

CATALOGING AND MANAGING FILM AND VIDEO COLLECTIONS

A GUIDE TO
USING RDA
AND MARC 21

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ABBREVIATIONS



The following abbreviations are used throughout this book. Where numbers and letters follow the abbreviations, they refer to text in the published editions listed below.

AACR2—Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, prepared under the direction of the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR, 2nd edition, 2002 revision, 2005 update (Chicago: American Library Association, 2002–2005). Accessible through Cataloger’s Desktop (<https://desktop.loc.gov>) and the RDA Toolkit.

AMIM—*Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual*, 2nd edition, the AMIM Revision Committee, Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, 2000). Accessible through Cataloger’s Desktop.

CC:DA—Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA), an ALA committee charged with developing policy positions on RDA, and discussing possible revisions and additions to the standard.

FRBR—Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, the conceptual model upon which RDA is founded. Written by a study group of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the FRBR Final Report was published in Munich by K. G. Saur Verlag in 1998. Amended and corrected PDF and HTML versions are available

free at www.ifla.org/publications/functional-requirements-for-bibliographic-records.

- IMDB**—The Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com). Founded in 1990, and one of the first websites to appreciate the potential of hyperlinking content across different web pages, IMDb remains the most extensive and authoritative source for information about films and television programs, and is indispensable to the film cataloger. It has been owned by Amazon.com since 1998.
- LC-PCC PS**—Library of Congress-Program for Cooperative Cataloging Policy Statements, accessible through the RDA Toolkit and Cataloger's Desktop. These statements provide guidance on the Library of Congress and Program for Cooperative Cataloging interpretations of RDA rules. They are shorter and less prescriptive than the Library of Congress Rule Interpretations (LCRI) for AACR2.
- LCSH**—Library of Congress Subject Headings, the most widely used controlled vocabulary of subjects for libraries. LCSH, though still important for film cataloging, is less significant for audiovisual than for monograph materials. Available through Classification Web (<https://classificationweb.net>).
- LCGFT**—Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms. Moving image terms were moved to a stand-alone thesaurus in 2011, so are now formally separate from LCSH. LCGFT offers a concise vocabulary of film genres and forms, based on literary warrant, with helpful definitions for the layman. Available through Classification Web and on the OLAC website (http://olacinc.org/drupal/capc_files/GenreFormHeadingsList.pdf).
- NAF**—Name Authority File, maintained by the Library of Congress and Name Authority Cooperative Program of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging and updated daily; available free at <http://authorities.loc.gov>.
- OLAC**—Online Audiovisual Catalogers, “an international organization for catalogers concerned with all types of nonprint materials.” Among other activities, OLAC publishes a range of useful and practical guides to assist film cataloging.
- PCC**—Program for Cooperative Cataloging, a cooperative effort to develop, clarify, and unify interoperable metadata standards worldwide, and increase the quality and availability of bibliographic records and authority files. PCC has over eight hundred active institutional members

and a secretariat drawn from LC staff. It has four programs, covering bibliographic standards, serials cataloging, name authorities, and subject authorities.

RDA—Resource Description and Access, a cataloging standard “designed for the digital world and an expanding universe of metadata users.” Accessible online by subscription through the RDA Toolkit (<http://access.rdatoolkit.org>). Annual print update editions are published by the American Library Association, the Canadian Library Association, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. Changes to the text of RDA continue to be made (over 500 updates were implemented in April 2014), so use of the online RDA Toolkit is advised.

INTRODUCTION

Why Collect Film?

A single grainy shot, forty-six seconds long, from a motionless camera.

It is noon. Streaming out of a French factory come women in long white skirts and wide-brimmed sun hats, men in caps and boaters, a dog pouncing at a bicycle, and finally two horses. Some of the workers look nervously across the street where, invisible to us, all too visible to them, sat Louis Lumière, their boss. They'd been warned to act as though nothing extraordinary was happening, and most importantly of all, not to look at the camera, but some still turn towards it as they rush past. It is a sunny spring day, and everyone looks well. Not one knew that they would be remembered that way for eternity, the permanent players in what was later known as *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (*Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*) (1895), popularly regarded as the first motion picture.

A few months later in Lyon, Louis and his brother Auguste projected a different scene to a curious audience. Their short film showed a train of holidaymakers pulling in to a Provençal station. At first hidden by the crowd awaiting its arrival, the train enters the frame on the right and approaches ever closer until it fills the left of the screen. The first audiences of *l'Arrivée*

d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat (*The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*) (1895) were (allegedly) so frightened by the oncoming celluloid locomotive that they rushed to the back of the room to avoid being hit. The Lumières may not have invented film (Louis Le Prince's *Roundhay Garden Scene* predated their first productions by seven years), but the pseudo-historical pack of panicked cinemagoers shows how, by combining technology, entertainment, verisimilitude, and human interest, the brothers forged a new art form. The early history of film is a tangle of uncertain patrimony, yet if anyone deserves to be called the father of cinema, it is Louis Lumière.

