

## Letter

With reference to Jeremy Miettinen's viewpoint about cataloguing codes.<sup>(1)</sup> May I remind your readers that AACR1 and 2 are international codes. The Paris principles on which they are based were drawn up by one of the best organised international conferences ever in this topic. The results of these principles have been under the scrutiny of cataloguers from all over the world and the IFLA office for U.B.C. has provided a forum for the subsequent discussion that has taken place. These principles did refer only to choice of heading certainly but a parallel process for description started with the I.S.B.D. which has been incorporated in both AACR1 and 2. The Anglo American Cataloguing Rules are in theory and in practice international codes.

AACR2 does not regard non-book media as books. Anyone who doubts this should look at the .0 rules for Sources of information and the way these rules are based in both parts 1 and part 2. What AACR2 does say is that the principles derived from cataloguing the oldest, largest and most complicated medium of all – print – can be applied to these other media. I am in no doubt that this is so. The LC Graphics manual will help us decide this point more clearly for though I have not yet examined it in detail it sets out to “supply the additional guidance to catalogue original archival and archival graphic materials” within the framework of AACR2. May I plead that the kind of work that Mr. Miettinen envisages takes place within this framework also. It will be needed to make AACR – which is inevitable – the kind of code it should be.

Now none of this is to imply that I think AACR is perfect – it's certainly not – but it is still by far the best code that the general library (its intended audience) has got and far better than many specialised codes for particular media. Most libraries should consider AACR2 in relation to their present cataloguing very seriously indeed.

Both to see where it can usefully supplement what they are doing and because it will be a pre-requisite to using other cataloguing provided by the systems using AACR2. These will become increasingly more important in the life-time of AACR2 and their scale is such that there will be so many works catalogued by AACR2 that it will become the total climate for cataloguing. If this is so then it is essential that AACR gets it right. So it is lucky that AACR2 is so sound and has proved so receptive both to the experience available for its compilation and to the suggestions for amendment presented to the Joint Steering Committee for the revision of AACR. This predominance will also mean that any work produced outside this climate may be seen as irrelevant no matter what its intrinsic merit –

which is very wasteful. Specialist cataloguers must be as open minded about AACR2 as AACR2 has been to the experience available to it. If they are, then everyone will benefit.

I must of course accept Mr. Miettinen's reproach about the teaching he got, and murmur in self defence that since he did manage to catalogue the I.U.D. perhaps he learnt more at library school than he thinks he did.

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#### **Reference**

- (1) *Art Libraries Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3, Autumn 1981, pp.3-5.