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 forståelsenen av, og videreutvikling av, regler for bibliografisk beskrivelse"
Usages of a semantic model:

- Retrieval from heterogeneous resources
- Data integration
- Data structure improvement
Among libraries: what is "heterogeneous"?

- ISBD is at the core of most cataloguing codes
- Cataloguing codes may differ
- Formats may differ
Retrieval from heterogeneous resources (2/3)

• ➞ What is easier?

• or:
Retrieval from heterogeneous 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?"

"Ooooops — your format is incompatible with mine"
Data integration (2/2)

• => What is easier?:

format \xrightarrow{\text{mapping}} \text{format} \quad (\text{we already do that quite often})

or: format \xrightarrow{\text{mapping}} \text{FRBR} \xrightarrow{\text{mapping}} \text{format}

=> 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
FRBR

Semantic model

Data structure improvement

Data integration

Retrieval from heterogeneous resources

ISBD revision

Cataloguing codes revision

MARC revision

Data model
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 \(\rightarrow\) ISBD), and to look for (if any):
  - Inconsistencies
  - Redundancies
  - Deficiencies (e.g., all "[not defined]" statements in Annex A)

- \(\Rightarrow\) revised, but basically unchanged ISBDs
Data structure improvement: revision of cataloguing codes

- **AACR + FRBR = revised AACR**
- **Current work of JSC for revision of AACR**
  - 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 $\leftrightarrow$ MARC21 mappings and his Extension of the FRBR model (http://www.loc.gouv/marc/marc-functional-analysis/home.html)
- Anyway, core difficulty = links
- $\Rightarrow$ 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:

  - FRBR21
  - UNIFRBR
  - NORFRBR
  - DANFRBR
  - UKFRBR
  - INTERFRBR
  - SWEFRBR
  - FINFRBR
FRBR

Semantic model

Data structure improvement

Data integration

Retrieval from heterogeneous resources

Individual implementations

Data model

ISBD revision

Cataloguing codes revision

MARC revision
Some potential discrepancies in FRBR interpretation

Work

Expression

Henrik Ibsen

Peer Gynt

translated into English by R. Farquharson Sharp

decorated by Elizabeth Mackinstry

Expression?
Some potential discrepancies in FRBR interpretation

Work

Expression

Henrik Ibsen

Peer Gynt

translated by William and Charles Archer

with an introduction by William Archer

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]"

Distinct expression?
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
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
FRBR

Semantic model

Data model

Data structure improvement

Data integration

Retrieval from heterogeneous resources

Individual implementations

New ISBDs

New formats

ISBD revision

Cataloguing codes revision

MARC revision
To sum up:

FRBR:

- revised ISBDs and MARC formats?
- radically new frameworks 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!