

# THE BIBLIOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION AND CHOICE OF ACCESS POINTS FOR SERIALS ACCORDING TO AACR2

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## ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the AACR 2 rules on serials. Serials have been chosen as a topic for discussion because they have presented, both in format and pattern of publication, peculiar problems for the Librarian in general and the Cataloguer in particular.

The paper examines the following areas of description — title and statement of responsibility, edition, publication, etc, physical description, series, notes, standard number and terms of availability. The problem of “unique titles” has been raised for discussion.

Finally, the paper seeks to provide an answer to questions like “when is a publication a serial and why are serials more often than not entered under titles”?

## INTRODUCTION

I want to assume that every practising librarian in Ghana has seen the AACR2. But perhaps not all librarians have had time and the patience to read it, let alone seriously try to put into practice its rules. The reason for this could be that the AACR2 is not in a ‘readable’ form. It is not something one can take and read like a novel when relaxing in his home, office or journey. The AACR2 is essentially a working bibliographic tool as well as a reference material. In such a form busy librarians, or librarians who have little to do with cataloguing may not be motivated to use it. The aim of this paper is therefore to reduce some aspects of the

AACR2 to an easy flowing “single thought” for librarians in general, and cataloguers in particular.

The aspect tackled by this paper is serials. The choice of serials is determined by the fact that, because of their complex nature, they are difficult to organise. Many cataloguers, both initiates and experienced, who are happy to catalogue monographs will like to have nothing to do with serials. The idea is to reduce that part of AACR2 which deals with serials to a “readable” form which, hopefully, will help in better understanding of how to organise serials. The first part of the paper will look at the portion on the bibliographic

description of serials. The portion on access points, choice of access point, etc., will be left for future discussions.

The controversy with serials starts with what a serial is. For the avoidance of doubt the term "serial" is used in this paper to mean:

"A publication in *any medium* issued in successive parts bearing numeral or chronological designation and intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include periodicals; newspapers; annuals; the journals, memoirs, proceedings, transactions, etc., of societies; and numbered monographic series" (AACR2: 1978).<sup>1</sup>

## THE DESCRIPTION

Like the monograph, the description of the serial is divided into the following areas:

- (i) Title and statement of responsibility
- (ii) Edition
- (iii) Publication, etc.
- (iv) Physical description
- (v) Series
- (vi) Notes
- (vii) Standard number and terms of availability.

## CHAPTERS RELEVANT TO SERIALS DESCRIPTION

The chapters on description of serials in AACR2 are chapter 1:

General Rules for Description; and chapter 12: Serials. It is quite possible, of course, for a serial to appear in formats other than printed text. Thus, though chapter 12 covers the description of serial publications of all kinds and in all media it does often refer the reader to chapters (in part 1) relevant to a particular format. Chapters in the second part of the book that are of most importance in serial description are chapter 21, covering choice of access points, chapter 23, which covers geographic names; chapter 24, which covers headings for corporate bodies; and chapter 25. 5B, which has been modified by Library of Congress to cater for unique or uniform titles of serials.

## SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Rule 12.0BI says the chief source of information for a printed serial is the title page . . . or the title page substitute of the *first* issue of the serial. Failing this, the chief source of information is the first issue that is *available*. Since many serials do not have a title page, the rule continues and specifies substitutes in the following order of preference: cover, caption, masthead, editorial page, colophon. The rule also prescribes sources of information for each area of the description. Information taken from outside the sources prescribed should be enclosed in square

brackets ([. . .]). The prescribed sources of information are as follows:

- (i) Title and statement of responsibility areas should be determined from the chief source of information.
- (ii) Edition areas should also be determined from the chief source of information, other preliminaries, colophon.
- (iii) Numeric and/or alphabetic, chronological, or other designation should be determined from the chief source of information, other preliminaries, colophon.
- (iv) Publication, distribution, etc. area should be taken from the chief source of information, other preliminaries, colophon.
- (v) Physical description should be determined from the serial itself.
- (vi) Series area could be determined from anywhere in the serial.
- (vii) Note area from any source.
- (viii) Standard number and terms of availability from any source.

