The future of FRBR

an exercise in soothsaying

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Is FRBR supposed to:

- help us *understand* how things work

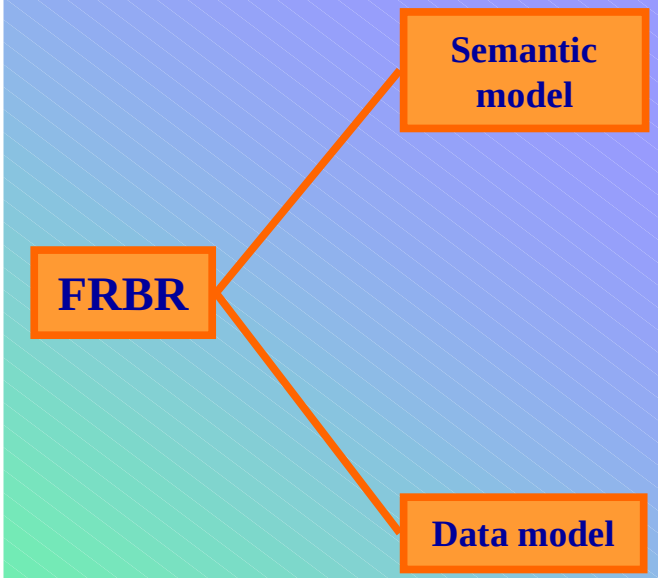
  or

- *make* things work?

Put in other terms:

- **FRBR may be seen as:**
  - **a semantic model**

    or
  - **a data model**


FRBR
Semantic model
Data model

The future of FRBR as a semantic model

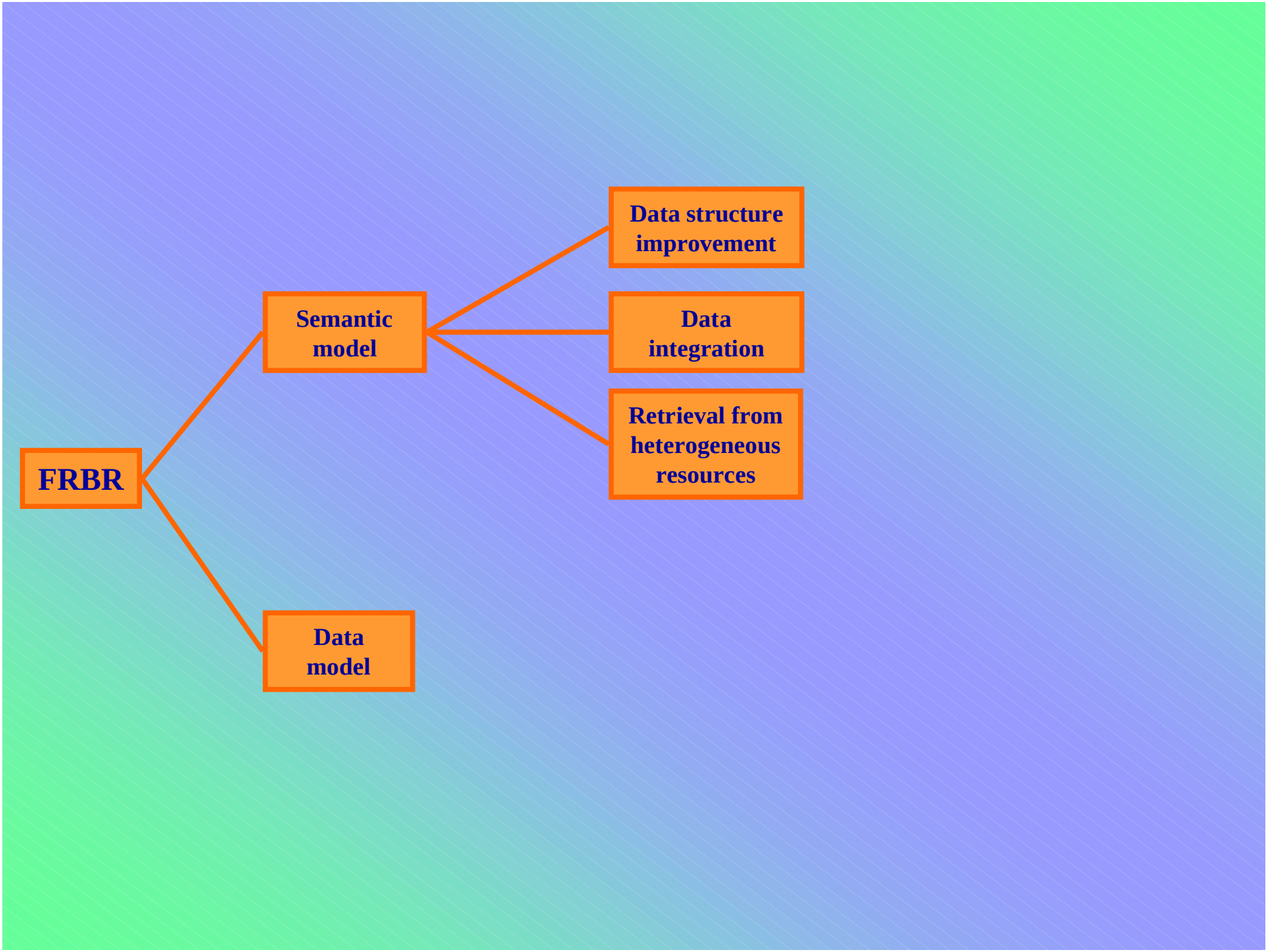
- ***cf.*** **FRBR § 1.3:**

"a logical framework to assist in the understanding and further development of conventions for bibliographic description"

"et logisk rammeverk for forståelsen av, og videreutvikling av, regler for bibliografisk beskrivelse"

Usages of a semantic model:

