Introduction

by Yin Zhang, Guest Editor

Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records

Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) [1], a report developed by the IFLA Study Group on the functional requirements for bibliographic records, has been discussed and explored for nearly a decade. FRBR offers a new perspective on how to create and relate records about information packages for more effective support of user information tasks. FRBR has been embraced by library communities and is shaping the direction of future cataloging standards, policies and, consequently, library practice and information system development.

This special issue of the *Bulletin* discusses the background of the FRBR model, its impact, current status and new development, and critical issues and challenges facing FRBR research and development:

- By way of introduction, Pat Riva, current chair of the IFLA FRBR Review Group, offers her insights on the FRBR model, including its background, methodological framework, model structure and components, and impact on cataloging standards and practice. She also reports on the recent and ongoing FRBR developments of IFLA.

- FRBR is a complex conceptual model that is challenging and often difficult to understand. Allyson Carlyle explains FRBR in the context of conceptual models in general and cataloging models in particular.

- Based on a review of literature and a survey of FRBR projects, Athena Salaba and Yin Zhang

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provide an overview of FRBR applications in various collections and settings and outline the current FRBR implementation efforts for various purposes and categories.

- An important reality of FRBR development is the need to address legacy data such as the MARC records upon which the majority of current library online catalogs are based. Shawne Miksa and her project team offer a practical account and empirical evidence of how existing MARC records may be used to support the four user tasks defined in FRBR: find, identify, select and obtain.

- With the future in mind, it is important to explore and discuss issues and challenges facing FRBR development. Maja Žumer analyzes current FRBR implementation issues and suggests possible ways to address those issues and foster FRBR implementation.

- Finally, Yin Zhang and Athena Salaba highlight the most critical issues facing FRBR research and practice as determined by a Delphi study exploring issues and challenges in the following FRBR areas: (1) the FRBR model, (2) FRBR-related standards, (3) FRBR applications, (4) FRBR system development and (5) FRBR research.

FRBR is essentially a conceptual model. Therefore, the understanding and interpretation of FRBR and subsequent FRBR applications and implementations may vary to a great extent. This is particularly true at this early stage of FRBR development marked by a lack of developed standards, guidelines and adequate examples. More research and development is needed to explore the application and implementation of FRBR for future retrieval systems that better support information seeking.

Resources Mentioned in the Article

[1]   IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records. (1998). *Functional requirements for bibliographic records: Final report.* UBCIM Publications– New Series. Vol. 19, München: K. G. Saur. Also available at: www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.htm