Cataloging three-dimensional objects: the funniest of the funny formats

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Introduction

The working title of this issue, "Non-Text Collections, or, Weird Things I have Catalogued," caught my attention. It sums up my 28-year cataloging career. The title conjures up images of the very real mounted black bear in Alaska and the equally real pig lungs here in Fresno. It has been my experience that Technical Services Departments in libraries across the land have many weird things that sit on the shelves, gathering dust, because nobody wants to tackle them.

I have been fortunate enough to have a number of very special people who have mentored me and have had a profound influence on my cataloging journey, including the great Nancy B. Olson (Mankato State, Minnesota, retired). I think of Nancy as the Grandmother of Modern-Day Special Formats Cataloging. I consider myself to be taking on at least a part of Nancy's mantle, doing my part to pick up where she left off. Other mentors include Michael Gorman (Librarian *Emeritus* and former Library Dean, California State University, Fresno), Jay Weitz (OCLC), and Deborah Fritz (The MARC of Quality). I have certainly benefited from the knowledge these colleagues and mentors have imparted to me over these many years.

One of my favorite Nancy B. Olson stories was when I took one of her special formats workshops at San Jose State University. She asked the students to work in small groups and catalog a chair. (This is a state school, so there were many mismatched chairs in the room.) In the end, if she could identify our chair by our catalog record, we passed! This provided for many great discussions … and it has always stuck with me. It was also an empowering exercise. If you can catalog a chair, you can catalog anything.

Cataloging Background

Our long and deep history of cataloging rules is geared toward the book, largely. In dealing with special formats, we turn to best practices from within our specialized cataloging communities (other catalogers who catalog similar formats.) In the U.S., we turn to the Online Audiovisual Catalogers, Inc. (OLAC) for special formats cataloging. I always encourage my workshop participants and article readers to join us. OLAC has an electronic list, OLAC-L, where cataloging experts in the field answer challenging queries. OLAC's Cataloging Policy Committee (CAPC) creates best practices guides. There are a number of best practices guides (all freely available) under the OLAC website, http://olacinc.org/ (I am currently chair of the OLAC CAPC Objects Task Force, writing the *Best Practices for Cataloging Objects Using RDA and MARC 21*, with planned publication in 2018.)

Defining Three-Dimensional Objects

This brings us to cataloging three-dimensional objects. What are three-dimensional objects? After all, every physical thing has three-dimensions. In cataloging, three-dimensional objects are "visual materials," excluding resources that are two-dimensional, projected by machines, or contain multiple material types (kits). In three-dimensional objects, the types of materials include: art original, art reproduction, diorama, game, microscope slide, model, realia, and toy. When cataloging three-dimensional objects, as long as we are in the MARC environment, one must consider to which of these groups our three-dimensional object belongs, because there's a code for that in the fixed field (Type of Visual Material) MARC tag 008, byte 33.

My current position at Fresno State has provided me with a lifetime supply of three-dimensional objects cataloging. We have a vibrant Teacher Resource Center (TRC) with many three-dimensional objects. Within this collection, I have cataloged many examples of realia for TRC, including: a number of various boxes of rocks and minerals, a box of seashells, and an occasional meteorite, tree rounds, tree leaves, and the like. I have also cataloged examples of models; surely, *Tall Paul* (an anatomical model) has become the most famous among my OLAC colleagues, as he has been on tour with me, giving workshops about cataloging three-dimensional objects across the country (see Figure 1). We have a bin full of hand puppets, which are "toys" in cataloging. We also have a good variety of educational games.

Figure 1. Julie Moore with Tall Paul, presenting a workshop on cataloging three-dimensional objects

I currently work in the Special Collections Research Center, where we also have many three-dimensional objects. Resources in Special Collections are housed there because they are rare, unique, and/or valuable. For example, our library is home to one of the most significant World's Fair collections in the world. Within this collection, there are hundreds of three-dimensional objects, ranging from a tiny (3 cm) souvenir telescope to a large diorama of the 1964-65 New York World's Fair (see Figure 2), one of only eight known to have been built (only three are confirmed to still exist.) These are items from the Donald G. Larson Collection on International Expositions and Fairs.