Ever since its invention, film has offered valuable descriptions and reflections of society and, for better or worse, it is the means by which many people engage with history, and interact with unfamiliar societies. Film is one of the most engaging, lucrative, and successful forms of popular entertainment. Film can also be great art. As there are good and bad books, so there are good and bad films. As two of the most popular media through which storytelling takes place, there are cultural similarities between books and films, and a symbiotic productive relationship between them. In recent years, between one-half and two-thirds of the films nominated for the Best Picture Academy Award have been based on preexisting literary works.¹ Spin-off publications promote cinematic releases, and are often a source of significant revenue in their own right.

The greatest libraries have always collected books *and* other cultural products. In 1906, Melvil Dewey wrote that

what we call books have no exclusive rights in a library. The name "library" has lost its etymologic meaning and means not a collection of books, but the central agency for disseminating information, innocent recreation or, best of all, inspiration among the people. Whenever this can be done better, more quickly or cheaply by a picture than a book, the picture is entitled to a place on the shelves and in the catalogue.²

Since 1989, the Library of Congress has committed to long-term film preservation through the Library's Audio-Visual Conservation Center, which adds twenty-five "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" films to the National Film Registry every year.³ The socioeconomic pressures that have drawn people back to public libraries have implications for the lending of films. A 2006 survey found that "Americans' biggest complaint about going to the movies is the cost."⁴ To some of the constituencies that libraries would like to target more effectively, films have greater cultural appeal than books.

And yet many librarians hesitate to embrace film, and develop film collections half-heartedly. This reluctance has a variety of causes, among which are an ever-present (if dilute) bibliophilia, a discomfort with the commercial aspects of the film industry, and unclear collection-development policies. But in their stated preference for books over films, librarians are not being old-fashioned; they are just reflecting a social prejudice that the former are somehow superior to the latter. The two are often compared as though they were in competition, and books usually win. “The movie was good, but the book was better,” is said so often that the phrase has lost all meaning. How many times have you heard the reverse? Yet the sentiment doesn’t really have any meaning to start with: books are not better than films, just as the Venus de Milo isn’t better than Titian’s Venus of Urbino. We may prefer one or the other, but there are natural limits to their similarities beyond which any comparison is nonsensical. As the sculpture and the painting both belong in the Louvre, so books and films both belong in libraries. In arguing for the relevance and importance of film, this volume calls for a greater appreciation of its intellectual and artistic capacities.

The film-shy librarian may believe that the physical and informational complexity of DVDs and Blu-ray Discs makes their purchase uneconomical. It is thought that cataloging film is difficult and time-consuming. A cursory glance at some of the bibliographic description out there will show a diversity of inconsistent practice. These concerns, although very real, can be addressed.

AACR2 was developed partly to accommodate non-book materials, but its intellectual forebears can be traced back to at least 1876, when Charles Ammi Cutter published his *Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalog*, the first “Object” of which was “To enable a person to find a book.”⁵ RDA is often found wanting when it comes to instructions on describing film, but unlike AACR2 and its precursors, at least it claims to have “the scope needed to support . . . comprehensive coverage of all types of content and media” (RDA 0.3.1), and it proposes to offer catalogers a nominally format-neutral standard.

Excellent rule books for cataloging film using the prevailing bibliographic standards have been available since 1981, when Nancy Olson’s volume on audiovisual cataloging was published.⁶ This book, and the more specific and comprehensive guidelines published by OLAC in 2002 and 2008, provided clear and accessible perspectives on cataloging films using AACR2.⁷ The literature has evolved with the standards. There are a few free online

guides to RDA and MARC 21 film cataloging, the most impressive of which is provided online by the Stanford University Libraries.⁸ This volume aims to expand upon the instruction found in these guides, and where necessary, reinterpret them. Even more so than with monographic material, when cataloging films issued on disc the standards are open to interpretation, for they are frequently unclear, and unappreciative of the complexity of both form and physical manifestation. The rules of RDA and MARC 21 are never broken here, but at times they are bent by necessity. My guide attempts to be the most comprehensive published to date, while recognizing that RDA is still evolving, and that new cataloging practices have yet to become definitive, standardized, or orthodox.

