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A Review of British Library support for the activities of the IFLA-CDNL Alliance for Bibliographic Standards, 2003-2004

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Abstract
This paper gives a brief outline of the work undertaken by the British Library in support of the ICABS initiative during 2003-2004. It focuses specifically on the development of the support of the work of the FRBR Review Group and the FRANAR Working Group for which The British Library has lead responsibility. It also briefly discusses the barriers to progress that have been identified through communications with colleagues and considers possible future activities.

Introduction
Hello and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

In conjunction with my ICABS colleagues, I would like to tell you a little about the types of activities we have been involved in over the past 12 months. In particular I will discuss the activities that the British Library is undertaking in support of ICABS, with our particular focus on support for FRBR and FRANAR activities.

This work is at an early stage. In this first year a lot of the work has been in discussing with colleagues involved in FRBR, FRANAR and the wider ICABS community on the type of support they would like to see. There have been some very interesting debates, so I would also like to take a few minutes to discuss some perceived barriers to progress and to draw some conclusions.

ICABS and the role of the British Library

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ICABS and the role of the British Library

- Formally agreed in 2003
- BL is the lead partner of FRBR and FRANAR related activities
- Not responsible for primary development, though involved via membership of groups
- Responsible for co-ordinating and supporting their work through regular activities and projects

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The IFLA-CDNL Alliance for Bibliographic Standards (ICABS) was formally established at the IFLA conference in Berlin last year, after discussions between various national libraries about an effective way to assure ongoing coordination, communication and support for key activities in the areas of bibliographic and resource control, after the end of previous core programmes.

Under ICABS, The British Library is the lead support agency for two important activities, namely the maintenance and development of the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and the Functional Requirements of Authority Numbering and Records (FRANAR) project.

Unlike some other ICABS support activities, where the lead partner is also the host organization for the activity, the role of the British Library is not to determine the development of FRBR or FRANAR directly. Responsibility for the development and maintenance of the conceptual models and related guidelines remains with the IFLA Cataloguing Section's FRBR Review Group and the IFLA Division IV Working Group on FRANAR respectively. We do contribute to that development directly through the participation of two members of British Library staff in the work of the groups. Alan Danskin represents the British Library on the FRBR Review Group and Andrew MacEwan on the FRANAR Working Group.

In parallel to our direct involvement, under ICABS, we have undertaken to liaise with the Review and Working groups to identify what types of support they need to help them work more effectively and to achieve their goals. We also undertake promotional activities, dissemination work and communication on FRBR and FRANAR.

FRBR and FRANAR

At the outset, we discussed with the FRBR Review Group and the FRANAR Working Group the type of support they felt ICABS could most usefully give them. Both are at different stages of development, so while both initially identified an overwhelming main priority – MONEY – specific requests for support have followed a different pattern in this first year.

As the worldwide review of FRANAR has been going on, we have largely been in a "waiting" phase. At the time of writing (April 2004) FRANAR colleagues expect much follow on work similar to that being done for FRBR. This is likely to include collaborative work with other communities e.g. AACR, and revisions to other publications such as MLAR and UNIMARC. They also foresee additional work being required to further develop subject access aspects. We will continue to liaise with them to identify the most appropriate and effective ways in which the British Library and ICABS can support the ongoing development of this work.

The FRBR Review Group is at a more advanced stage in its development, so more has been possible with them. The main requirement identified was financial assistance to support the ongoing development through the work of the subgroups, to facilitate wider attendance. Almost all the work is carried out by email and not all groups felt that project support was necessary. However, one or two felt that the ability to meet face to face at more critical stages might assist the work and speed up developments. Options we have discussed are provision of administrative and organisational support for meetings or the possibility of meetings hosted by the British Library. We could also consider limited support for travel and subsistence for members.

The British Library has provisionally allocated some limited financial support (STG £5,000) in each of our next 3 financial years, during the lifetime of the current ICABS agreement.

Mapping FRBR to ISBDs

Mapping FRBR to ISBDs

- Need to demonstrate consistency between ISBDs and FRBR
- Need for prioritisation of FRBR projects and activities
- Need to balance theoretical and conceptual issues with practical issues
- Tom Delsey appointed as project consultant
- Jointly funded by Die Deutsche Bibliothek and The British Library

The most tangible project to date has been the mapping between FRBR and ISBDs. The purpose of this work is to reinforce the essential consistency between ISBDs and the FRBR model and the project arose from a proposal made by the ISBD Review Group. The Review Group had been trying to align the terminology used in the texts of the ISBDs and that used for FRBR, but the more abstract, conceptual model underlying FRBR meant that a simple substitution of terminology was not possible. The complexity of the task led them to conclude that a full mapping of the ISBD elements to the corresponding FRBR entity attribute or relationship was required. The proposal to fund the project was originally made to Die Deutsche Bibliothek, which is the ICABS partner responsible for ISBDs. Die Deutsche Bibliothek and the British Library then jointly considered funding the proposed project, if it was also felt to be appropriate by the members of the FRBR Review Group.

