Functional Requirements for Bibliographical Records (FRBR)

by Rhonda Barry

1. History and Background

Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) is a model that has been developed by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). IFLA has long been involved in establishing international library standards. For example, in 1971 it developed the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Monographic Publications (ISBD).

Over the past few decades the environment that cataloguers are working in has changed radically.

Factors contributing to the changes include:

- automated systems that allow creation and processing of bibliographic data
- growth of large databases, both national and international, in which many libraries share cataloguing data, e.g.Te Puna, Kinetica, OCLC's WorldCat
- need to reduce cataloguing costs, together with the concern that economic pressures threatened cataloguing standards and therefore appropriate bibliographic access for users
- continued growth in publishing output
- new forms of electronic publishing that do not fit the traditional formats, such as web sites, ejournals
- networks and online information resources
- corresponding changes in user demands

In 1990 IFLA commissioned a study.The terms of reference stated:

> *"The purpose of this study is to delineate in clearly defined terms the functions performed by the bibliographic record with respect to various media, various applications and various user needs ... " (IFLA Final report)*[1]

In other words, what is the purpose of the bibliographic record? What is it supposed to do?

2. Approach

The terms of reference for the study called for the development of a framework that identifies and clearly defines

- the entities of interest to users of bibliographic records
- the attributes of each entity
- the types of relationships that operate between entities

The methodology for the study used techniques that are involved in the development of conceptual models for relational database systems.

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3. Areas for Further Study

The study recognises that it does not answer all questions and more work needs to be done in particular areas:

- the notion of seriality and the dynamic nature of entities recorded in digital formats needs further analysis
- implications for MARC formats to reflect the relationships outlined in the model
- the model could be used for OPAC design and database structure and evaluation
- the FRBR model that has been developed does not cover all the attributes and relationships that you find in an authority record, such as see and see also references. The focus to date has been on bibliographic records, as opposed to authority records.

4. Objectives of the Study

There were two primary objectives:

- to provide a clearly defined, structured framework for relating data that are recorded in bibliographic records to the needs of the users of those records
- to recommend a basic level of functionality for records created by bibliographic agencies

A bibliographic record is defined as the aggregate of data that are associated with entities described in library catalogues and national bibliographies. The entity is what we are cataloguing. Included in this are descriptive data elements, data elements used in headings for persons, corporate bodies, titles, and subjects that function as filing devices or index entries, data elements that are used to arrange or organize the records such as classification numbers and data specific to copies in collections.

5. Entities

The entities are divided into three groups

Group 1
Entities that are the products of intellectual or artistic endeavour that are named or described in bibliographic records. Group 1 entities have been the focus of the study to date. Group 1 entities consist of the following:

Work
A distinct intellectual or artistic creation. This is the abstract entity and it exists at the conceptual level. There is no material object as a work.

Expression
The specific intellectual or artistic form that a work takes when it is realized. The work may be expressed in a variety of ways, such as text, still image, moving image, sound, dance. Changes in the conventions that are used to express a work result in a new expression, eg. translation into another language, text of King Lear made into a movie

Manifestation
The physical embodiment of an expression of a work, eg book, CD, poster

Item
A single exemplar of a manifestation

Some examples of Group 1 entities are:

Work
John Bunyan's Pilgrim's progress
Expression
Chinese language edition
text in pictorial format
text for the 2nd edition
Manifestation
print format of the Chinese language edition
CD of the Chinese language edition
Item
copy signed by the author copy lacks p. 30
illustration

Group 2
Entities that are responsible for the intellectual or artistic content, the physical production and dissemination or the custodianship of the entities of the first group

Person
An individual

Corporate body
An organization or group of individuals or organizations

Group 3
Entities that serve as subjects of works.

Additionally, subject relationships can occur between the entities in the first and second

groups, for example, a composer, an author, or a book can be the subject of a film. Group 3 entities consist of the following:

Group 1 and Group 2 entities

Concepts
Abstract notion or idea eg. globalization, government, cyberspace

Objects
Material thing eg. dog, building, rose, solar system

Events
An action or occurrence eg. Olympic Games, World War II, conference

Places
A location eg. Kimberley, Papua New Guinea, London

6. Attributes

Each of the entities described above has a set of characteristics or attributes. Users of libraries use attributes to query and search for a particular entity and also to identify that entity as the one they want.

This part of the FRBR model moves into the area of metadata.

Attributes fall into two broad categories:
- inherent characteristics, e.g. size, labelling information such as statements on the title page
- assigned identifiers, such as music number, classification number

Examples of Group 1 Entities' Attributes

Work
ID
Title
Date

Manifestation
ID
Title
Statement of responsibility
Editon
Imprint
Form and extent
Terms of availability
Mode of access

Expression
ID
Title
Form
Date
Language

Item
ID
Provenance
Location

7. Relationships

Various relationships can be identified between entities of all the groups. For example, statements such as "translated from ... " or "based on ... " are a signal to the cataloguer that a relationship should be reflected in a bibliographic record. FRBR seeks to clarify these relationships.

8. User Tasks

Users can be anyone who accesses bibliographic information, students, researchers, librarians, publishers, systems developers, bookshops.

The FRBR review identified four user tasks:

- find entities that correspond to user's stated search criteria
- identify an entity to confirm or distinguish it from other entities
- select an entity appropriate to user needs
- obtain or acquire access to the entity described

9. What Lies Ahead ?

Think of the applications in our catalogues, which contain many works with uniform titles, such as for Bible, liturgical works.

Other examples in the OCLC database

Stephen King
102 works, 231 manifestations

Shakespeare's Hamlet
1 work, 2696 manifestations

Rowling, J. K. (Harry Potter stories)
28 works, 300 manifestations

10. For More Information on FRBR

Tillett, Barbara. What is FRBR? : a conceptual model for the bibliographic universe. (Washington : Library of Congress, Cataloguing Distribution Service, 2004) Available in pdf format at http://www.loc.gov/cds/FRBR.html

IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions)
http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.htm
http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf

OCLC
http://www.oclc.org/research/projects/frbr

AustLit Project
http://www.austlit.edu.au

(Footnotes)
[1] Functional requirements for bibliographical records : final report / IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographical Records. (Munchen : Saur, 1998) http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr1.htm

Changes at Kinder Library

by Judith Bright

The Kinder Library at St John's Theological College, Auckland, has undergone a "rebirthing". For a number of years, those involved with ministry education within the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, have been seeking a way for greater ownership of the Kinder Library by all facets of ministry and theological education within the Church, rather than just the centre at St John's Theological College in Auckland.

Governance of the Library has moved from St John's College to that of an Oversight Committee under the umbrella of the Church's main ministry committee. Library support for the degrees taught by the School of Theology at Auckland University, via St John's College and Trinity Methodist Theological College remains our key role. We will be further developing our support of Anglican regional and distance ministry ventures. We continue to be known as the Kinder Library, with the by-line ...a resource for the whole church.