This book aims to be more than another guide to cataloging and managing collections. It also offers librarians a primer on comprehending film itself—its history, its formats, its vocabularies, and its participants. To catalog films, we must first understand them. Books are simple material objects. The way they encode and embed their content is recognizable and understandable to anyone who can read. Optical discs are more complex. It is no good instructing catalogers to enter the words “anamorphic widescreen” or “dual-layer” into particular MARC 21 fields. Catalogers need to know what these words, and the related alphabet soup of acronyms (PAL, NTSC, EAN, BBFC), mean. Just as you shouldn’t catalog a book if you don’t know what pages or publishers are, so you shouldn’t catalog a DVD or Blu-ray Disc if you don’t understand what you are providing a description of, access to, and guidance upon.

This complexity is not solely due to unfamiliar technical vocabulary. Catalogers know what functions authors, editors, and illustrators perform. What about cinematographers? Producers? Art directors? The role of an actor is straightforward, and we understand what it involves because, in the words of Marlon Brando, “acting is the least mysterious of all crafts. . . . Most people do it all day long.”⁹ We have a sense that the role of the director is important—they somehow make a film by telling everyone else what to do. But what does this mean when it comes to creating a catalog record? Do these individuals belong, in the old-fashioned terms, in a main or added entry? Should we include them in a statement of responsibility appended to the film’s title? Where else, if anywhere, should we record these people, and how should we qualify them? And what about, for example, the cinematographer—is his or her work significant enough to warrant inclusion in our catalog records? Is it ever significant enough that it might inform our purchasing

decisions? This volume aims to aid your comprehension by answering these kinds of questions.

Despite the prominent place of film in the social, cultural, and economic spheres of contemporary society, training in the cataloging and management of film library collections has always been “rare and inconsistent. . . . What [has been] surprising (and disconcerting) is the persistence of this gap in professional training.”¹⁰ I aim to go some way toward meeting this challenge by intertwining guidance on the technical aspects of cataloging optical discs with, to misquote Woody Allen, everything you always wanted to know about film, but were afraid to ask. The confident application of rules and the use of standard vocabularies and workflows undermines the assumption that collecting optical discs is an inefficient use of monetary resources.

Films are both temporally and physically fragile; this much is true. Demand for most titles drops off quickly. Optical discs are easily damaged. Yet good collection-development policies answer questions about the currency of titles and the physical storage of discs: you just need to apply the same principles as you do to the purchase of books. You need to be well informed. It is also true that the evolution in home video formats and current technological trends are altering the ways viewers consume film. We are moving from DVDs to Blu-ray Discs while puzzling over the fact that it seems like only yesterday that we were replacing VHS. The problem of technological obsolescence is a real one. But the enthusiasm with which librarians have pursued potential ways of delivering e-books despite even more rapid evolution of standards and gadgets, demonstrates how libraries can develop models to provide other digital material, such as streaming media. The ways by which we provide access to, organize, and describe these emerging technologies are not likely to differ greatly from our approaches to managing collections of optical discs.

This book is written for anyone with an interest in the cataloging and/or management of library film collections. I hope it will be useful both to librarians who are cinephiles and those with only a passing interest in film. It presupposes knowledge of the basic precepts of descriptive cataloging using RDA and MARC 21, and where cataloging principles do not differ between optical discs and books, this knowledge will be assumed. My principal aim is to provide a useful reference text for the cataloging of film collections, not a primer on cataloging per se.

However, I don't presume that readers will have an extensive knowledge of the history of filmmaking, or of optical disc formats. The vocabulary of

film, like that used to describe optical discs, can frighten people. This book breaks down and explains the language of film. If you already feel comfortable with this, and with the technical aspects of DVDs and Blu-ray Discs, I hope you will find new material to complement your existing knowledge. At the very least, this volume attempts to gather information that has previously been scattered.

The first chapter presents a history of cinema and the formats on which films have been stored and distributed, along with a brief historical overview of audiovisual librarianship. It will explain why DVDs and, increasingly, Blu-ray Discs, have become the preferred medium for sales of films after their theatrical release.

Chapters 2 through 6 discuss instructions on how to catalog DVDs and Blu-ray Discs with a description of the environment in which the production and distribution of film takes place. Avoiding the temptation to organize by means of FRBR categories, or other unhelpful pseudo-philosophical distinctions, I have themed the chapters under broad, practical topics, the better (hopefully) to assist with a holistic understanding. Introductory text provides the context to the content recorded in MARC 21 bibliographic fields. MARC may be unsuited to the age of linked data and cloud computing (and RDA seems to have been consciously developed with the aim of making it obsolete), but any practical cataloging guide is still more usefully organized by MARC fields than by RDA chapters. So chapters 2 to 4 provide three sequential groups of MARC 21 fields, dealing, quite broadly, with people, content, and technical features—or the who, what, and how of films on optical disc.

