

Scholarly Libraries and the New Cataloging Rules

THE following four papers were presented at a joint meeting of the A.L.A. Division of Cataloging and Classification and the Association of College and Reference Libraries, December 29, 1941.

By LUCILE M. MORSCH

The New Edition of the A.L.A. Catalog Rules

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To represent the catalogers of the country in a consideration of the *A.L.A. Catalog Rules*, preliminary American second edition, is a tremendous order, first because their needs vary so greatly and second because it has not been possible to get the opinions from many types of libraries. I am assuming, however, that, because I represent also the Library of Congress whose printed catalog cards are widely used by all types of libraries and whose practices are in general those of the A.L.A. catalog rules, what is satisfactory for the Library of Congress should be, for the most part, satisfactory for other libraries. I have, however, attended a number of meetings of catalogers discussing the rules and a few weeks ago sat for two days with representatives of several of our largest libraries to obtain their opinions on part two of the new edition.

Permit me to stress the fact that we are discussing not a new set of rules nor a set of new rules, but rather a new edition of the rules of 1908. This is a very important factor in the discussion because it

makes clear that the Catalog Code Revision Committee has not proposed any substantial changes in our practice. It has been perhaps too conscious of the cost of recataloging to recommend many changes even when it saw that some might be desirable. Instead its chief contribution has been to expand the rules of 1908 to make them more intelligible, a little less open to various interpretations. This has been done by elaborating the rules and by illustrating them with many examples. There are, to be sure, some new rules to cover material not specifically mentioned in the original rules, as for example the rules to cover the entry for adaptations, dramatizations, and parodies. But these are merely statements of present practice and the result of demonstrated needs rather than theoretical expansions concocted in the minds of the committee. In fact, in the words of the chairman, "Rulings have not been attempted for cases which seemed of an exceptional character, nor when there was insufficient precedent or an insufficient number of examples as a basis for codification."¹

¹ *A.L.A. Catalog Rules*. Preliminary American second edition. Chicago. A.L.A., 1941, p. xiv.

Uniformity of Entry

In the opinion of the catalogers this is one of the chief failings of the new edition. It does not go far enough in covering the various types of material which we have to handle from day to day. We *must* have uniformity of entry if we are to succeed in any cooperative work. For uniformity is essential to effective interchange and cooperation. In these days of challenging the form of our catalogs, when some critics of the catalog are advising the omission of subject entries and the reliance instead on subject bibliographies, others the omission of title entries, still others the separation of the catalog into its various component parts, there is only one entry on which everyone apparently agrees and that is the author or main entry. Even the most radical advocates of the catalog as a mere finding list instead of the great bibliographical tool we have been developing for half a century have not suggested that we need not make an entry for the person, personal or corporate, responsible for the work.

If, then, we are to succeed in any cooperative work—not only the extension of the use of Library of Congress or other printed cards but cooperative book use—we must have standardization of entries. In a recent statement on the use of the national union catalog to decrease descriptive cataloging costs,² George A. Schwegmann, Jr., its director, stressed the need for standardization of entries by strict adherence to the new *A.L.A. Catalog Rules*, or a modification of them. Only such standardization can keep a catalog of eleven million entries from chaos without expensive and not always effective editing of entries received.

² Letter of Dec. 11, 1941, to Jens Nyholm, assistant librarian, University of California Library, Berkeley.

Not Far Enough in Scope

I have said that the *Rules* do not go far enough in scope, that we cannot leave to the judgment of individual catalogers, regardless of the quality of that judgment, a choice of several entries in the many cases of material not covered by the *Rules* and which we are handling from day to day. Let me illustrate with a few examples.

How would you enter the name of a radio program which might be the author as well as the subject of a book? Under its own name? Under its sponsor? Under the writer of the script, if known?

How would you enter a radio station? Under place? Under its own name? Under its owner? Under some arbitrary form heading such as we use: New York. Radio Station WNYC. WNYC is a municipal station. Should it be considered an official body?

How would you enter the scenario of a motion picture based on a novel, such as *Grapes of Wrath*? Under its author, if you could ferret it out? Under the author of the novel? Under the title?

How would you enter publications of a government in exile? If the seat of the government is in territory occupied by another government and publications are issued from two sources both claiming to be official publications of the government, some means must be found to distinguish between them. For example, the government of Holland headed by Queen Wilhelmina is in England where it continues to issue acts of government printed in the official gazette, appearing in London. In addition, publications from the occupied territory of the Netherlands are also being issued. Does the official recognition of one of these bodies by our government affect its entry?

In November 1937 President Vargas of Brazil divested all the governors, except one, of the twenty states which comprise the United States of Brazil of their offices and reappointed them (or others) as federal interventors.³ How would you enter the reports of these federal interventors? Are they to be entered under Brazil or under their respective states?

The case of Brazil is simply one example of a large class of material not covered in the *Rules*—publications of officers appointed by a government body for the administration or control of a subordinate government—and should not have a special rule limited to this specific case. In fact, throughout the new edition there are numerous specific rules which should be reduced to examples to illustrate rules more broadly stated. The principles on which they are based should be included as a part of each rule to guide the cataloger in new types of cases.

Rules Never Complete

But even broad rules, with the principles on which they are based, can never be frozen, can never be complete. The examples I have mentioned of radio programs, radio stations, motion picture scenarios, governments in exile, are problems of a changing world which the catalogers before 1908 had not known. New editions should be brought out much more frequently than they have been and some means should be found, either as supplements or through a column in one of the library journals to keep them entirely up to date. Should the Library of Congress assume the responsibility of publishing its cataloging decisions as they are made⁴

³ *Statesman's Yearbook*, 1940, p. 735.