- **Retrieval from heterogeneous resources**
- **Data integration**
- **Data structure improvement**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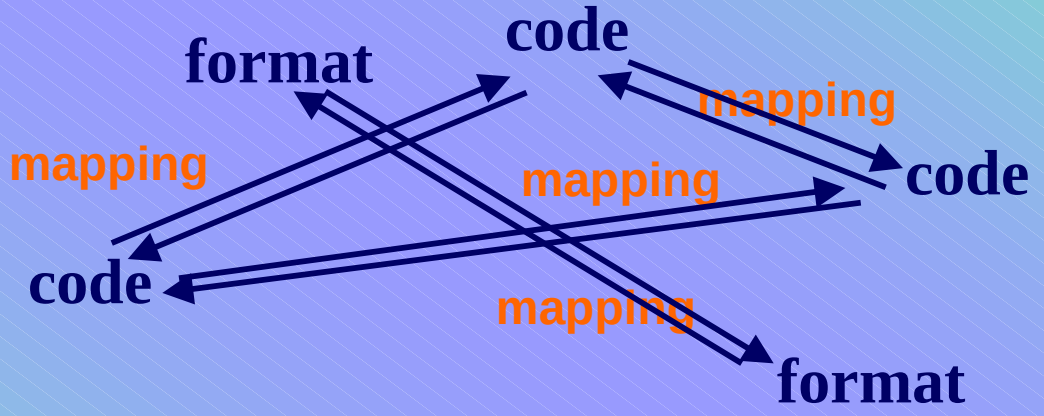
Retrieval from heterogeneous resources

Retrieval from hetereogeneous resources (1/3)

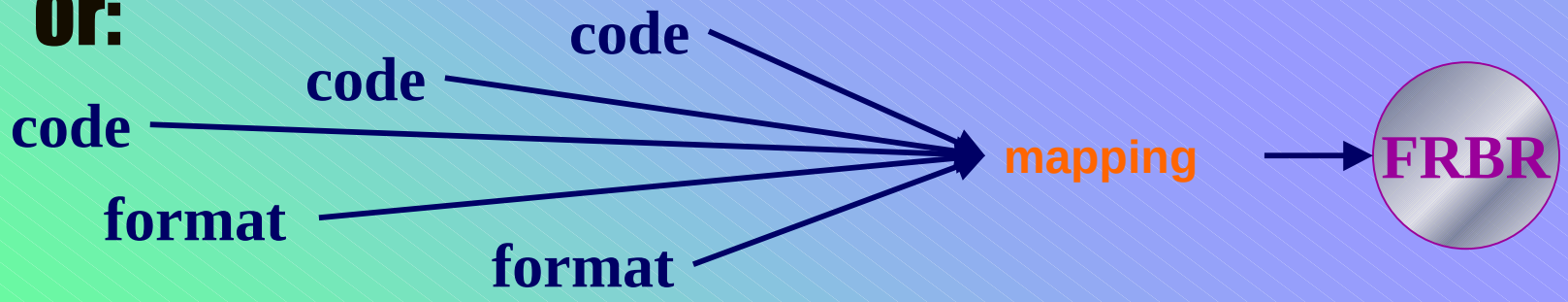
- **Among libraries: what is "heterogeneous"?**
  - **ISBD is at the core of most cataloguing codes**
  - **Cataloguing codes may differ**
  - **Formats may differ**

Retrieval from hetereogeneous resources (2/3)

- **=> What is easier?:**

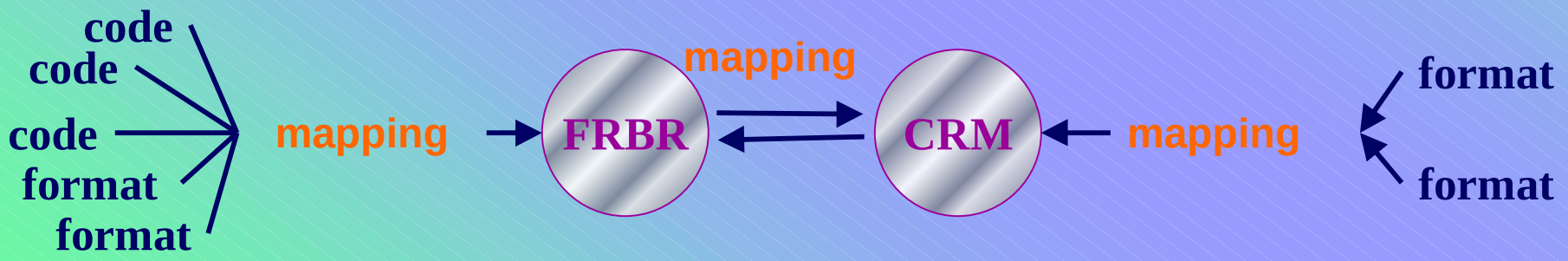


- **or:**



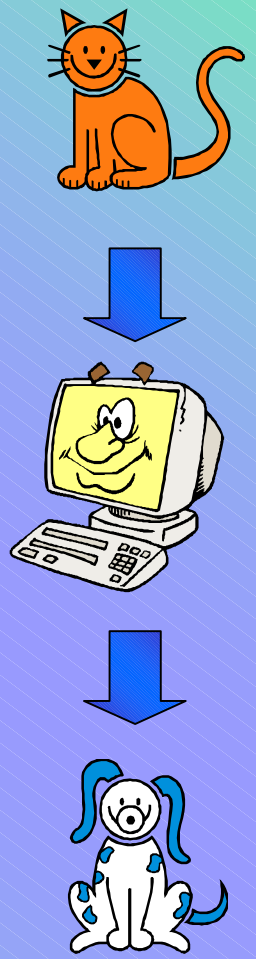
Retrieval from hetereogeneous resources (3/3)

- **Between libraries and other institutions**
  - **No such "common language" as ISBDs**
  - **Mappings are unavoidable**
  - **e.g.:**



Data integration (1/2)

"I'm interested in your records; may I borrow them?"



