

## **Lessons from Implementation of AACR1 and AACR2**

Presentation made to the Technical Services SIG of ALISE, January 15, 2010  
by Arlene G. Taylor

### **Implementation of AACR1**

I was in library school (Univ. of Ill. at Urbana/Champaign) for an MLS 1965-66. Kathryn Henderson was my cataloging professor. I contacted her to ask for her input for this presentation. She was a consultant (representing the American Theological Library Association) to the committee making the new rules (to be called *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*); so she had access to the drafts. She wrote: "I served for 4 years as a consultant and attended meetings, including finding on our chairs one day during one of the sessions that LC would institute something called superimposition. It was a bolt out of the blue and there was much discussion." She taught the new rules to our class, but what I remember learning is the Paris Principles.

I was a cataloger at the Library of Congress (LC) June 1966–Sept. 1967. The implementation of AACR1 occurred March 20, 1967, "60 days after the date of publication ... a period that will be sufficient for card subscribers to procure copies of the rules and for their catalogers as well as the catalogers at the Library of Congress to become fully acquainted with the provisions of the rules and their relation to existing catalog entries." (*Cataloging Service*, bulletin 79, Jan. 1967, p. 1). CSB 79 also announced the policy of superimposition, and CSB 80, April 1967, gave more detailed information about how LC "intends to apply the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* to new cataloging."

I don't remember having much training at LC in preparation for the change-over. We had a lecture one afternoon on the differences between ALA rules and AACR. It's possible that I was so low in the hierarchy that the idea was that my supervisor would revise all my work and teach me as we went along, although I do remember that about 10 months after I started at LC (June 1966), I was assigned as a reviser of new catalogers. That would have been around April 1967, and AACR was implemented March 20, 1967; so I was expected to know enough AACR to teach and revise someone else. Also, the rules for *description* in AACR had been essentially lifted from LC's *Rules for Descriptive Cataloging* and their revisions, which had been in use since 1949; so there was relatively little change there.

Because of superimposition, we were led to believe that most cataloging would be the same for a long time, and only as we needed to establish new headings would we need to learn the new rules for entry and heading form. The policy of superimposition did, in fact, mean that, very often, we simply used already-established heading forms. However, the result was a nightmare for users who could not understand, for example, why some universities were entered under place (e.g., "Illinois. University.") while others were entered under the word "University."

I taught cataloging at U of Illinois Library School from spring 1971 through summer 1972. I taught AACR, but told students about older rules. I always included a history lecture.

### **Implementation of ISBD**

Then came implementation of International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) in 1974. I was then head of copy cataloging at Iowa State University. I taught workshops on ISBD. I also taught at U of Illinois Library School in the summer of 1974. A better comparison to what is happening now might be when ISBD began to be used for AACR1 presentation (i.e., the separate publication of AACR1, Chapter 6, for monographs). At that time serials (and other formats) were to continue to be punctuated the old way, and monographs were to use the ISBD order of elements and ISBD punctuation. Libraries switched over at different rates. A number of heads of cataloging insisted that copy catalogers had to make corrections to old records using old rules for order and punctuation and make corrections to new records using ISBD. This was extremely difficult to teach. It was one thing for people who had been doing it the old way for years to remember which way was old and which was new. But for someone learning it all for the first time, it was virtually impossible to keep them straight in their minds. And, also, students were supposed to learn the old punctuation for anything other than monographs. I tried to teach both for a couple of years, but finally I just taught ISBD and hoped that the students who would have jobs that required old punctuation would be able to learn that on the job. I always told them, however, that there were lots of records already in catalogs that look different, and I gave them handouts showing old cataloging that had used rules from different time frames.

### **Implementation of AACR2**

AACR2 was published in 1978, but implementation was first postponed to 1980, then to 1981. My dissertation, based on research carried out in 1979 and 1980 was “A Five-Year Projection of the Impact of the Rules for Form of Heading in the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition*, upon Selected Academic Library Catalogs.”

This is a t-shirt that a friend had made for me – [show t-shirt] – it shows the struggle: “AACR II in 1980” with a slash through 80 which is replaced by 81, and on the back “no superimposition”

I was invited to speak at the 1980 annual meeting of ALA in New York. John Berry's editorial in *Library Journal*, vol. 105, no. 11 (June 1, 1980), p.1243, stated that the most important thing that should be accomplished at the summer 1980 ALA conference was to postpone [again] the implementation of AACR 2. I gave my report to a standing-room-only crowd, essentially showing that it would not be as big a problem as many people were saying, especially if libraries did not start new catalogs but just integrated the new cataloging into existing catalogs using the technique of interfiling and/or “see also” references.

