periodicals, magazines
- serials of all kinds (magazines, yearbooks, almanacs, directories)
- loose-leaf publications or services
- databases, web sites, new serials media of all kinds.

### Integrating resources

Surely we can improve our approach to integrating resources. These resources have been around for a long time but seem to have been

given a new impetus by the digital world. Traditional examples of an integrating resource would be a loose-leaf publication of some kind, often relating to legal or economic subjects and reporting over a period of time on, for example, developing case law, or economic progress and indicators, and so on. These publications, often in the form of binders with loose-leaf updates, are clearly added to or changed by the updates. New pages, for example, are integrated into the whole resource, changing and developing it. When we come to databases, web sites, and other electronic media, we can see at once that many of them are not only serial in nature, having a dynamic or continuing essence, but are also integrating – the updates change the whole content and basis of the resource.

Our feeling on the working group was that many of these resources are continuing in nature, but also that the titles of the resources (perhaps, I should add, if any) were often not at all stable. In extreme cases they could (somehow!) change with each issue. We wanted to suggest a framework which would make it more feasible to deal with such publications and their updates effectively. Accordingly it is proposed that *these updates do not need a new bibliographic record*. The treatment proposed has traditionally been called *latest entry*. This would mean that in the case of a title change, the title of the existing catalogue record would be amended to reflect the change in title, and the previous title would be reflected in another data field of the same cataloguing record. *There is no new record*. Overall the process described can be repeated several times in the lifetime of the resource and will be known as *integrating entry* when applied to integrating resources.

#### *Title changes*

I will give just one more major reason to change before looking at the harmonisation of the guidelines as a whole. It is not only in the field of integrating resources that we are looking to focus more on the nature of title changes and whether or not certain title changes should trigger the creation of a whole new bibliographic record. The working group also wanted to aim at increasing the number of title changes regarded as minor and which do not therefore add very much to our workloads or our costs, if this can be done, as we believe it can, without loss of descriptive quality or access.

The significance of *increasing the number of title changes regarded as minor* is that:

- it reduces the record creation effort
- the three serials constituencies mentioned are adopting the change with the same, or similar, guidelines, for the first time and therefore there will be general agreement on when a new record is needed
- this will lead to more effective deriving and exchanging of records, enhanced bibliographic quality and control, and reductions in costs.

#### **Retitling the ISBD(S) standard**

The reader might have noticed several uses of the word “resource” and the terms “continuing resource” and “bibliographic resource”. In the working group we found this language necessary in order to discuss new types of publication. *Serial*, on its own, was not enough. In other words, we were talking about bibliographic resources which were clearly dynamic and continuing in some senses, but which certainly no one up to that point would have thought of as serials – either in a conventional sense or in the new language of e-media. This meant that some arguments for a change in the name of the standard were clear. However, there was considerable discussion about the advisability of retitling the standard, bearing in mind the widespread acceptance of the original name, the fact that the term “serials” has always covered a multiplicity of publications and formats, and the reluctance to jump on the bandwagon which seems to say that everything related to the digital world should be reinvented or renamed. Yet the need to recognise such categories as integrating resources in the title of the standard in the end seemed the most important consideration. We also wanted to confirm the significant changes, and adaptation to new forms of publishing, which are taking place and provide further tangible evidence that ISBDs are responding.

These are some of the considerations which led us to the change in title from the *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials* to the *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials and other Continuing Resources*, or, from *ISBD(S)* to *ISBD(CR)*.

### Convergence and harmonisation

The journey of the working group from old title to new title, and from old text to new text, has been supported, encouraged and enlivened by many colleagues. The two other serials communities, or constituencies, mentioned above, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules community and the International Standard Serial Number community were also considering similar changes. An important part of the impetus to such changes were the ideas and concepts presented in papers and at meetings and conferences by Jean Hirons<sup>5</sup>, Regina Reynolds<sup>6</sup>, Judy Kuhagen<sup>7</sup> and Crystal Graham<sup>8</sup>. The paper on *Issues related to seriality*<sup>9</sup>, for example, became a key document in developing ideas.

We came to realise that there was an unmissable opportunity to try to converge these three standards and harmonise their provisions. Representatives of the three communities therefore met in November 2000 in Washington, DC, in order to harmonise ideas, concepts, and, if possible, actual text. The overall aims of harmonisation were almost completely achieved and the key definitions and parts of the texts in each standard were successfully discussed and agreed.

It is therefore our hope that when all three revised standards are published later this year, the substantial harmonisation proposed could lead to enhanced understanding and sharing of records across the bibliographic continuum, from publishers to web aggregators to libraries, and that we may get closer to the *nirvana* of:

- more *logic and economy* in serials cataloguing and description
- enhanced *bibliographic control* of serials in a more effective and efficient way

- more effective *deriving/exchange* of serial records
- getting closer to the *appropriate quality* of record, neither too brief nor too full
- *cost reduction* wherever possible.

### References

1. UK Serials Group Conference, April 2002, University of Warwick: Briefing Session No.19
2. The workshop was: *Seeing Serials in a New Light: from ISBD(S) to ISBD(CR)*: that is, from the *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials to the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Serials and other Continuing Resources*. This was a joint presentation of the Cataloguing Section and the Serial Publications section. See <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla68/prog02.htm#7>
3. CONSER: serials cataloguing American style, by Jim Vickery. *Catalogue & Index* (101-102), Autumn/Winter 1991, 4
4. <http://www.editeur.org/>
5. Jean Hirons, Acting CONSER Co-ordinator, Library of Congress, originated and put forward seriality proposals for consideration by JSC and others
6. Regina Reynolds, Head of the National Serials Data Program, the US ISSN Center at the Library of Congress, was instrumental with Jean in putting forward proposals and ideas for change
7. Judy Kuhagen, Cataloging Policy and Support Office, Library of Congress
8. Crystal Graham, Head, Digital Information and Serials Cataloging, University of California, San Diego
9. *Issues related to seriality*, by Jean Hirons and Crystal Graham, paper presented to the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR, Toronto