"Oooops — your format is incompatible with mine"

Data integration (2/2)

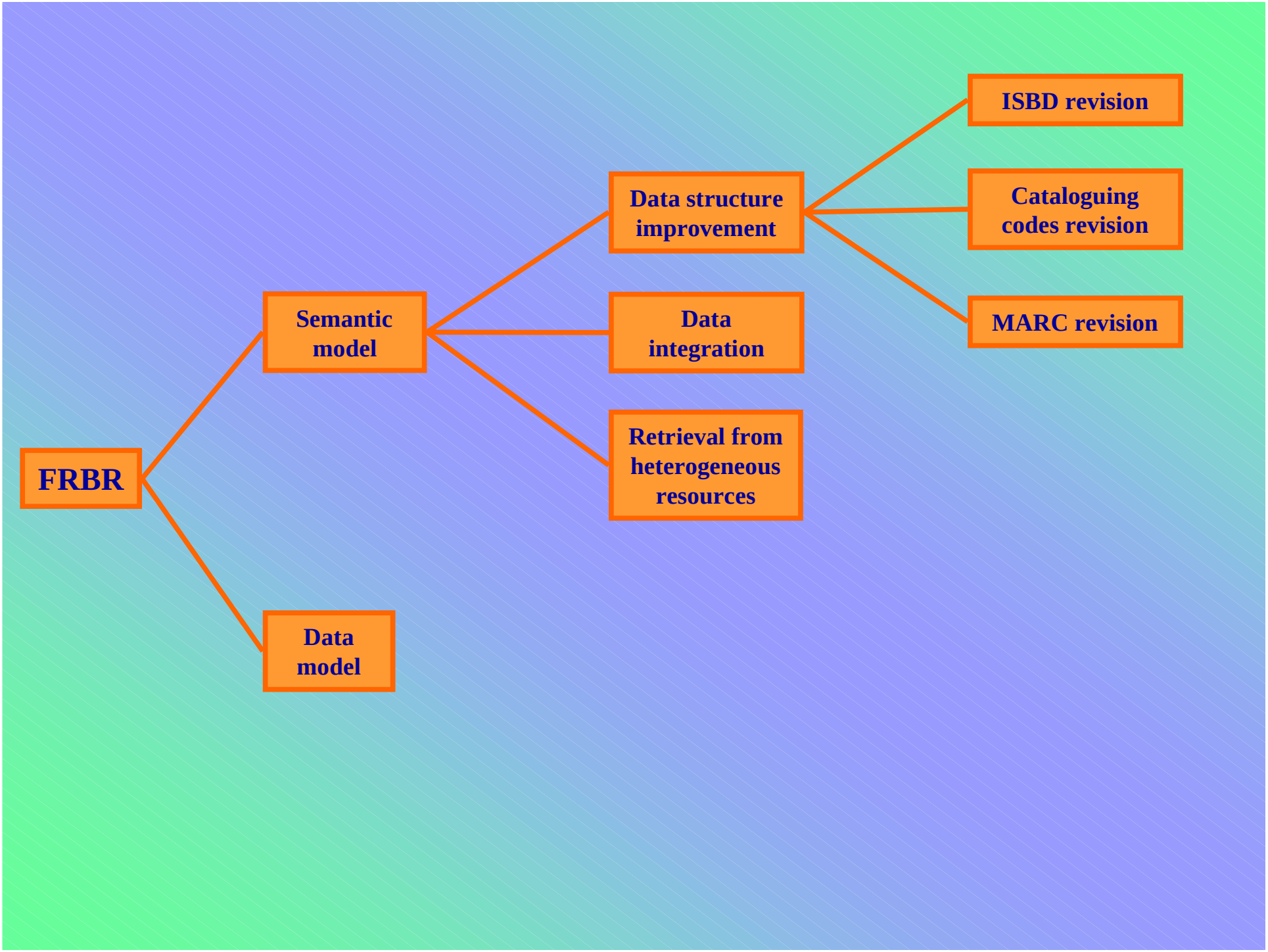
- **=> What is easier?:**

(we already do that quite often)

=> Perhaps there is enough commonality between MARC formats to avoid such a process?

Data structure improvement

- **A semantic model allows us to clear a data structure of its:**
  - **Inconsistencies**
  - **Redundancies**
  - **Deficiencies**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ISBD revision
Cataloguing codes revision
MARC revision

Data structure improvement: ISBD revision

- **ISBD + FRBR = revised ISBD**
- **Current work of the ISBD Revision Group:**
  - **relies only on FRBR chapter 7 (basic level national bibliographic record)**
  - **results only in shift from "required" to "optional" for a number of ISBD elements**
  - **the model itself (chapters 3-5) is not taken into account**

Alternative:

- to base ISBD revision on FRBR Annex A (mapping FRBR→ISBD), and to look for (if any):
  - Inconsistencies
  - Redundancies
  - Deficiencies (e.g., all "[not defined]" statements in Annex A)
- => revised, but basically unchanged ISBDs

Data structure improvement: revision of cataloguing codes

- **AACR + FRBR = revised AACR**
- **Current work of JSC for revision of AACR (http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/jsc/current.html):**
  - **State the principles underlying AACR**
  - **Advance the discussion on "the primacy of intellectual content over physical format"**
  - **Test the practicalities associated with the creation of bibliographic records for expressions**
  - **Incorporate FRBR terminology in AACR**
- **=> revised, but basically unchanged AACR**

Data structure improvement: revision of MARC formats

- **Use Annex A and further mappings to enhance the consistency of extant formats**
- **Use Tom Delsey's FRBR ←→ MARC21 mappings and his Extension of the FRBR model (http://www.loc.gouv/marc/marc-functional-analysis/home.html)**
- **Anyway, core difficulty = *linkS***
- **=> revised, but basically unchanged MARC formats**