Figure 2. Tabletop Model of the New York World's Fair 1964-65, one of only three known to still exist

What Makes Three-Dimensional Objects Challenging to Catalog?

It depends upon the item at hand, but often, even the most basic core elements of cataloging description can be challenging to figure out.

Title

If there is a title at all, it may appear on the item, a label, on the box, or on an external source, such as a distributor's catalog or website. All of this falls in or around RDA 2.3.2.2, along with a prioritized list of preferred sources.

- Take a title proper from the preferred source of information as specified at **2.2.2** –**2.2.3** (Take the title from the manifestation itself. Included: container in which it was issued.)
- If there is no title provided within the manifestation itself, take a title proper from one of the sources specified at **2.2.4** in order of preference:
  a) accompanying material (e.g., a leaflet)
  b) other published descriptions of the manifestation
  c) a container that is not issued with the manifestation itself (e.g., a box or case made by the owner)
  d) any other available source (e.g., a reference source; website).

When instructions specify transcription, indicate that the information is supplied from a source outside the manifestation itself.

Make a note on the source of a title proper, if required (see **2.17.2.3**).

- And if there is no title, create one. Put it in square brackets. (This situation happens more often with three-dimensional objects than with any other format.)

No GMD (General Material Designator)

One of the most difficult parts of moving from *AACR2* to *RDA* for me, especially as a special formats cataloger, was the loss of the GMD. The GMD was an early-warning indicator that this item is not a book. It used to reside in the title field, 245 $h. For example:

245 00 $a [Pig lungs] $h [realia].

(See Figure 3 for an image of this object.) The GMD was problematic, because it was a number of different concepts bundled up into one word. The GMD was replaced by:

336 Content Type: a categorization reflecting the fundamental form of communication in which the content is expressed and the human sense through which it is intended to be perceived. https://www.loc.gov/standards/valuelist/rdacontent.html

337 Media Type: a categorization reflecting the general type of intermediation device required to view, play, run, etc., the content of a resource. https://www.loc.gov/standards/valuelist/rdamedia.html

338 Carrier Type: a categorization reflecting the format of the storage medium and housing of a carrier in combination with the type of intermediation device required to view, play, run, etc., the content of a resource. https://www.loc.gov/standards/valuelist/rdacarrier.html

In the example below, we removed all of the GMDs in our catalog for consistency. While I was sure that the sky would fall, I was surprised that nobody noticed. (Well, aside from the catalogers and a couple of music professors, they did not complain, anyway.) We adjusted to this big change, and we have moved on.

245 00 $a [Pig lungs].
336     $a three-dimensional form $b tdf $2 rdacontent
337     $a unmediated $b n $2 rdamedia
338     $a object $b nr $2 rdacarrier

Figure 3. Pig lungs (complete with a tactile cancerous tumor; used to demonstrate the effects of smoking on human lungs)

Other 3XX Fields and Challenges

If one visits the 3XX fields in MARC Bibliographic, http://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd3xx.html one finds a dizzying array of new 3XX fields that may be used to enhance description. Many of these elements would have formerly resided in the 300 field for physical description, or possibly the 5XX notes fields. Recently, I was cataloging American Indian baskets. In the old *AACR2* days, the 300 would not have been a challenge. Now, it seems that we can also use these other 3XX fields, especially the 34X and 38X fields, often connected with even more controlled vocabulary lists. The 340 field, for example, is for Physical Medium. I have discussed this on the list, asking about which controlled vocabulary lists to use for these 3XX fields. I was referred to the RDA Registry Site for controlled vocabulary. RDA Material: http://www.rdaregistry.info/termList/RDAMaterial/

I was cataloging pine needle baskets. My choices were between the terms "Wood" or "Texture," neither of which seemed adequate. Others recommended that I use terms from the more thorough *Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus*. Still others referred me to *Cataloging Cultural Objects* for cataloging these kinds of cultural materials. Additionally, it is important to me to bring out the name of the basket weaver and their tribal affiliation. All of those relationships to this basket help us to provide the cultural context from which this basket came.