⁴ Proposed in an open letter to the chief of the Catalog Division, Library of Congress. *Library Journal* 64: 434, June 1, 1939.

another channel might be unnecessary, but a still better plan might be for the A.L.A. Division of Cataloging and Classification to appoint a standing committee on catalog rules, which would serve in an advisory capacity in the formulation, dissemination, and interpretation of new rules, and the publication of new editions as often as additions and revisions make them necessary. Obviously each edition will be larger than its predecessor, and for that reason will be more valuable as an aid in the standardization of entries and as a tool to reduce the cost of cataloging by eliminating hours spent on correspondence, in discussion, and in seeking precedents.

If this is true, what is all the excitement about this new edition which has resulted in the statement in it that "Concerning the rules . . . there has been considerable disagreement as between some catalogers and some administrators. The latter are inclined to believe that there is too much elaboration and that the expense involved in following these rules in many cases will be unjustified. A special committee of administrators and catalogers has been appointed to consider this view and has been asked to report its conclusion as soon as possible."⁵

I hope that this concern is limited entirely to the elaboration of the code in part two which deals with the physical description of the books: the transcription of the title, the imprint, collation, and notes, because most of the leading catalogers with whom I have discussed the rules agree that this is where considerable simplification is in order. I, for one, think that part two should not be published at all, that standardization of practice in details beyond the entry is not worth the cost and is not even desirable

⁵ *A.L.A. Catalog Rules*, *op. cit.*, p. ii.

if our largest libraries require the detail of present practice. In this I am not representing most catalogers because they have been brought up to feel that the Library of Congress way is the correct way and that if no rule is in print to tell them what that way is they must determine it by precedent, or, lacking that, they must write to the Library of Congress for advice. It is a fact that we receive letters asking about punctuation of titles and details of collation. One order for cards within the last year was referred to us from the Card Division because it read: "Qualified order. Send only if revised to three dot author's name at beginning of title," and another asked for an explanation of a case of a period being placed outside quotation marks. Another library reported that on page seventy-seven of a given book there was a diagram omitted from the collation of the L.C. printed card. These are all examples of what Dr. Osborn has called legalistic cataloging. They are not, however, in any way due to the elaborateness of the rules. Every good press has its style manual and attempts to follow it as consistently as possible. The Library of Congress in printing its cards also attempts a reasonable degree of consistency in these matters of style. It is not practical, however, for any other library to accept it except in principle. In the 1908 edition of the *Rules* the Library of Congress practice in many cases was stated as a supplementary rule. Unfortunately in the new edition only the Library of Congress practice is described, which implies that it is the ideal method for any library. Inasmuch as standardization in details of description is of doubtful value, why should the American Library Association publish part two of the new edition and thereby set

up a dictatorial code? Instead the Library of Congress should publish a style manual describing its practice and be responsible for keeping it reasonably up to date. Other libraries could use it so far as it met their needs but would recognize it as the practice of the Library of Congress only and have no fear that if they violated it in any way their libraries would not have the stamp of approval of the American Library Association.

Needs Being Studied

In fact the Library of Congress itself is at present studying the relationship of its descriptive cataloging to the needs of the library and the needs of other libraries using its printed cards. Simplifications must be based on the minimum essentials of the needs of the Library of Congress and what those needs are must be determined by the reference and searching staffs. If the simple abbreviation "illus." is adequate description of the illustrative matter in a book containing portraits, maps, facsimiles, and diagrams, the catalogers will gladly omit the more elaborate description now supplied. But it is definitely up to the departments for whom the catalog is made and who work with the public for which it is made, to decide which details, if any, can be omitted. The catalogers can go no further than to challenge the needs and urge cooperation in seeking possible simplifications.

Questions of the fulness of bibliographical description and the number of entries to be made for a book are matters which should vary in libraries according to the purposes of the institutions, the nature of the collections, and the use to be made of the catalog. They cannot be decided for all libraries either by the A.L.A. or the Library of Congress. For many years

administrators have been leaving these problems to the catalogers. Suddenly they have realized their own responsibilities in this field—responsibilities of making major policies of far-spreading effects—which cannot be delegated to a single department. Along with this realization has come a terrifying feeling of inadequacy because the problems are staggering in their proportions and the administrators have lost the contacts necessary to their solution.

They are having to rely very largely on the advice and experience of those “technicians” whom a few alarmists have urged them to distrust. Hence the recent great concern on the part of some library administrators. If there is a crisis in cataloging it is not a general crisis closely associated with and attributable to the publication of the new edition of the *Rules* but an individual problem to be faced courageously at home.

By FLORA B. LUDINGTON

The New Code and the College Library

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Library administrators, in the last few months, have been going to school to the catalogers. The classes have been analogous to those in the medical profession known as refresher courses. Their success has been in proportion to the knowledge and interest of the administrator. I have been attending such a seminar, and for much that follows I am indebted to the catalogers of the Mount Holyoke College library who were my teachers. These discussions served to sharpen my realization of cataloging minutiae and of changes that have crept into its procedures in the years since I profited by the teaching of Jennie Dorcas Fellows. In spite of Dr. Bishop's warning that I should never try to do reference work without having had cataloging experience, I did serve as a reference librarian for a number of years.

My administrative experience is of shorter duration, but in the past few years I have become sharply aware of the administrative problems related to cataloging. These problems all relate to making material promptly and readily available and the costs in so doing. The library catalog, key to the accessibility of this material, is newly related to these problems in the light of the revised code of cataloging.

This preliminary American second edition very largely codifies existing practice. It arranges in a form which is readily consulted cataloging procedures of the Library of Congress developed in the past forty years. Needless to say, they have changed during this period. They have changed since the 1908 code was published and they will continue to change. Aside from the need to codify Library of Congress practice, it was especially desirable to clarify many points for libraries doing cooperative cataloging and for those listing their holdings in union catalogs. The