### PUNCTUATION AND LEVEL OF DESCRIPTION

Areas in the description should be divided by the full stop (.), space ( ), dash (-), i.e., (-.); *Unless* paragraphing is used. In the case of levels of description the cataloguing

agency may choose the first, second, or third level depending on its need. *It is permissible to choose a different level for Serials Cataloguing from the level used for Cataloguing other formats.*

Choice of language and script of description, inaccuracies, and accents and other diacritical marks are dealt with for serials description, as prescribed in 1.0E through 1.0G. In other words there is nothing here that is unique to serials.

### TITLE AND STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY AREA

The title and statement of responsibility area, as with description of monographs, etc., is the first area in the description of serials. This includes the title proper (GMD), parallel titles, other title information. The title proper is recorded as for any other sort of work. With serials, however, this is more likely to be rather uninformative element, as for example, in the case of generic or non distinctive titles, i.e., "Bulletin" "Transactions" "Proceedings". Another oddity about the serial title is that it is sometimes difficult to tell if a corporate body's name or abbreviation is part of the title proper or not. For example, is it "Entomological society of Canada Bulletin" or is it simply "Bulletin"? In case of doubt the cataloguer should fall on

rule 12.1B2 which says that the name of a corporate body can be treated as part of the title "only if it is *consistently* so presented in various locations in the serial (cover, caption, masthead, editorial pages etc.) and/or, when cataloguing retrospectively, in indexes, abstracts, or other lists."

## SECTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS TO SERIALS

Serials that are separately published as *sections of*, or *supplements to*, another serial can also present a puzzle. Rule 12.1B3 says that if the title proper in the chief source of information consists of the title common to all sections or the title of the main serial, along either the section or supplement title, and the two are grammatically independent, the cataloguer must record the common title first, then the section or supplement title preceded by a full stop. If this happens then the order in which the title proper is presented in the chief source of information should be disregarded.

"Journal of the Historical Society of Ghana. Supplement".

"Current contents. Physical, chemical and earth sciences".

Rule 12.1B4 covers section or supplement titles preceded by a designation. The common title comes first, then the designation preceded by a comma (,) e.g.

"Journal of physics. Part A, mathematical and general".

Sometimes too, the title proper of a serial includes a date or numbering that varies from issue to issue. This should be omitted and replaced by a mark of omission, unless the omission occurs at the beginning of the title proper. Thus,

"*Twentieth* annual report of the Government Coastal Agency for the period 1st April, 1974 to 31st - March, 1975".

*becomes*

"Annual report of the Government Agency, for the period 1st April, 1974 to 31st March, 1975".

Note that the numbering "*Twentieth*" is omitted.

## PARALLEL TITLES

On the whole, parallel titles and other title information are dealt with as for any other material. If there is a parallel title for both a common title and a section title, the common title and section title should be recorded, followed by the space, equal sign space (=) and the parallel title, eg.

"Bank of Ghana review = Revue de la Banque du Ghana".

If the chief source of information gives the full form of an acronym or initialism appearing in the title proper, it should be treated as "other title information", eg.

"QY: the bulletin of Balme Library.

#### STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Statement of responsibility for serials vary in a few points from those for other materials. Most important variation is that statements relating to personal editors are not considered statements of responsibility for serials. If a statement relating to an editor is considered necessary give it in a note.

"The Legon Librarian-archivist"

"Note: Founded and edited by S.A. Kotei".

With other words, statements of responsibility appearing as part of the title proper should not be repeated here *unless* they appear separately in the chief source of information.

"Ghana Library Association weekly newsletter"

*but*

"Weekly newsletter/Ghana Library Association".

#### EDITION AREA

The edition statement of a serial is quite different from that of a monograph. Statements indicating volume, numbering of designation or chronological coverage, such as "19th edition" or "27th edition" should not be included in an edition statement for serials.