An interesting email debate followed, which highlighted many of the issues involved in the development of bibliographic control. Some views were initially expressed that it was premature to undertake such a mapping and that it would simply need to be redone as developments in FRBR or the ISBDs took place. However, the concensus view was that it was better to do a mapping now to help with the practical implementation and to generate interest in practitioners, both information professionals and system developers. There is a perceived need to make FRBR "more concrete and practical" and it was recognized the mapping would also be useful to the FRBR Working groups themselves by highlighting issues which still need to be resolved.

Once consensus on the relevance and importance of the project was agreed Die Deutsche Bibliothek and the British Library agreed jointly to fund the project. Mr Tom Delsey was appointed in March 2004 to carry out the mapping work, which is expected to be completed by June 2004.

Dissemination

Dissemination and promotion of results

- Mostly FRBR in 1ˢᵗ year

- Published articles (see ICABS website for details)

- Presentations at CILIP Umbrella conference and Cataloguing and Indexing Group meetings and annual conference

- Coordination
  - e.g. Joint Steering Committee for AACR

In this early phase of this work, dissemination and promotional activities have been mostly focussed on FRBR. This is due to the ongoing worldwide review of FRANAR as mentioned earlier. We have also focussed on UK publications and events – for the very pragmatic reason that these were already in our diaries! Alan Danskin has authored and co-authored (together with Ann Chapman from UKOLN, the UK Office for Library Networking) several papers on FRBR developments.

A full and up to date list is available in BL reports to the ICABS website and on the BL website at http://www.bl.uk/

BL staff have also given presentations at major UK events, such as the CILIP Umbrella conference and Cataloguing and Indexing Group events. These have covered both general reviews of FRBR as well as more specific applications, such as an ongoing BL project to investigate the use of FRBR as the basis of an objective measurement of the quality of bibliographic records.

Slides for these presentations can be found at http://www.cilip.org.uk/groups/cig/news.html

We are also trying to ensure that there is coordination between strands of activity going on under the aegis of different groups and partnerships. A major element of this strand is the ongoing development of AACR and the incorporation of FRBR principles into its structure. The British Library, with ICABS partner, Library of Congress and the National Library of Canada are contributing to this development through the AACR Joint Steering Committee.

Barriers to progress

In this early phase of ICABS work through discussions with colleagues on the FRBR Review and FRANAR Working groups, we have begun to touch on barriers that some of the main participants see as possibly effecting their work in future. I mention these now, not because we have any ready made solutions, but because it will be helpful to have full and open discussions on these barriers to help the community overcome them.
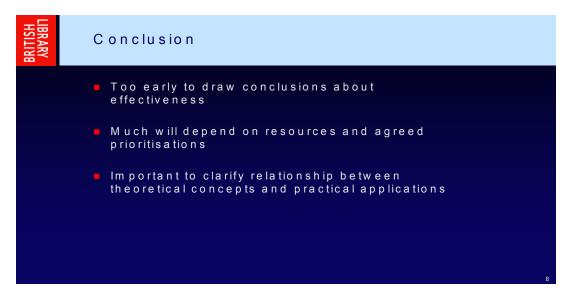
As I mentioned earlier, the main perceived barrier is – as many of you will expect – lack of funds. While the individual institutions in ICABS can attempt to do something to help this situation, we may still face problems of getting the right skills, expertise or knowledge available at the right time to ensure that work is carried out in a timely way. Sometimes the only people who can participate are those who can obtain funding and/or time from their parent institution or employer. Some believe these limitations may skew participation and impact on the rate of progress.

A second barrier is our ability to get involved more actively with commercial system developers and implementers. This is required to influence the development and redesign of library management systems, which will be necessary to turn FRBR and FRANAR principles into effective services for catalogue users. If we want library management systems with databases and catalogues which embody the benefits of FRBR and FRANAR, this is something we must give more attention to as a community.

The need for greater collaboration with bodies representing other sectors (museums, archives) was mentioned as highly desirable by several colleagues. They see benefits to the Library sector from closer harmonisation of bibliographic models with those for other types of resources, but there is a perception that this has not been given high

enough priority in the past. Again the problem may often be one of lack of resources rather than any unwillingness to look beyond the library sector to the benefits of collaboration.

Conclusions

 The ICABS work has got off to a good start, but is still at a relatively early stage of development and therefore probably too early to draw firm conclusions about its effectiveness. Much will depend on the availability of resources and the prioritisation of proposed projects and activities. And, as with the debate over the FRBR mapping, it will be essential to maintain an appropriate balance between theoretical concepts and practical applications.

We will continue to work with FRBR and FRANAR colleagues to identify areas where our support can be of most benefit to them and the wider professional community. And we look forward to telling you about that in the future.

Caroline Brazier
The British Library
April 2004