The future of FRBR as a Data model

- ***Cf.*** **FRBR § 1.3:**
  "the model could also be expanded in depth to create a fully developed data model"

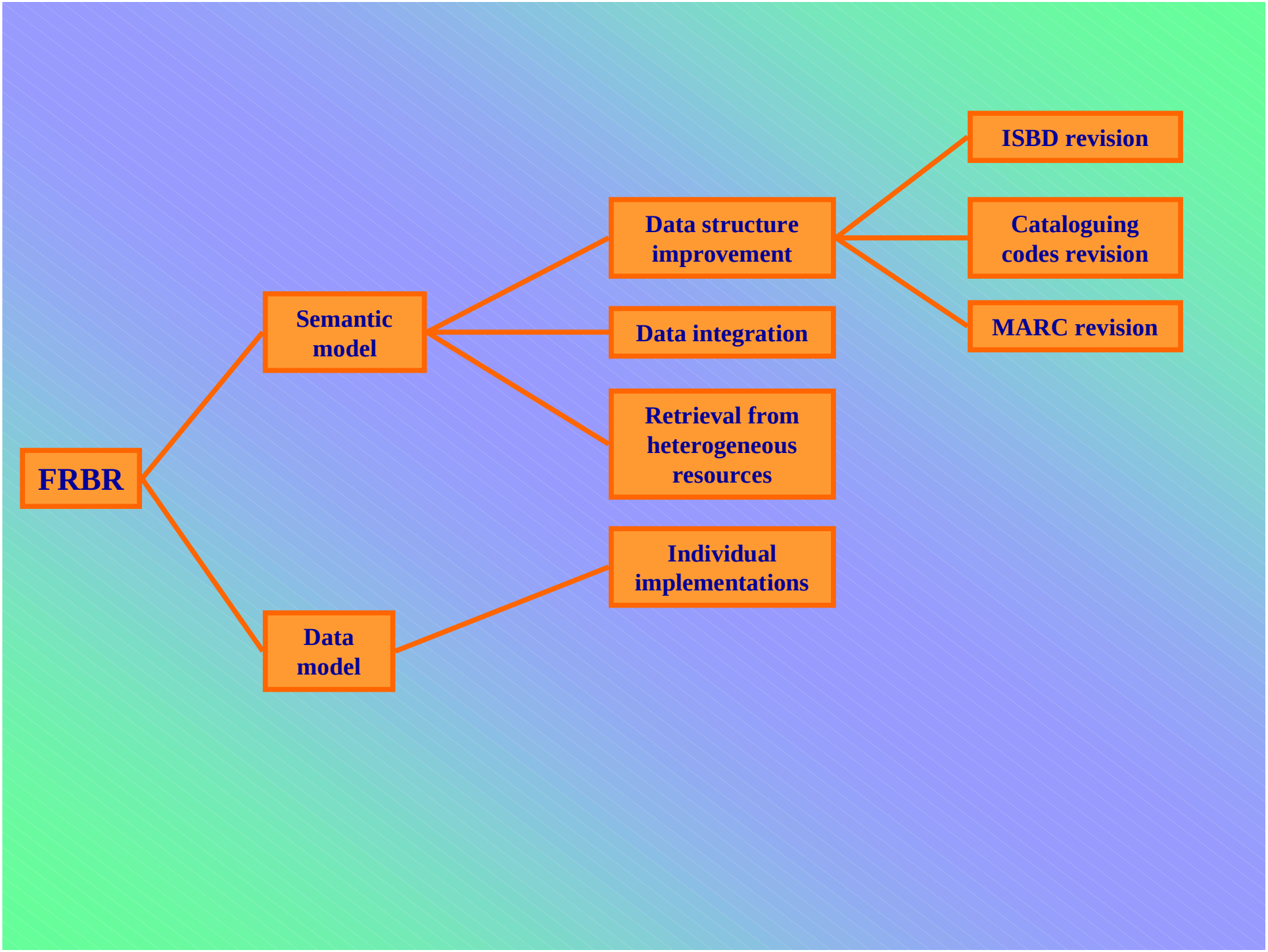
  "Modellen kunne også bli utvidet i dybden for å få en fullt utviklet datamodell"

Premises

- **FRBR can't be used as is (*cf.* "title" attribute, "name" attribute...)**
- **Further development is required**

How is this going to happen?

