

Response to the ICP 2015 Draft

IFLA Cataloguing Section and IFLA Meetings of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code

From Karen Coyle

The 2015 draft of the International Cataloguing Principles (ICP) is a step forward in addressing how cataloging must be defined in relation to the current state of library catalog technology. Following on the 2009 draft, which introduced concepts developed in the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, this draft also includes sections on search and retrieval and additional access points. I wish to encourage the Working Group on ICP to take this draft even further and to correct some of the problems that are carried forward from the 2009 draft.

My comments can be summarized as:

- the *catalog* is a technology, and *cataloging* is therefore in a close relation to that technology
- some catalog principles are provided by the *catalog* technology but not *cataloging*
- authority control must be extended to *all* elements that have recognized value for retrieval

The catalog is a technology

It is of great importance that we recognize that the goals of cataloging cannot be separated from the technology that delivers the information in the catalog to the user of the catalog. In most cases, the ICP speak of cataloging without reference to the technology of the catalog. However, the catalog's technology is a necessary component for the achievement of the principles and cataloging data must surely be designed to facilitate the interaction that users have with the technology of the catalog.

Unlike card catalogs, in which the catalog entry was the only content of the catalog and alphabetical browsing was the only discovery method, systems today provide features that are not based on alphabetical browsing. These include keyword search across the entire catalog record, search limit facets such as date ranges and language, and links to external services such as book and album covers, tables of contents and reviews. It is expected that in a future environment that makes use of linked data there services based on data external to the catalog can be expanded. The services are not addressed as part of the standard catalog data, yet their

presence may depend on information provided in the catalog record, and they may be considered essential for the ability of the catalog to perform its functions.

It may be seen as a slippery slope, but the goals of the *catalog* must be addressed in the cataloging principles. It is not possible to separate the system functionality from the data that it has to work with. The two must be developed in tandem, with full knowledge of current technology capabilities and of the characteristics and expectations of the early 21st century catalog user.

Some principles address *catalog* functions, not *cataloging* functions

While the technology and the cataloging data must interact, it is also important to be clear the roles that the two sides of this coin play, and how they interact with each other. There are two areas of the draft that speak to the role of the technology beyond the content of the catalog entries. The first is the highly commendable recommendation in section 2.11 that the catalog should conform with the IFLA Statement on Open Access, and the second is in section 2.12 which says that the catalog must comply with international standards for accessibility. Both of these are extremely important principles for *catalogs*, but neither can be achieved through *cataloging*.

With these entries in the ICP 2015 the committee has already moved beyond the purview of cataloging and has addressed two areas that can only be principles of the technology of the catalog. This is evidence of the interdependence of the catalog data and the catalog system, and is proof that the features of the catalog system must be addressed to achieve the goals of the library catalog.

Authority control must be extended

The 2009 ICP were the first to include a list of data elements that are commonly used as secondary limits on, or as sort elements for, retrieved sets. These include date (of publication), language, place of publication, content form and media type. (cf. sections 71.2.1, 7.1.3.1 of the 2015 draft) This appears to be in response to developments in library systems that use similar data elements to allow users to narrow retrieved sets of catalog entries. This is called “faceting” and is also used extensively in non-library search systems such as product catalogs on the web.

The facets used in existing library systems are limited to data elements that have controlled values, such as personal names, dates, and languages. That these latter two have controlled values is an accident of the design of the common library data format, ISO 2709 (the standard for the MARC format). These values were not originally developed as search limitation facets; they were included in the record design long before that data was used for library systems. In the original design, these structured data elements served to facilitate re-use of the machine-readable data for the creation of computer-generated printed lists, primarily lists of new library acquisitions.

The list of possible secondary retrieval elements in the 2015 draft of the ICP includes elements whose values are not considered “authorized access points.” Some, such as the place of publication, are not currently controlled as to their content. I hope that it is obvious that in order to function as facets or to be reliable as elements of retrieval, values must be taken from controlled lists of terms or codes or identifiers, and must be in a standard format. Free text values cannot be successfully used for the purposes of faceting or performing limits on retrieved sets.

There are some standard formats that are available, such as the standard format for dates, ISO 8601. This requires that year dates be in the form YYYY, and that extended dates be YYYY-MM (year then month) or YYYY-MM-DD (year, month and day). A textual representation of dates within a string of data, such as “New York, MacMillan, c1960” is not appropriate for use as a facet. There is also a standard format for languages in ISO 639. This is already used in MARC records.

There are no international standards or controlled forms for place of publication, content form or media type at this time. Some library partners have agreed on such lists within their communities, but only those communities with an authoritative list of allowed values will be able to fulfill the principles listed in 7.1.3.1 of the 2015 document. Therefore the document should state that those data elements are only suitable for search and retrieval if governed by an authoritative controlled list of values. This is no different from the statements in the ICP regarding authority control of names, which must be controlled to provide catalog users with accurate results.