

Open Rules for Cataloging

Faye Leibowitz

General Languages Catalog Librarian (ret.)

University of Pittsburgh Library System

email: faye.leibowitz@gmail.com

Denise Soufi

Metadata Librarian for Middle Eastern Languages and Special Collections

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Email: dsoufi@email.unc.edu

Amber Billey

Systems & Metadata Librarian

Bard College

E-mail: abilley@bard.edu

Sarah Theimer

Assistant Professor, Cataloging & Metadata Librarian

University of New Hampshire

Email: Sarah.Theimer@unh.edu

Abstract

The Open Rules for Cataloging (ORC) project is proposed to be a freely available alternative to Resource Description and Access (RDA) for those who desire a simpler, less abstract cataloging code. The premise of the ORC project is that it is possible to identify universal cataloging concepts in preexisting cataloging rule sets which can be used as the base of a modern cataloging code. The ORC Project has three goals in mind: to reduce needless expense, to promote inclusion, and to facilitate data interoperability. ORC complies with ethical principles and best practices. It will be compatible with a variety of metadata environments. This compatibility will enable data exchange and reuse as well as adaptation. The Open Rules for Cataloging have the potential to revolutionize cataloging practice by simplifying it and making it accessible to all.

Introduction

Cataloging rules should be “created by catalogers for catalogers who actually catalog library materials” (Open Cataloging Rules, n.d.). The Open Rules for Cataloging (ORC) project is proposed to be a freely available alternative to Resource Description and Access (RDA) (RDA Toolkit, 2022) for those who desire a simpler, less abstract cataloging code. It is being developed by a group of dedicated volunteers from the cataloging community. The premise of the ORC project is that it is possible to identify universal, time-honored cataloging concepts in preexisting cataloging rule sets which can be used as the base of a modern, ethical cataloging code. The Open Cataloging Rules will be built upon a strong, reliable, historical foundation to provide a helpful tool for the basic cataloging needs of the community.

The ORC project was formed and initiated as a freely available cataloging code alternative to RDA by Amber Billey of Bard College in 2019 under the name Open Cataloging Rules (OCR). Under Amber’s leadership from August of that year until March 2020, members of the Core Committee, a small group of volunteers willing to take on the work of the project formulated the vision, scope, principles, and element set. Due to the pandemic no work was done on the project until it was revived by Denise Soufi, Metadata Librarian for Middle Eastern Languages and Special Collections at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in December 2020. Faye Leibowitz, retired General Languages Catalog Librarian at the University of Pittsburgh Library System, volunteered to co-lead the project with Denise. In 2021, the Core Committee determined which sources it would use to develop the cataloging rules and began developing a workflow. A

GitHub-based publication platform was also decided on. In March 2022, the name was changed to Open Rules for Cataloging (ORC) to avoid confusion with the acronym “optical character recognition” (OCR).

ORC Project Goals

The ORC Project has three goals in mind: to reduce needless expense, to promote inclusion, and to facilitate data interoperability. ORC complies with ethical principles and best practices. It will be a cataloging code compatible with a variety of metadata environments. This compatibility will enable data exchange and reuse as well as adaptation.

A strong desire for open access runs deep in our profession. Several cataloging guidelines are freely available, such as International Bibliographic Description (ISBD) 2011 (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2011) (which is under copyright, but is available online as a PDF file), Program for Cooperative Cataloging policy statements (Accessing Current Library of Congress-Program for Cooperative Cataloging Policy Statements (LC-PCC PSs): Resource Description and Access Preparation (Acquisitions and Bibliographic Control, Library of Congress), 2019), Describing Archives: a Content Standard (DACS) (Society of American Archivists, 2021), and Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (DCRM) RDA Edition (Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (RDA Edition), 2022). For decades catalogers have relied on the freely available MARC format (Library of Congress Network Development and MARC Standards Office, 2021) as an international standard for structuring data, and the Library of Congress is continuing in this vein with its BIBFRAME project (BIBFRAME -

Bibliographic Framework Initiative (Library of Congress), 2021). In general the library community is moving away from closed standards to open and interoperable ones.

Yet the cost of cataloging instructions is growing increasingly expensive. Currently in 2022, AACR2 in 2002 with the 2005 update costs \$98.00 (Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition, 2002 Revision, 2005 Update (Kit) | ALA Store, n.d.), while an annual subscription to the RDA Toolkit costs anywhere from \$167 to \$197 per user. (Subscribe | RDA Toolkit, 2022) ORC is intended to become a completely free, open access set of cataloging rules.

