MOVING ON FROM MARC: AN EXAMINATION OF BIBFRAME
Plenary II Report, MLA 2014 Atlanta
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The second day of the MLA conference opened with a session on the Library of Congress's Bibliographic Framework Initiative, a platform that has been in development since 2011 and is touted as the successor to MARC. Kimmy Szeto began the session with an introduction to BIBFRAME. He stressed that it is important for libraries to find an alternative to MARC, because today's library users are looking for more than our traditional catalog entries, which are digital surrogates of physical objects. In order to create this better catalog, we need to first create data sets.

The "building blocks of metadata" are data modeling, content rules, schema, serialization, and exchange. BIBFRAME incorporates Linked Open Data, which uses URIs as identifiers, and links to other URIs via resource description framework statements, or "triples." In an RDF statement, the resource has a property which exhibits some value. Triples can also be thought of in the form of a statement with a subject, predicate, and object. These statements combine into "trees" of linked information, which then combine into a network of information. With no pre-defined schema, any connection can work. The building blocks of linked open data are RDF and the semantic web, plus open standards for serialization and exchange. Machines will be able to take this data and combine it in ways which allow for better search and retrieval.

Next, Kevin Ford from the Library of Congress gave a talk entitled "An introduction to exploring cataloging flexibility in BIBFRAME." The mission statement for the Bibliographic Framework Initiative is that it will "re-imagine and implement a bibliographic environment for a post-MARC world." The web site http://BIBFRAME.org was created in 2013, and vocabulary implementation experiments began in January 2014. However, some of the building blocks were in place earlier: URIs for people (and later organizations, places, and other entities) were started in part by the Virtual International Authority File, with URIs assigned from authority file information. In 2009, LC subject file entries, along with other LC vocabularies, were given http URIs, and are freely available at id.loc.gov. The British National Library, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, and the French Bibliotheque Nationale have all put bibliographic data online as linked data, along with many other organizations.

Many sets of linked data for music exist outside the library world, including DBTune.org, Musicbrainz, and the BBC. In this age of increasing user expectations, using persistent http URIs reduces maintenance and ambiguity, and allows a decentralization of data. This in turn allows for more flexibility in annotating and augmenting data by future catalogers – and users. Since it is web-ready and web-accessible, it allows more openness, leaving librarians to their areas of expertise rather than navigating the technology.

BIBFRAME is content model agnostic, so it will work with RDA as well as other content standards. BIBFRAME will replace MARC by allowing description and management for all types of library holdings including both physical and digital formats and by providing for data that supports bibliographic description. By using the RDF vocabulary data model and network-based technological protocols, the BIBFRAME ecosystem would allow library-produced data to better interact with data already present on the web. Persistent links uniquely identifying persons, organizations, or works will replace text strings, which will greatly reduce or eliminate bibliographic file maintenance. All users would interface with the same ILS web layer, which would not only be an OPAC, but also an interface for data input and access.

The core classes of information in BIBFRAME are: the Work (resource reflecting the conceptual essence of the item), Instance (material embodiment), Authority (either a local access point or one with its own URI, which enables data aggregation), and Annotation (assertions about the other core class elements, such as reviews and abstracts.) In a music-specific example, a compilation becomes a work for BIBFRAME purposes. For the compilation, there are two pieces of music, plus the "work" that is the entire album. The instance is the CD itself. Another way to think of this is that the work (album) contains a performance of a Dvorak piece, which is a performance of the composition, performed by the particular persons, all of which could link to instances of the scores, or a digital recording of the performance.

Currently, the BIBFRAME initiative is starting to test implementation ideas, continuing to add vocabulary, writing discussion papers and communication use cases, constructing a prototype BIBFRAME input tool, exploring the treatment of aggregate works (such as serials and collections), and testing different implementation scenarios.

Ford's presentation concluded with a brief demonstration of the current input form and a brief question and answer session.