- **Possibility #1: as many implementations schemes as databases**
  - **Different (incompatible?) guidelines & cataloguing rules**
  - **Different (incompatible?) formats**
- **=> Something like:**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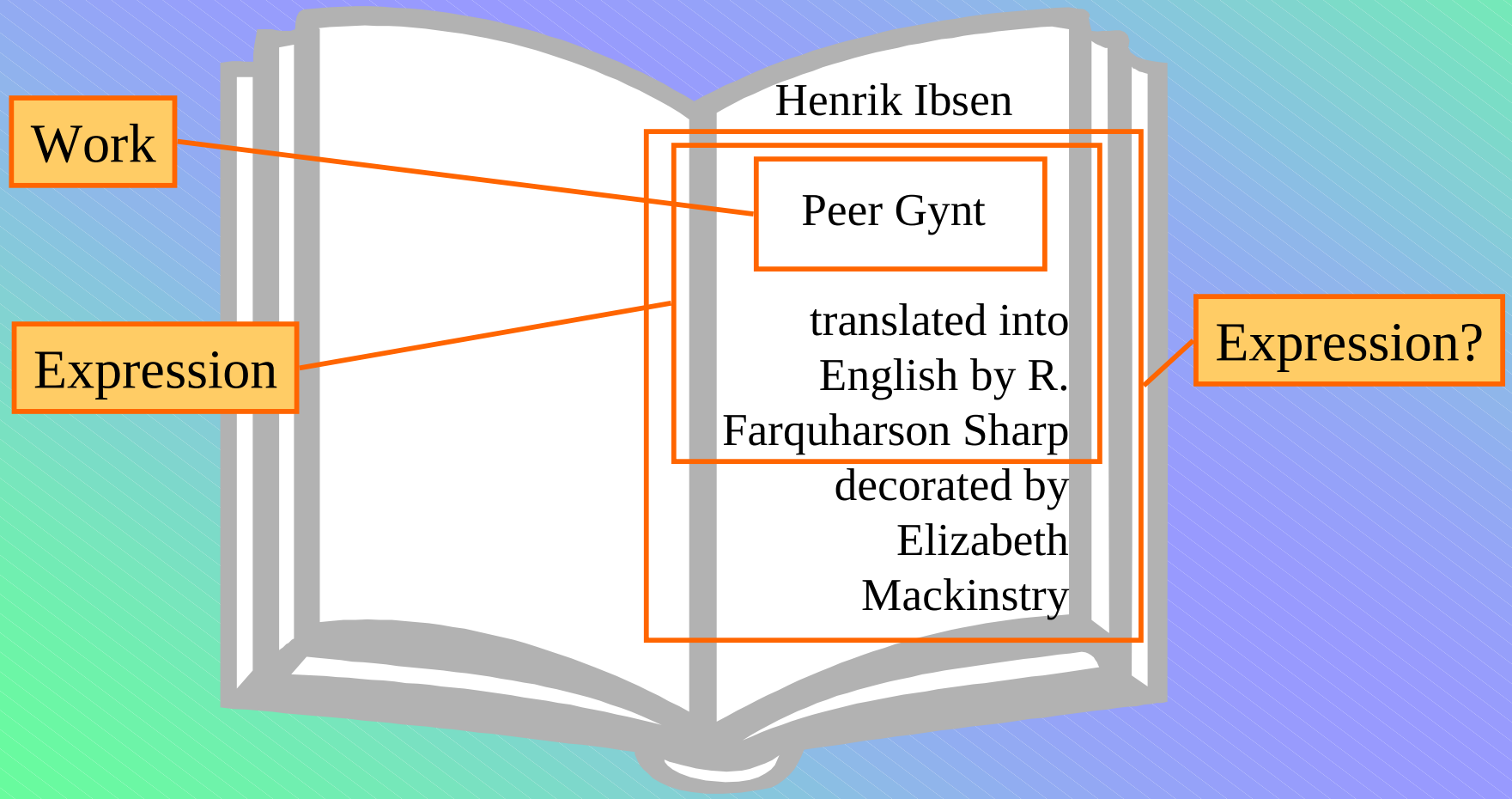
Some potential discrepancies in FRBR interpretation



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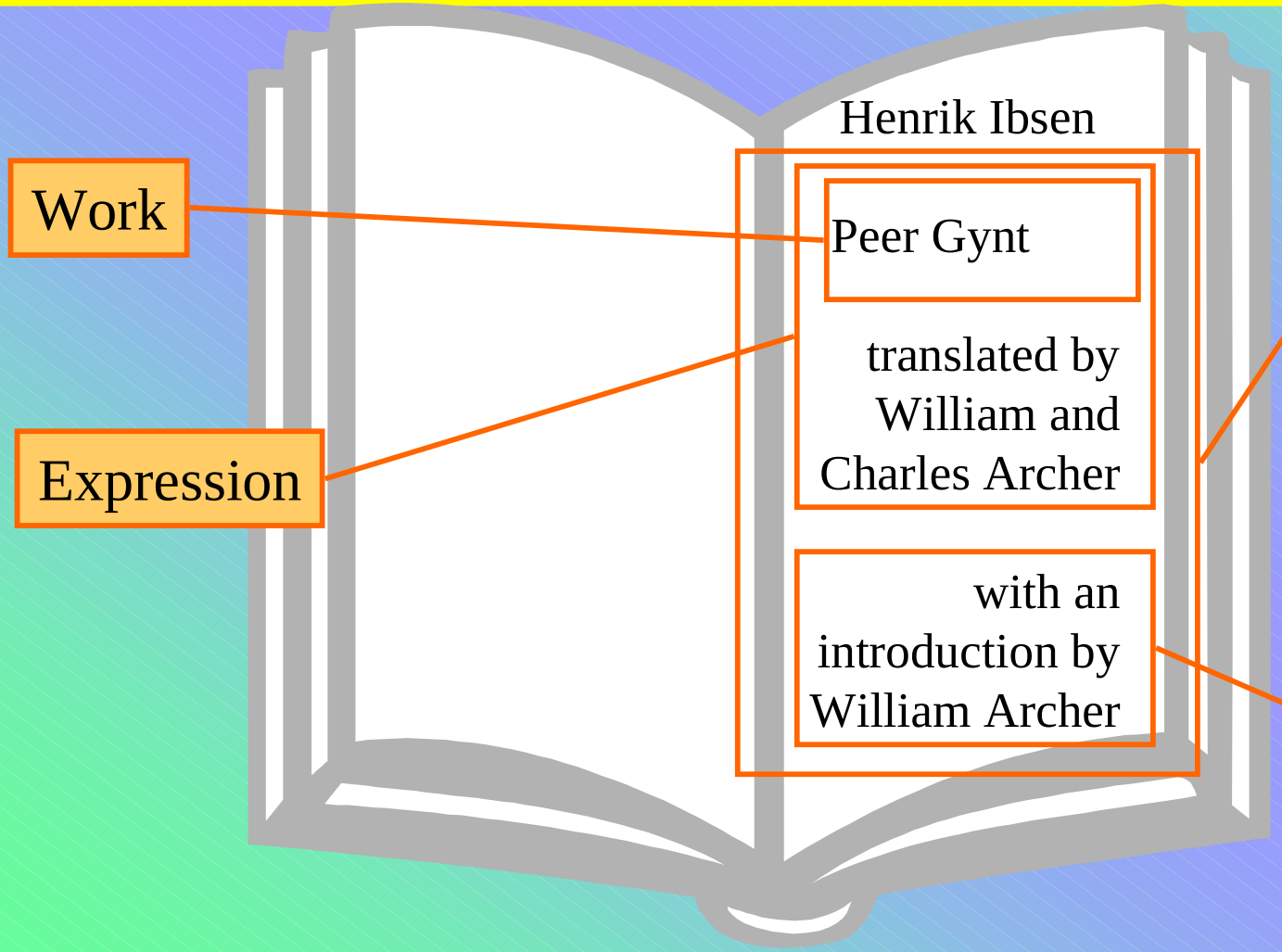