An open access cataloging code encourages participation and promotes inclusion in a number of ways. First, it eliminates the paywall that can serve as a barrier for institutions lacking in funding, thereby promoting easy adoption of the rules. Second, it facilitates transparency. Third, it enables professional cooperation outside of legacy institutional power-structures. Lastly, open access rules help to facilitate data interoperability. Being freely accessible, they can easily be adopted by content providers thereby promoting better integration with the library catalog. And by creating rules that are less complicated and more streamlined and focused, our data can work better with different data services. ORC is intended to be useful to a wide audience, including library workers, but also vendors, metadata workers in private industry, or even, perhaps, individuals who want to catalog their private libraries.

ORC and the IFLA Statement of International Cataloging Principles

ORC generally adheres to the IFLA Statement of International Cataloging Principles (“IFLA Cataloguing Principles,” 2009). The first IFLA principle focuses on the convenience of the user. Data should be recorded in a way that is comprehensible to all types of users, from the general

public, to scholars, students, and librarians. ORC rules will be straightforward and conceptually transparent, while taking into consideration the needs of different types of users and libraries.

“Common usage” is the second IFLA principle. One of the challenges with RDA is the use of terminology that reflects neither common usage nor even the cataloging tradition. Traditional cataloging terminology is generally retained in ORC, particularly for those data elements that would be of importance to non-librarians.

The IFLA principle of “representation” has been modified in ORC. The importance of controlled forms of names is acknowledged and supported by ORC; as such the expectation is not to create new rules for authority work but rather endorse any current and future standards. The IFLA “accuracy” principle is of course of prime importance in connecting users to resources. ORC plans to rely on transcription to record data, unless a different representation would be more helpful to users.

The next two IFLA principles concern the necessity, sufficiency, and significance of data elements. ORC supports and includes data elements that facilitate access, contribute to the functioning of the catalog, and adequately describe and identify resources. Such elements are chosen on the basis of their relevance and for their ability to uniquely identify an entity.

The “economy” principle is one of the driving forces behind the development of ORC. The rules in the ORC code will be formulated to be practical and easy to use. To fulfill this principle, ORC will provide ample examples accompanied by MARC coding. ORC also respects and supports the IFLA principle of “consistency and standardization.” Current rules for authority work will be

supported. ORC will remain focused on bibliographic description and is drawing on the shared cataloging tradition to create its rules.

As for the “integration” principle, the focus of ORC is on bibliographic resources as commonly encountered in public and academic libraries. The project is beginning with cataloging rules for non-rare monographs and will develop rules for other formats if needed by the community.

There are currently no plans to develop rules for formats that already have freely available guidelines. For example, the DCRM suite is freely available for use in more complex cataloging.

There is also a considerable amount of free documentation available about serials cataloging from CONSER on the LC website (CONSER - Cooperative Online Serials Program of the PCC - Program for Cooperative Cataloging (Library of Congress), n.d.). OLAC has published free documentation related to cataloging audio-visual resources, three-dimensional objects, etc.

(OLAC Publications and Training Materials | Online Audiovisual Catalogers, Inc. | Minnesota State University, Mankato, n.d.). ORC is attempting to fill the gaps in freely available cataloging rules and will ensure consistency by adhering to the shared cataloging tradition in developing its rules.

One of the goals in creating an open access cataloging code is to support the IFLA principles of “interoperability” and “openness.” ORC supports the use of controlled vocabularies that can easily be translated in order to facilitate interoperability. The openness principle focuses on data access; ORC is extending this principle by making the scaffolding for that data open access.

ORC is fulfilling the “accessibility” principle by using the Cataloging Code of Ethics (Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee, 2021) in addition to the IFLA Code of Ethics (IFLA

Code of Ethics for Librarians and Other Information Workers (Full Version) – IFLA, 2012) to evaluate the accessibility of the ORC code. The last IFLA principle concerns the rationality of the rules in a cataloging code. IFLA principles will be followed in the ORC code as far as possible, but there are instances where there will be deviation from some of them in order to fulfill others of higher priority. Those infrequent deviations will be rational, not arbitrary.

Development of the Project

The basic elements of bibliographic description are included in ORC. Initially, these rules will not include a lot of interpretation. As time goes on, the hope is to incorporate examples and solicit input from the ORC user community. Figure 1. lists the proposed data elements of ORC.