Chapter 2 covers the individuals and organizations who make film: its producers, cast, and crew. Descriptions of what film people do are presented alongside information about how to acknowledge this input in good cataloging practice. This chapter also outlines film's publication and distribution history, and the MARC fields in which these details are recorded, including the standard numbers assigned for the purposes of identification during distribution and sale.

Chapter 3 deals with film titles and the intellectual and artistic content of optical discs, incorporating subject and genre headings. The main entry in a MARC record for a film on DVD or Blu-ray Disc is normally a title statement. Its recording is complicated by the differing title placements, forms, and statements of responsibility found within the film and the physical object upon which it is stored. This complexity will be unravelled, and

guidelines given on the recording of accompanying material (e.g., additional special features) and related titles (e.g., novels from which films are adapted).

Chapter 4 covers the technical features of optical discs. The abbreviations and technical terms found on a DVD or Blu-ray Disc case will be explained, as will the MARC fields in which they should be recorded.

Chapter 5 covers the cataloging of television programs, and chapter 6 the cataloging of older formats, focusing on VHS and photochemical film. Recognizing that AACR2 is still alive, chapter 7 provides a sequential list of the MARC 21 bibliographic fields in which AACR2 practice differs from RDA.

Collection management is the topic of chapter 8, which covers collection development, storage, classification, and censorship, among other issues. The final chapter looks to the slow death of the optical disc, and its inevitable replacement by video streaming; it also explains what streaming is, how it works, how to catalog it, and the ways in which it might be integrated into library services.

A bibliographical afterword advises readers on how to keep up-to-date with contemporary trends in audiovisual librarianship. Useful websites, publications, and blogs are listed. For those interested in film theory and criticism, direction is given to introductory works. Finally, two appendixes: the first provides sample MARC records (in RDA format) for the range of material objects described in the previous chapters, the second provides images of the most common symbols found on optical discs and their accompanying material.

Notwithstanding the widespread use of optical discs for computer software, videogames, education and training, and archival storage, this book focuses almost exclusively on film and television. Throughout this book I give preference to the word *film* over its synonyms. The words *cinema*, *film*, *movie*, and *motion picture* are sometimes used interchangeably, sometimes differentiated. But they're also loaded terms—the Urban Dictionary states that *film* is “a word that people who think they are smart use instead of ‘motion picture,’ ‘picture,’ or ‘movie’” (www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=film&defid=5758914). It is the second-most popular definition but not quite fair—in Britain, for example, the word *movie* is rarely used even for the most action-packed blockbuster. Many film theorists maintain a distinction between *filmic*, the relationship between the production and the surrounding world, and *cinematic*, which relates to structure and aesthetics.

The three most commonly used words are distinguished by film critic and historian James Monaco: “‘movies,’ like popcorn, are to be consumed;

‘cinema’ . . . is high art, redolent of esthetics; ‘film’ is the most general term with the fewest connotations.”¹¹ This work agrees with Monaco’s suggestion that *film* is the least troublesome word. It is also in keeping with contemporary library practice in assigning subject headings: the Library of Congress (LC) uses the word *film* to refer “to works that are originally recorded and released on motion picture film, on video, or digitally.”¹² Unfortunately, as in many aspects of cataloging, we are burdened with the practices associated with superseded formats. LC was not clarifying the use of the word *film* against the perceived confusion with *movie* but with the literary warrant associated with the earlier use of *video*, which is still frequently used in cataloging and classification standards for a variety of purposes. When cataloging, we are sometimes forced to use this word, but in writing about the cultural objects of this book’s concern, *film* is favored as more neutral and global, with an older provenance than *movie*.

RDA is still subject to regular amendment, and the MARC 21 bibliographic format continues to evolve to accommodate it. Communities of practice have yet to develop definitive best practices. This volume interprets RDA one way—there are others. However, this book assumes that the implementation of RDA is a done deal, and that catalogers will be using this standard in the records they create. For better or worse, we now live in a post-AACR2 world. This volume reflects that fact while acknowledging that although some libraries may still be cataloging only in AACR2, most will be maintaining it for older copy-cataloged records, some libraries may not be using either format, and some readers may not be involved in cataloging at all.

NOTES

1. Of films nominated for Best Picture, 39.6 percent have been based on a preexisting novel, and a further 18.1 percent on a play. Nate Silver and Walter Hickey, “Best-Picture Math,” *Vanity Fair*, March 2014, www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2014/03/oscar-winner-predictions-nate-silver.
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9. Rick Lyman, “Marlon Brando, Oscar-Winning Actor, Is Dead at 80,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 2004, www.nytimes.com/2004/07/02/movies/02CND-BRANDO.html.
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