Instead, here are recorded local edition statements, special interest edition statements, special format or physical presentation statements, language edition statements, and reprint or reissue statements indicating a reissue or revision of a serial as a whole. Thus a serial might appear in a "library edition" or a "microform edition" or an "English edition" or "Accra edition". A newspaper might be the "morning edition" or the "home edition". Other aspects of the edition area for serials are treated as are those for other materials.

#### NUMERIC AND/OR ALPHABETIC, CHRONOLOGICAL OR OTHER DESIGNATION AREA

The materials specific details (MDS) area is peculiar to cartographic materials and serial publications. For serials, this area is called the numeric and/or alphabetic chronological or other designation area. It indicates the first issue and; for completed serial, both the first and the last issue of the serial. This indication might include a Volu-

me, number of letter, an issue or part number or letter, and a date, or it might include any combination of these. Thus, the statement might be,

- (i) "1957-" or,
- (ii) "Vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1960) -" for serials still in progress or
- (iii) "Vol. 2, no. 1 (Jan 1960) - vol. 5 no. 10 (Sept. 1980)" for completed serials, or,
- (iv) "Vol. 1, no. 1 (Dec. 1951) - vol. 20 no. 5 (May 1981); Vol. 1, no. 1 (1984) -" for successive designations, etc.

If there is more than one system of numbering, they should be recorded in the order in which they appear in the chief source of information, and the second system and any following it should be preceded by an equal sign. If a new designation system is begun without change of title, the first and last issues under the old designation should be indicated, followed by the designation of the first issue under the new system.

While this rule seems straight forward enough, there is a problem with its implementation. The first issue of a serial is often unavailable and determination of the volume, number, and date may be no simple matter at all. There are, of course, sources for such information, i.e., the Union list of serials and New serial titles or the National Bibliographies, National Union Catalogs.

Unfortunately, these kinds of sources are not readily available to all libraries, and some serials of local interest will not be listed in reference sources. What does the cataloguer do in this difficult situation? There are two possibilities. Hunter and Fox (1980)<sup>2</sup> would have catalogued an item whose first issue is not available and does not appear in guides to periodicals by estimating the chronological designation and follow it by a question mark, even though they have admitted that there is no authority in the rules for this practice. To be on the safer side, adopt AACRA2's stand by ignoring the unavailable first issue and catalogue the serial by the first available issue.

#### PUBLICATION, DISTRIBUTION, ETC. AREA

This area consists primarily of place of publication, distribution, etc., name of publisher, distributor, etc., and date of publication, distribution, etc. If they differ from the information already given, place of manufacture, manufacturer and date may be *optionally* added. The only way this area is modified for serials is in the recording of date of publication. Date of publication of the first issue is recorded and followed by a hyphen and four spaces:

"Accra: Ghana Pub. Corp.,  
1968. -"

In the case of completed serial, however, the date of publication of the first and last issues are given separated by a hyphen:

"Accra: Ghana Library Association, 1980-86".

The date of publication should be recorded even if it coincides wholly on in part, with the date given as the chronological coverage.

"The believer. - 1 (Feb. 1980) -  
- Accra: The Believer Press,  
1980 -"

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION AREA

This area follows the publication, distribution etc., area. And it is separated from it by a full stop, space, dash, space, as are other adjacent areas, or it may begin a new paragraph. This area may include four elements: extent of item; other physical details; dimensions; and accompanying material.

The first three elements are recorded as instructed in the chapter dealing with the sort of material to which the serial belongs. Thus chapter 11, rules 11.5B - 11.5D, would give instruction for these elements for microform serial. For serials still in progress, the extent of the item is given by recording the appropriate specific material designation preceded by three spaces.

Thus, the extent of item for a printed serial still in progress would be "V". For a completed serial, the number of parts, in Arabic numerals, precedes the specific material designation, i.e., "96V" or "278 microfiches". The last element in the area, which specifies accompanying materials, is included only for accompanying material which is to be issued *regularly and is intended to be used in conjunction with the serial.*

"Vol. ill.; 21cm + slides"  
"filmstrips: col.; 35mm. +  
booklet"

The physical description of the accompanying material may *optionally* be recorded. If the company material is regularly issued or is issued only once, describe it in a note or ignore it.