Draft Outline of Elements

1. Title and Statement of responsibility
 - o Title proper
 - o Parallel title proper
 - o Other title information
 - o Variant title
 - o Later title proper
 - o Statement of responsibility relating to title proper
 - o Notes on title
 - o Source of title Proper
2. Edition
 - o Edition statement
 - o Statement of responsibility relating to edition
 - o Notes on the edition area
 - o Source of edition statement
3. Imprint
 - o Place of publication, production
 - o Name of publisher, producer
 - o Date of publication, production
 - o Notes on the imprint
 - o Changes to the imprint information
4. Material Description
 - o Extent
 - o Other physical details
 - o Illustrative content
 - o Dimensions
 - o Supplementary material
5. Content, Media and Carrier Types
 - o Content type
 - o Media type
 - o Carrier type
6. Series
 - o Title proper of series
 - o Parallel title of a series
 - o Other title information of series
 - o Statement of responsibility relating to series
 - o ISSN of series
 - o Numbering within series
 - o Notes on the series
7. Additional Notes
 - o Relationships with other resources
 - o Translations
 - o Reproductions
 - o Resources with different editions
 - o Resources with supplements

Figure 1. Data Elements

The creation of ORC rules and definitions involves comparing existing cataloging codes, both public domain and copyrighted, to identify common trends and concepts. Whenever possible, the

exact text of a cataloging rule or definition from a public domain source is used as the ORC rule. If no usable preexisting public domain rule can be found, a rule is created based on universal concepts expressed across resources.

Figure 2. displays a portion of a cataloging rule comparison spreadsheet used in the rule and definition creation process. This spreadsheet compares rules relating to the element “Series.” In this example, the text of a BIBFRAME definition was altered to serve as an ORC definition. Also, an LC rule was altered/adapted to create an ORC rule. The preferred preexisting cataloging code used in ORC rule creation is the 1949 Rules for Descriptive Cataloging in the Library of Congress. (Library of Congress Descriptive Cataloging Division, 1949). It is comprehensive and mirrors contemporary practice to a large degree. Library of Congress standards have a high degree of confidence in the cataloging world. This resource is in the public domain in the United States. The 1949 LC cataloging rules were one of the fundamental resources used in the development of the original AACR in 1967 (Gorman, 2014, p. 823). In this example from the “Series” element spreadsheet, the ORC rule for “Other title information of a series or multipart monographic resource” is extracted verbatim from the 1949 LC rules for the corresponding instructions for serials. The ORC definition of “Statement of responsibility relating to a series or multipart monographic resource” uses the modified BIBFRAME definition for a general statement of responsibility, but the word “resource” was replaced with the word “series” to make it specific to this element. BIBFRAME is a linked data system, so the general element “statement of responsibility” can be used in many contexts, such as by linking the element to series, edition, etc.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	No.	Subno.	ORC term	BIBFRAME term	BIBFRAME def	ORC definition	BIBFRAME definition	ORC rule	Rules for descriptive cataloging in the Library of Congress	MSRs	LCRs
4	6.3		Other title information of a series or multipart monographic resource	N/A	N/A		N/A	Subtitles are omitted unless necessary for identification or for clarification of the scope of the publication.	Subtitles are omitted unless necessary for identification or for clarification of the scope of the publication, p. 53 (instructions for serials)	N/A (but there are good examples of series statements – most cataloging codes include rules relating to the “series statement” which includes numbering, rather than just series title. ORC probably also needs guidelines for series statement.)	N/A
5	6.4		Statement of responsibility relating to a series or multipart monographic	Creative responsibility statement	N/A	Statement relating to any persons, families, or corporate bodies responsible for the creation of, or contributing to the content of a series; usually transcribed, (replaced word “resource” with word “series”. Otherwise, taken directly from BIBFRAME)	N/A (BIBFRAME definition is not limited to series)				
6	6.5		International standard number of a series or multipart monographic								

In the future, MARC examples, as well as examples in Dublin Core, MODS or other standards, may be included. Also, ORC may be expanded to include rules for cataloging non-book formats, if there is a demand for this within the cataloging community. The ability to order the rules by MARC field or other elements will possibly be built into the platform. The goal will be to provide flexibility of display and searching within the platform. An additional goal is to enable catalogers to submit examples and ask for clarification within the system.

Conclusion

The current standard cataloging code, RDA, is prohibitively expensive and excessively complex for many catalogers. Open Rules for Cataloging are being developed to meet the basic need for a simple, comprehensible and easy-to-use cataloging code. ORC is building on the foundation of over 100 years of cataloging documentation to identify major concepts that are common to earlier standards. Current philosophical and ethical standards are incorporated into ORC. The platform will maximize flexibility of display and search-ability. In the future, the desire is to develop an interactive system which will enable the cataloging community to supplement the

rules with examples encountered in everyday practice, as well as to discuss the examples and rules. The Open Rules for Cataloging have the potential to revolutionize cataloging practice by simplifying it and making it freely accessible to all.

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