The reports about my presentation published afterward in LJ and in *American Libraries* sounded as if the reporters had attended the presentations of two different speakers. The LJ report misrepresented what I said and gave several misstatements of fact. LJ did publish (4 months later) a letter of corrections from me and another one written by Michael Gorman and William Gray Potter. The last paragraph of my letter stated: “Lastly, the report implied that I ‘conceded’ that libraries should open catalogs in new formats because of AACR 2. I did not. There are many reasons for working toward machine-readable catalogs as quickly as possible, but AACR 2 itself is not a convincing reason. The furor over AACR 2 is a symptom of a deeper illness. Even without new rules, catalogs are in constant need of changes in headings because people and corporate bodies change. Yet the need for authority control was not recognized until we faced making a few more changes than usual because of a new set of cataloging rules that merely represent the next step in a continuum of progress toward better catalog access.” (LJ, Dec.1, 1980, p.2445) The last paragraph of Gorman and Potter’s letter stated: “We know that the flurry of a conference can lead to hasty summaries. We believe, however, that Arlene’s paper was inherently valuable and of interest to a great many people. It deserved to be summarized correctly even though it did not support LJ’s editorial view.” (LJ, Dec.1, 1980, p.2446)

My dissertation was published as a book (*AACR 2 Headings: A Five-Year Projection of Their Impact on Libraries*. Libraries Unlimited, 1982). A follow-up article (“Looking Back: Implementation of AACR 2,” co-authored with Barbara Paff, *Library Quarterly* vol. 56, no. 3, July 1986, p.272-285) used data collected in a library during the first 3 years of implementation to show that my projection had been right on.

I served as a committee member of CC:DA during the implementation of AACR2, which began Jan. 1, 1981. There was much more training than with AACR1, and I made several presentations at preconferences and workshops. Many people could not afford to travel to centralized workshops, however; so materials were sold to folks willing and/or able to pay.

I was also teaching (U of Chicago) during the AACR1 to AACR2 transition. This transition was different from now in that with AACR2, the presentation of data did not change for monographs (i.e., everyone was still going to use ISBD for the way description would look and almost everyone still had card catalogs; although many were printing cards from data entered into the MARC format). The content of the elements changed some, and the rules for constructing the forms of some names and titles changed a lot. So it was possible to keep teaching cataloging of monographs the same way and just explain the different content and name forms. Teaching of serials and A/V cataloging became easier, because all now used ISBD.

Again it was difficult to teach both old rules and new rules at the same time to students new to it all. It is different for someone ingrained in old rules – they can, for a time (although not more than a couple of years), remember what is new vs. what they’ve been doing for years.

### **Lessons that may be learned from previous implementations of new cataloging rules**

1. Do research – and if the research methodology is sound, believe the results!!! If someone reports the results of the research incorrectly, it can be refuted immediately on the Internet.
2. Teach students about the fact that there are differences in sets of rules, but do not try to teach them all the details. Even if students are convinced they will never catalog, anyone dealing with catalogs (reference librarians, acquisitions librarians, etc., as well as catalogers) will be dealing with records created over time using different rules.
3. Recognize that change is difficult. Kathryn Henderson wrote to me: “It was a valuable experience to have been present at the last four years of the code revision in the 1960s. I learned much about the politics of code revision. I can well remember revision members from large institutions like Yale standing up and saying ‘We will *not* change our catalogs to the new forms.’ Of course that was in the days of card catalogs, but I don't know if it is really any easier to change them today. Change always comes hard. From what I hear politics is still the driving force.”
4. Concentrate on *principles* for both old and new – don't expect people new to cataloging rules to remember which is which in the *details* of old rules vs. new rules
5. Current *catalogers* need to know what is going to be *different* in how they prepare a record and organize a catalog. Current *students*, on the other hand, need to know principles and what the general parts of a record are, along with how authority control pulls records together into a catalog.
6. Share teaching materials widely. Have workshops: library schools have the facilities to do this. Most schools now have the means to teach online, which would be a boon to folks who can't afford to travel to centralized workshop locations like ALA preconferences. Lots more than one afternoon of training is needed.