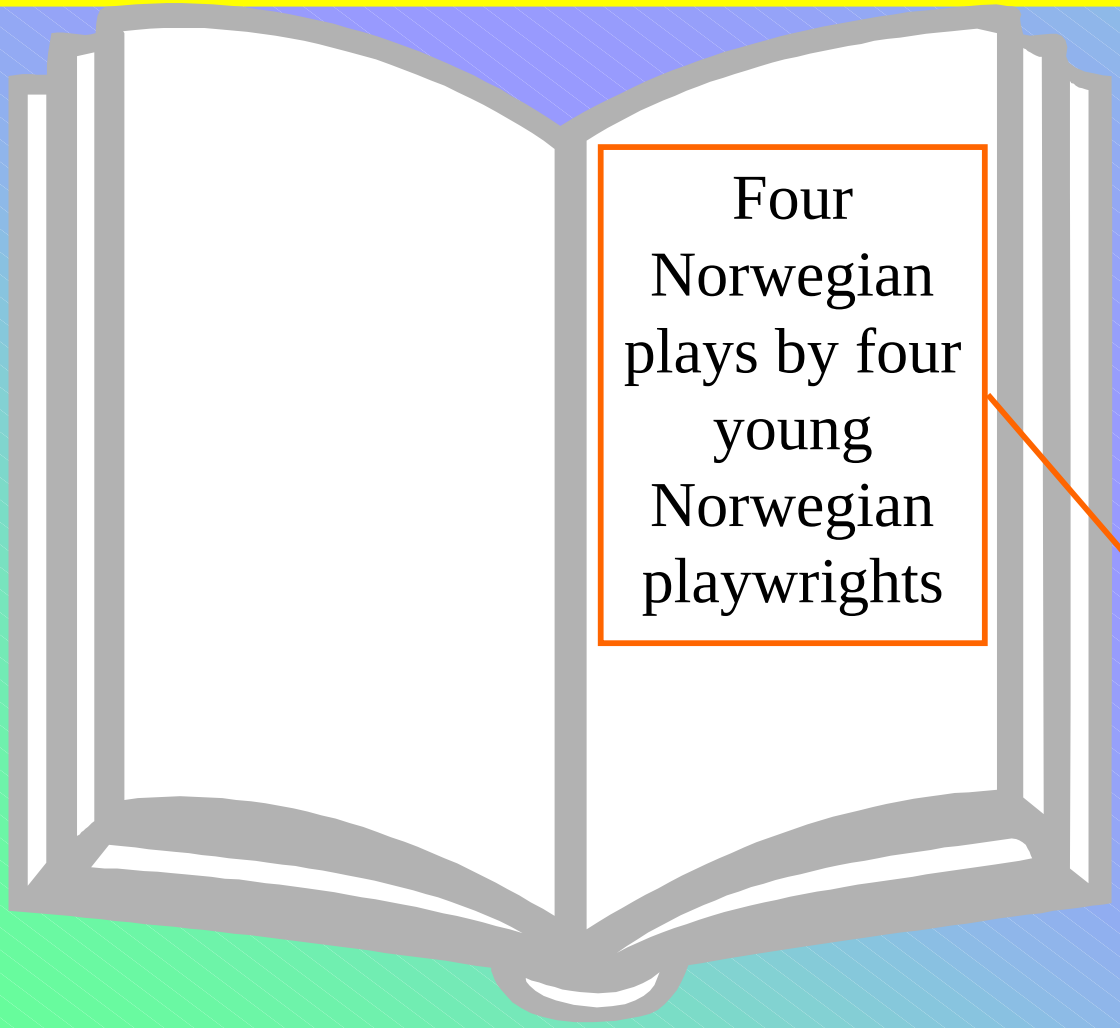
Work

Expression

Distinct expression?

Distinct work?

