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UNDERSTANDING FRBR: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WILL AFFECT OUR RETRIEVAL TOOLS

UNDERSTANDING FRBR: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WILL AFFECT OUR RETRIEVAL TOOLS. Edited by Arlene G. Taylor. *Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. iii, 186 pp., ISBN13: 978-1-59158-509-, softcover, $45.00.*

Understanding FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) is a tall order, but this extraordinary collection of essays by experts rises to the challenge. The "book is written for librarians, bibliographic systems designers, library and information science faculty and students, and anyone else who is interested…" and willing to take the time to think through the abundant examples presented in the text. Since FRBR is a conceptual model, the essays are written to accommodate a broad audience. Not only is the intended audience broad, in terms of their roles, but also broad in the scope of interest in materials that might benefit from FRBR treatment – archival materials, art, architecture, cultural materials, maps, moving images, music, and serials.

At the heart of the matter are those essays that illuminate the relationship of FRBR to movements in the current bibliographic control environment – how FRBR relates to the new cataloging code (*RDA: Resource Description and Access*), how FRBR fits into the history of cataloging, how research has influenced the development of FRBR, how bibliographic families and superworks help fill out the model, and how authority control and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD) help make a bridge between the conceptual model and data. Although these topics are not for the faint of heart, it is exciting to see the model unfold across the bibliographic universe. The authors have admirably covered this ground in fewer than 100 pages, all with an apparent assumption that some previous knowledge help carry the themes forward. The essays are concise and document the extensive international involvement that may lead to international acceptance of FRBR and RDA.

In the essay about FRBR and archival materials, Alexander Thurman feels that the conceptual model "is essentially limited to the subset of archival holdings consisting of items not traditionally considered 'archival,' such as published works." While he makes a good point of describing archives as unique collections, some of the unique entities in collections are indeed well served by the FRBR model and would extend resource richness for researchers. It is true that treatment of such items may have to be different than "archival control exercised at the collection level." Consider individual musical manuscript works housed in the Arnold Schoenberg Archives at USC or a manuscript for *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser at UCLA; surely these fit perfectly into the FRBR model. As FRBR impacts future retrieval tools, there needs to be a way to bridge the perceived chasm between archival and library control. Murtha Baca and Sherman Clarke in the chapter titled FRBR and Works of Art, Architecture, and Material Culture, on the other hand, acknowledge the divergence of the FRBR model and Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO), but do find threads where the FRBR model could bring together related works.

Other chapters, such as Martha Yee's FRBR and Moving Image Materials: Content (Work and Expression) versus Carrier (Manifestation) and Sherry Vellucci's FRBR and Music, bring clarity to the issues surrounding materials that would benefit the most from FRBR. Following the FRBR structure and locating the attributes in MARC records reveals that automatic conversion of current MARC record to "expression level record" would be difficult because the data is scattered throughout the MARC record (p. 148). Vellucci rejoices that FRBR is the first model to accommodate the complexity of musical works and the existence of complex bibliographic families and complex bibliographic relationships. Yee points out that FRBR, as realized through RDA, does not fulfill the promised results solutions because it does not separate content and carrier, among other criticisms.

The publication of this work is timely, because vendors are taking steps to build discovery tools that utilize FRBR concepts. It is important for library professionals to understand FRBR concepts in order to grasp what is seen in search results. Beyond grasping search results, an assessment of what works, what does not work and why it is needed will help vendors knowledgeably shape discovery tools. Of course, underneath the discovery tools and the conceptual FRBR model is the bibliographic data. What are those essentials in the bibliographic data that make FRBR work? Many of the essays show in detail the kind of descriptive and access data from bibliographic records that is required to gather works together in a meaningful way (group 1 entities). Furthermore, the authors explain the role of access points in bibliographic records (group 2 and 3 entities) and illustrate why the presence and accuracy of this data is so important in filling out the FRBR model.

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