The 380 field, Form of Work, seems similar (even redundant) to the 655 Genre heading. The 388 field, Time Period of Creation, is intriguing to me. I have cataloged many rocks, minerals, meteorites, geodes, and fossils. I am particularly interested in fossils. I wonder if we could use the 388 field to indicate the geologic time period as evidenced by a particular fossil, for example: Triassic, Jurassic, or Cretaceous. I still have many more questions than answers about these newer 3XX fields.

RDA Demands Precise Data

My whole point in bringing up these 3XX fields (and later, the 264 fields) is that as we move forward with RDA and MARC, we find an unpacking of many of our old, familiar MARC fields that formerly carried multiple uses and concepts. These are being parsed into other more specific MARC fields with more precise meaning.

Chris Oliver, McGill University, explained that RDA demands precise data (Oliver, 2011). Each element should be precise and distinctly defined. Each element needs to contain only one kind of data. Precise data equals usable data. Each element has the potential to be used to search, index, and to build meaningful displays of data. Chris Oliver authored *Introducing RDA: A Guide to the Basics* (Oliver, 2010).

Years later, we catalogers are continuing on this path of describing resources with more precise data. Apparently, this is in hopes of linking our library bibliographic data to the semantic web, (or the web of data, or big data), and linked data, using triple stores with RDF and more. One thing that I have always appreciated about being a cataloger: there is always something new to learn, just around the corner.

Production, Publication, Distribution, Manufacture, and Copyright Notice

Another area where we are seeing this unpacking and repackaging is with the Publication statement that used to be in the 260 field. Now the data elements that used to be in the 260 are entered into the 264 field to exact more precision.

Let's take my anatomical model, *Tall Paul*, for example. In the olden days, I cataloged *Tall Paul* with the following 260 field:

260    $a Skokie, Illinois : $b Anatomical Chart Company, $c c1996.

This data is now in the 264 field. The 2nd indicator defines the function:

0 – Production (RDA 2.7.1.1) "inscription, fabrication, construction, etc. of a manifestation in an unpublished form."
1 – Publication (RDA 2.8.1.1) "publication, release, or issuing of a manifestation."
2 – Distribution (RDA 2.9.1.1) "distribution of a manifestation in a published form."
3 – Manufacture (RDA 2.10.1.1) "printing, duplicating, casting, etc. of a manifestation in a published form."
4 - Copyright notice date

With these funny formats from our Teacher Resource Center or Special Collections, it is quite possible to have all of these functions. Only the first named place of publication, publisher, and date of publication are "core," however. RDA says that if you do not have the publisher elements, then you describe those elements as "not identified" in brackets:

264 _1 $a Place of publication not identified]: $b [publisher not identified], $c [date of publication not identified]

LC & PCC libraries have encouraged catalogers to supply the "inferred elements." In the case of *Tall Paul*, Skokie, Illinois, Anatomical Chart Company, 1996 these data elements are found on the item. Now, the cataloger really must think about the relationship of the Anatomical Chart Company to the item at hand. Is it a publisher? A distributor? A manufacturer? Three-dimensional objects are not really "published," in the usual sense of the word. They are not "published" like a book is published. This is a very difficult issue especially for those of us who catalog special formats.

In my quest for precise data, I turned to Google and searched Anatomical Chart Company only to find the following statement:

"Anatomical Chart Company is a part of Lippincott Williams & Wilkins within the Wolters Kluwer Health cluster." (https://shop.lww.com/search?categoryId=&query=Anatomical+Chart+Company#.

(However, please note that since cataloging this item, the website has changed and this text is no longer there.) What does that mean?! I even went to their live chat help, asking whether the Anatomical Chart Company was a publisher, distributor, or manufacturer. It became clear that she did not know. She was willing to sell me another Tall Paul! I did my due diligence, and I still came up empty-handed. I needed to just catalog it. I ended up "inferring" the data elements into a 264 _1 with brackets – that was one possibility.

