**Descriptive cataloging**

Descriptive cataloging is the first step in cataloging library materials. Descriptive cataloging involves describing the material first, then deciding the entries to complete the process. For the purpose of consistency, a reference book titled Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edit ion, 1998 Rev is ion (AACR2R) has been compiled and adopted by most libraries.

AACR2R,“General Rules for Description,” the most bas ic rules are listed. Some of the more commonly used ones are outlined here.

1. In formation for cataloging is to be taken from the “chief source of information.” The chief sources for different types of materials are stated in the relevant chapters of AACR2R. If the chief source is lacking, data can be taken from any source. (Rules 1.0 A1, 1.0 A2)

2. The description is divided into the following areas. Each area may have more than one element.

Title and statement of responsibility

Edition

Material specific details

Publication, distribution, etc.

Physical description

Series

Note

Standard number and terms of availability

(Rule 1.0 B1)

For ex ample, Edition is an area. Publication, distribution, etc. is another area, whereas Publication is an element.

3. These are the general guidelines for punctuation.

a. Precede each area by a full stop, space, dash, space (. – ), unless the area begins a new paragraph.

b. Use square brackets ([ ]) to indicate that data are taken from outside the prescribed sources.

c. Use an ellipsis (. . .) to indicate the omission of part of the element.

d. General material designation (GMD) is always enclosed in its own brackets ([ ]). (Rule 1.0 C)

4. To suit the needs of libraries large and small, levels of detail in the description are established. A library should choose the level that is most appropriate to its size. Three levels are pre scribed in Rule 1.0 D.

a. “First level” of description includes the following elements: • Title proper / first statement of responsibility, if different from main entry heading in form or number or if there is no main entry heading

• Edition statement

• Material (or type of publication) specific details

• First publisher, etc., date of publication, etc.

• Extent of item

• Note(s)

• Standard number

b. “Second level” of description contains more details:

• Title proper [general material designation] = Parallel title : other title information / first statement of responsibility ; each subsequent statement of responsibility

• Edition statement / first statement of edition

• Material (or type of publication) specific details

• First place of publication, etc. : first publisher, etc., date of publication, etc.

• Extent of item : other physical details ; dimensions

• Title proper of series / statement of responsibility relating to series, ISSN of series ; numbering within subseries

• Note(s)

• Standard number

c. “Third level” of description includes all elements of the second level plus other information that is important for the library user.

Depending on the needs of each individual library, the appropriate level of description is chosen. Usually small libraries choose the first level of description, while medium libraries choose the second level. Only very large research libraries or special libraries practice the third level of description. Small libraries are required to do the second level of description if they belong to a consortium and have a shared database with other libraries.