Some potential discrepancies in FRBR interpretation

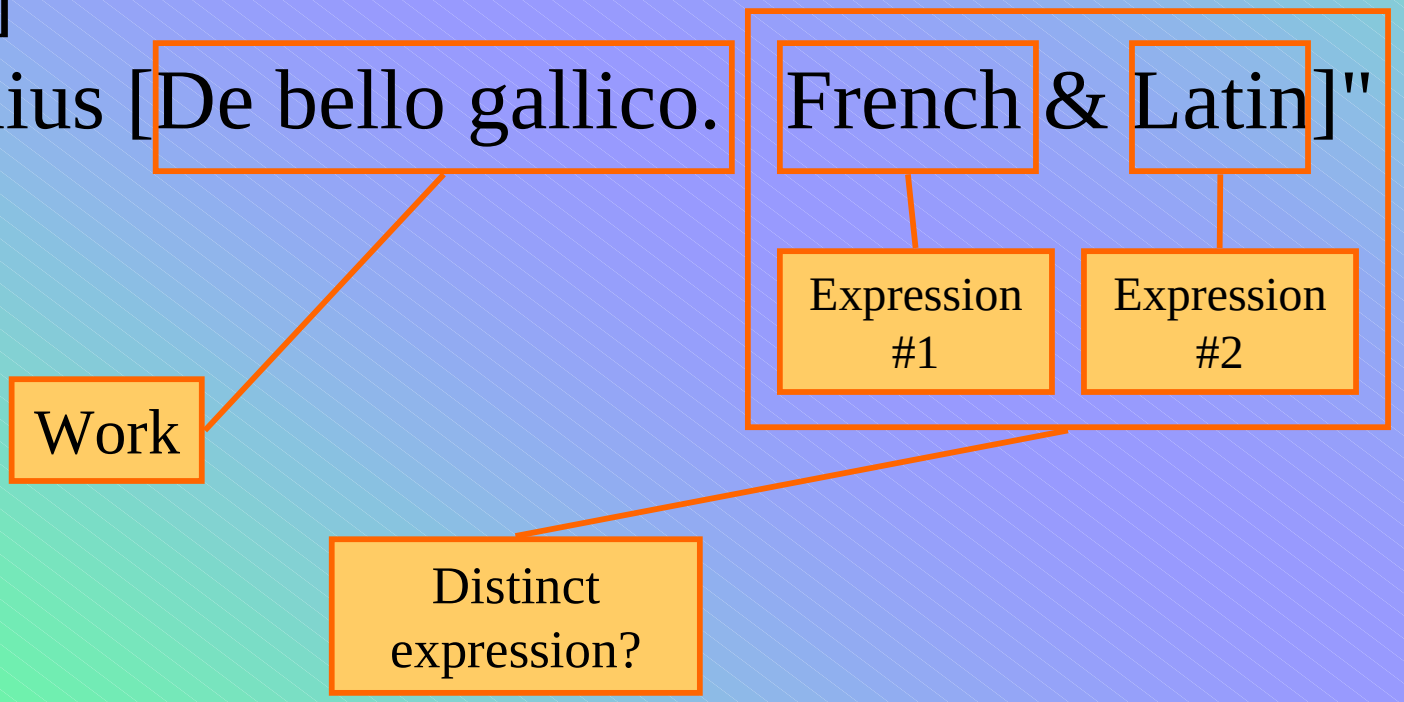


Four Norwegian plays by four young Norwegian playwrights

Is this a work? Or just the title proper of a manifestation?

Some potential difficulties with current codes

AACR 25.5C1: "if an item is in two languages, name both. […] If an item is in three or more languages, use 'Polyglot'.
[Example:]
Caesar, Julius [De bello gallico. French & Latin]"