"Vol. 7 no. 6 contains wall chart  
(Col., 26 x 40cm)".

The frequency of accompanying material should be given in the note.

"Slides with every 7th issue".

### SERIES AND NOTE AREAS

The series area follows the physical description area. There is nothing unique to the serial series statement. It is to be recorded according to the general rules found in chapter 1.6.

In contrast to the series area, the next area — the note area, may contain rather different information for a serial than for other publications. Notes can be extensive due to the possibility of change in any element of description whenever a new issue appears. Notes are particularly used to record data that are considered to be especially susceptible to change overtime such as subtitles and editors. Notes also contain the linking information that connects a serially published item with its predecessors, successors, and other manifestations. In all, there are twenty or so different items about which notes on serials might be made, some appearing frequently. Nearly all serials will need a note on frequency. If however the frequency is already apparent from the title and statement of responsibility area or it is unknown it should be omitted.

Also if the frequency of the serial changes, notes should be made on it. Examples of frequency are annual, quarterly, weekly, irregulars, bimonthly etc.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Notes on *relationships* with other serials will also be needed often. A serial may be a *translation* or *continuation* of another serial; or may be continued by another serial; it may be the result of a *split* or *merger*; a serial may be *absorbed*

by another; it may be *reproduced* by another serial; it may be a subsidiary edition of a principal edition or one of *numerous editions*; or it may be a supplement or have a supplement. Any of these relationships should be described in a note. Of the twenty or so notes that are likely to appear in a serial description, notes on frequency, relationships, indexes, library holdings and item described should be the most common, and perhaps the most important.

## STANDARD NUMBER AND TERMS OF AVAILABILITY AREA

The final area of the description — the standard number and terms of availability — follows the note area. As with the physical description area this may begin a new paragraph rather than being preceded by a full stop, space, dash, space (. -). The area consists of the following elements:

- (i) International Standard Serial Number (ISSN)
- (ii) The key-title (not unique title).
- (iii) Terms of availability (price) (optional)

The key-title is, of course, unique to serials and it should be given as assigned according to the rules of the International Serials Data Sys-

tem (ISDS). The key-title should be given even if it is identical with the title proper.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, thus, the description of serials has much in common with all descriptions, particularly in format and organisation. In some ways, serial descriptions have special features. It is these special features plus the shifty and uncertain nature of serials that generate the problems and troubles which strike fear in the heart of many a cataloguer. Serials, as we have seen, can beget, overtime, varied authorship. No one person can prepare the entire contents of all the parts indefinitely. So authorship is spread, generally, among many individuals. This usually results in diffused authorship so that no one person can be credited with primary responsibility. It is because of this that most serials are entered under their titles. There may be some personal authors. But this is very rare indeed. In most cases corporate bodies as authors are also excluded because of the difficulty posed in giving precise definition to them.

Instead the "vast number of serials published, the many different types of serials, the variety of sources from which they must be acquired, and the constant changing of titles, formats, publishers, and frequency all con-

tribute to the complexity of serial handling" (Bernhardt: 1973).<sup>3</sup> Serials can be so problematic that even the AACR2 could hardly cope. Hardly did the AACR2 appear than the problem of "generic titles" cropped up and some cataloguers started talking about the introduction of "unique titles". Serials could be troublesome to the extent of being treacherous and one can see this "troublesomeness" being curtailed if only more rigid universal bibliographic control is exercised over the *publication* and *organisation* of serials. This is the big challenge to our National Bibliographic Control Agencies working hand in hand with International Bibliographic Agencies like the IFLA, Unesco's ISDS and the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR (JSC). I will like to end in a lighter mood by re-echoing Mary Ellen Soper's thoughts on descriptive cataloguing of serials. She says,

"Descriptive cataloguing of serially published materials can be regarded as a game, a hunt through luxuriant undergrowth, a gathering in from many places of the necessary details needed to construct an elaborate edifice which *may be swept away when the next issue appears*. It is a game which should be played seriously but a chuckle or two is at times appropriate to relieve frustration".<sup>4</sup>

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