

A common international standard for rare materials cataloguing? Why? And how?

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Paper proposal

Topics covered: case studies of the adoption, adaptation or rejection of particular cataloguing standards at institutional or national level; the needs of researchers and other users, or of cataloguers and other data creators

Private libraries as special collections in academic and research libraries: description challenges and users needs: a case study

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Abstract

The creation, in 2009, of the *Old and Rare Books and Special Collections Section* of the Library of the School of Arts and Humanities (SAH), University of Lisbon, culminated with the adoption of institutional policies concerning collection development and the adaptation of international cataloguing standards to the description of these materials. As private libraries were considered part of the special collections, specific cataloguing challenges were posed in order to address present and future needs not only of academic researchers, namely in the fields of textual criticism, book history, reception studies and cultural studies, but also of librarians studying the history of the collections of the School of Arts and Humanities library.

These challenges became more clear and evident when the cataloguing process of the private libraries of the former Professors of Curso Superior de Letras¹, Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu and Augusto Soromenho, started in 2009. Both libraries were elected as case studies within SAH library considering the extraordinary number of

¹ Curso Superior de Letras was created by royal decree of King Pedro V in 1859 and the predecessor of the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon (Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa).

marginalia and other reading marks, particularly visible in the copies of the library of Professor Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu, as well as relevant notes or marks concerning the provenance of the books (former owners, donors, vendors, etc.)

In order to address the starting question *How to make this relevant information available for users?*, a critical analysis of the ISBD (consolidated edition) and UNIMARC bibliographic format manual was undertaken by the library team with the purpose of establishing an institutional description practice. The “Note area” of ISBD, with emphasis to the “notes relating to the copy in hand” (7.11) and “Notes block” of UNIMARC, particularly fields 316 (“Note relating to the copy in hand”) and 317 (“Provenance note”) were considered the critical ones.

A quite innovative approach for the description of those particular marks has been established for internal use by the library staff. Such is the case of the description of the existence of manuscript notes, for which, in the absence of an international standard format, an institutional normalized form has been established in collaboration with faculty. Concerning the provenance of the books, information about vendors, bookbinders, as well as the transcription of handwritten inscriptions have been made mandatory, along with the usual references to former owners.

In a near future the inclusion of a direct link from the bibliographic record (OPAC) to the digital image of specific parts or pages of the books where relevant notes or marks occur would be of great value to researchers.

Keywords: *Special collections; Academic and Research Libraries; Cataloguing standards; Users needs*