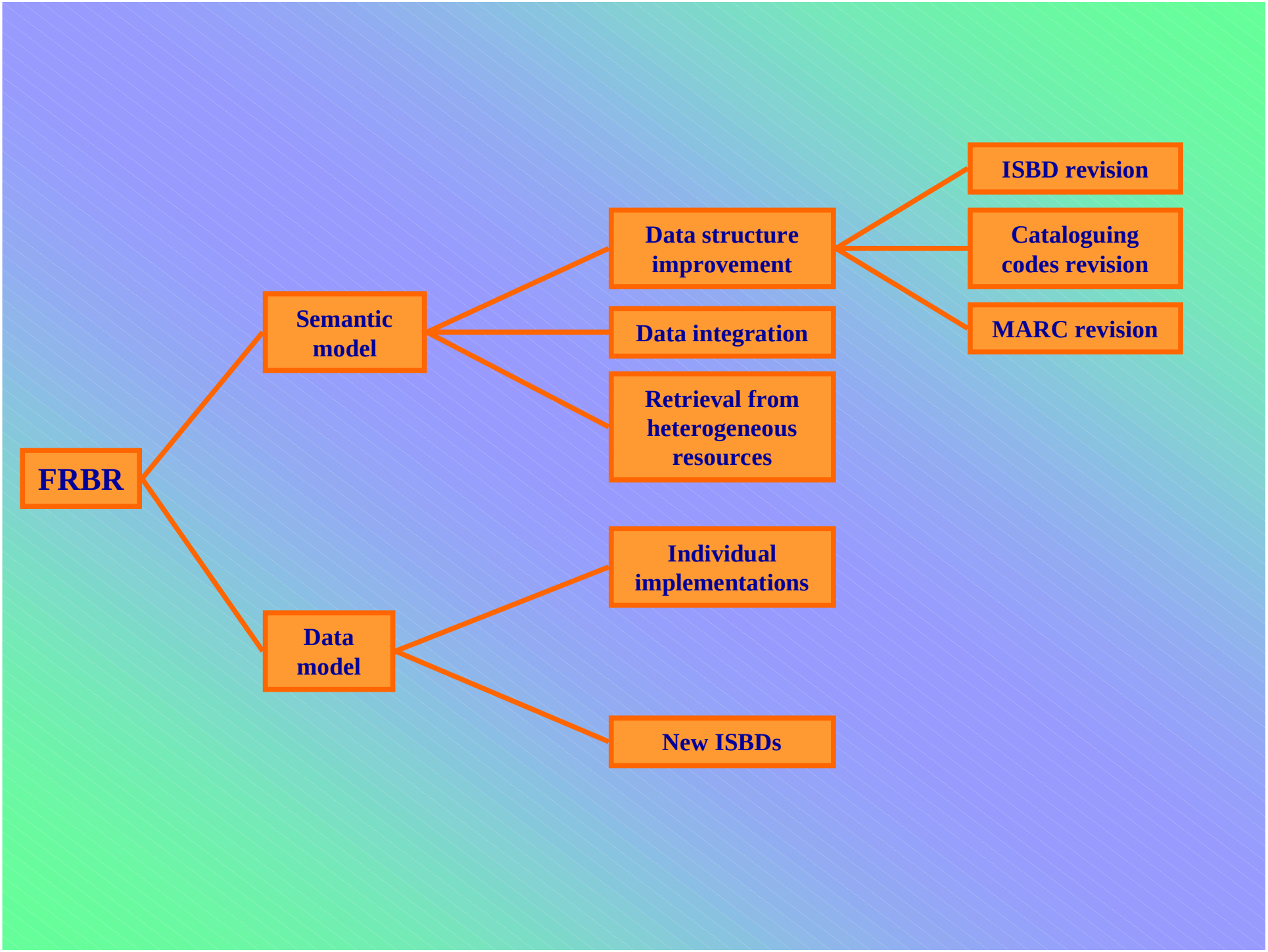


A practical example: AustLit Gateway

- **The first large scale implementation of FRBR**
- **All attributes have been redefined**
- **New entities have been introduced**
- **"We encountered significant issues relating to interpretation of FRBR and the pragmatics of implementation"**
- **"Do we have a new expression of a selected works or anthology if it includes 100 of the same poems as the first expression, but adds 3 new ones and omits 6 old ones? We decided yes – but that has raised issues: do we record the contents of each of these expressions? Only the differences? What's the pragmatic solution?"**

- Possibility #2:
  - consensus
  - compatibility / interoperability
  - standardization
- New ISBDs (or whatever their name will be)
- Conference for an international cataloging code?

- => radically changed ISBDs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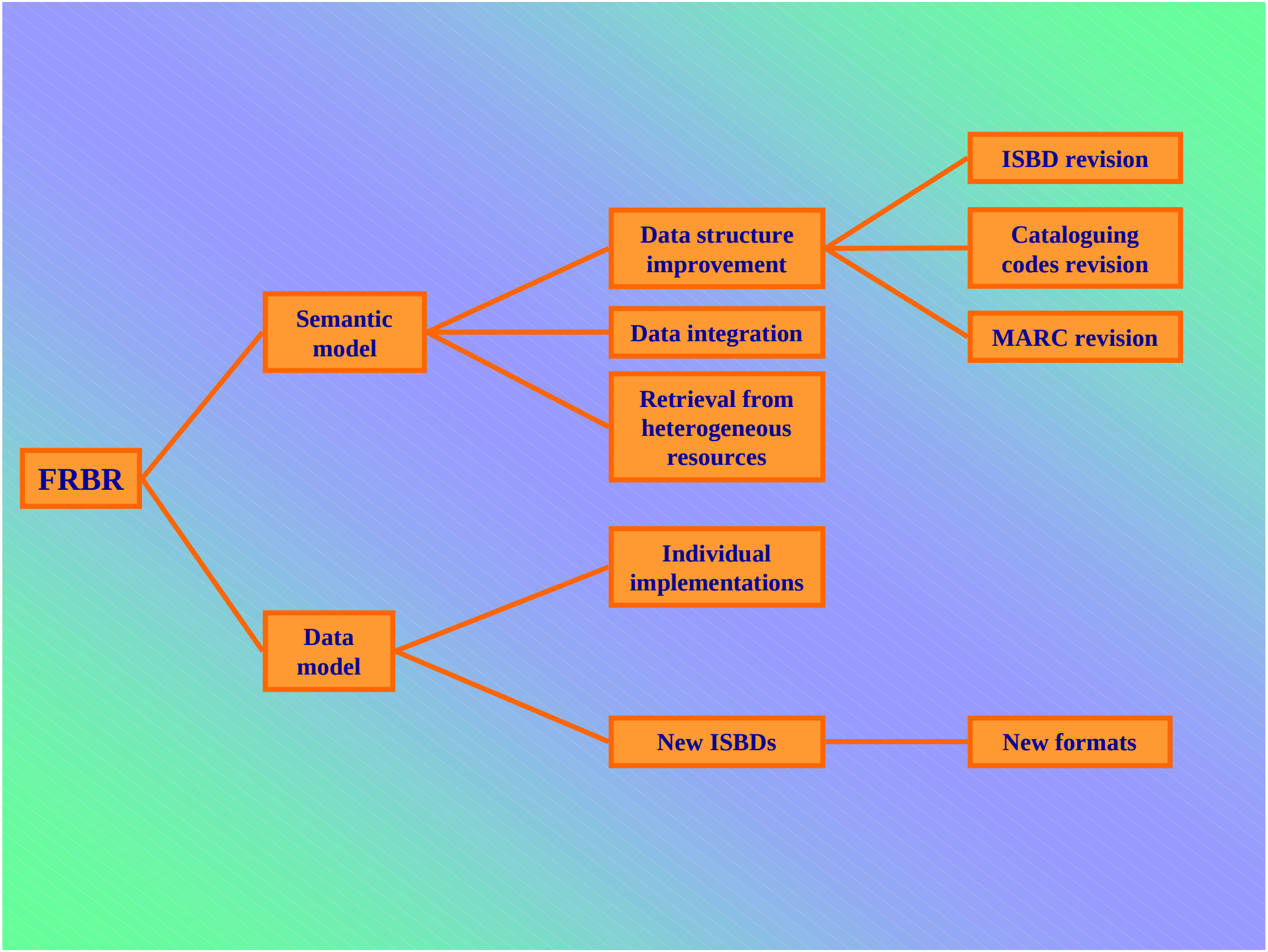
Implementation choices must be done

- **"One entity level = one record"? Or "flat records"?**
- **"Rule of three": mandatory? optional? *forbidden?***
- **Uniform titles and author-title records for expressions?**
- **Cataloguing = not so much to *describe,* as to *structure access points?***

The ultimate implementation step…

- **… An XML-based format?**
  (*cf.* Denmark's VisualCat)

- **=> radically changed formats**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New formats

To sum up:

FRBR

revised ISBDs and MARC formats?

radically new frame-works and formats?

Conclusions

- The more I know about FRBR, the more "I know I ought to know"
- FRBR is not an end, but a beginning
- FRBR is only one element in cataloguers' future landscape
- A motto: "Neither 'FRBR fundamentalism', nor lack of interoperability!"

Takk!