

Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

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TO: American Library Association, ALCTS/CCS,
Committee on Cataloging: Description and
Access
FROM: Glenn Patton, OCLC
SUBJECT: REUSE Project

In early October, several of my OCLC colleagues and I met with colleagues from the Neidersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen and Regional Library Network for Central and Northern Germany to inaugurate the REUSE Project, a project that will investigate ways of making it easier for German libraries to use bibliographic data created in the United States for shared cataloging and retrospective conversion. We were joined in this visit by Barbara Tillett, Chief of the Cataloging Policy and Support Office at the Library of Congress and by Monika Münnich of the Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, who currently chairs the German equivalent of the Joint Steering Committee.

It should be no surprise that German academic libraries buy large numbers of materials published abroad, with more than half of their yearly intake coming from Anglo-American publishers. Similar amounts of bibliographic records still await retrospective conversion into machine-readable form.

Bibliographic data in MARC format and based on the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules have been available to German libraries for some time. Even though some initial problems in converting records from USMARC and UK MARC to the German standard, MAB, have been successfully resolved, usage of Anglo-American data has remained very low. The primary barrier is now recognized to be basic differences between AACR2 and the German cataloging rules, *Regeln für die alphabetische Katalogisierung (RAK)*. These differences require considerable manual intervention and intellectual effort in order to fit data from the Library of Congress, the British National Bibliography and OCLC into existing German library catalogs.

Preliminary studies (based mostly on retrospective records) identified several broad categories of differences:

- German cataloging practice relies heavily on multi-level description techniques for multi-volume sets, items in series, "bound-withs", items with no collective

title, etc. While AACR2 allows for the multi-level technique, U.S. libraries have not used that practice since USMARC doesn't support it. German libraries depend this level of access since many of their collections are "closed stack".

- There are some significant differences in name heading practices, especially for corporate names, geographic names and uniform titles. These result, in part, from obvious linguistic differences. They also result from the fact that RAK includes filing rules within the cataloging rules and some aspects of heading formulation are geared to providing particular filing orders.
- Some aspects of main entry, especially for publications emanating from corporate bodies, are handled differently and, our German colleagues admitted, somewhat arbitrarily.
- Transliteration from non-Roman scripts is done differently. This, we all agreed, may be an "unsolvable" problem since neither cataloging tradition is likely to give up long standing transliteration tables and since machine manipulation is not possible without access to the original non-Roman characters.

When the project is formally initiated in January 1996, it will attempt to address two fundamental issues:

1. Systematic identification and analysis of the main differences in the representation of bibliographic objects according to AACR2 and RAK will be done by creating a large set of data, selected from the OCLC and GBV databases, consisting of pairs of records describing the same bibliographical entity. These data will then be systematically compared.
2. Serious attempts will be made to develop algorithmic methods for data conversion that would go beyond the structural conversions currently used. The aim would be a high degree of "RAK-conformance" by machine manipulation of AACR2-based data. It is also hoped that these methods can be "reversed" to provide "AACR2-conformant" data from RAK-based records. These algorithmic procedures will probably have to be combined with attempts to build multilingual authority files. Our German colleagues were very interested in recent developments in the USMARC Authorities Format that facilitate linking of headings for the same entity but established under different sets of cataloging rules.

The project steering committee (which includes Dr. Tillett and Frau Münnich) also recognizes that an outcome of this project could include suggestions for revisions to both AACR2 and RAK. As project activity continues, I will keep you informed of its progress.

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