264 _1 $a Skokie, Illinois : $b Anatomical Chart Company, $c [1996]
264 _4 $c ©1996

However, if I were to catalog it today, I would not bracket it especially since the information is on the item. The Objects Task Force members have discussed the fact that it would be helpful if we had an indicator that tells the cataloger that this company's name was on the item, but we do not know its relationship to the item, since this situation occurs so frequently.

Space, the Final Frontier; or, When There is No There There

With three-dimensional objects, there is often no publication, distribution, or manufacturer information at all. Take a meteorite, for example (see Figure 4). Those are naturally-occurring objects. If we buy a meteorite for our Teacher Resource Center, it comes packaged. Therefore, there is no 264 _1 for publication information, since it is not published. However, I do have distributor's information, so I can at least provide that:

264 _2 $a [Bethel, Connecticut] : $b Educational Innovations, Inc., $c [2011?]

If someone finds a meteorite on the ground and donates it to the library, that is clearly a naturally-occurring object. There is no packaging. There would be no 264.
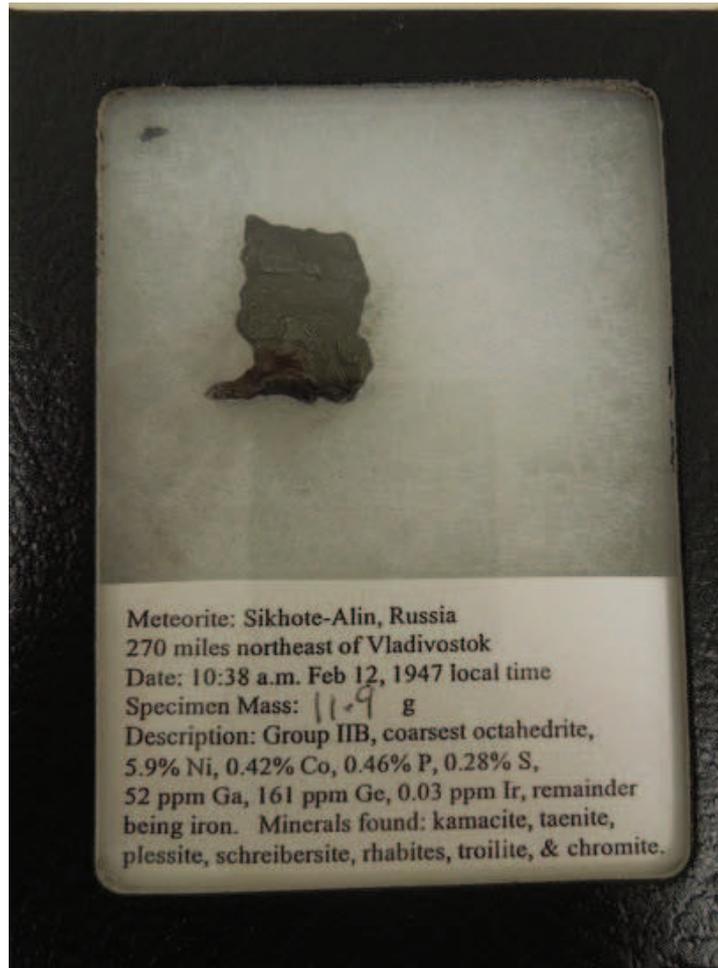
Figure 4. Meteorite (from Sikhote-Alin, Russia, February 12, 1947)

Cataloging: Keep Your Eye on the Prize

As a cataloger, we make hundreds of decisions a day … just about cataloging. It is easy to feel overwhelmed, which is why I always keep a sign by my desk that says, "Do not agonize!" – Jay Weitz (OCLC). The work we do is vital in helping our library users find the resources they need. The changes I have witnessed in cataloging over these 28 years are astounding. Now, I am waiting for the next big sea change to occur with Bibframe and Linked Data. Our future as catalogers continues to promise to be an interesting one, as we wade out into the Semantic Web.

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