

When Do We Include Coordinates?

It is optional to give coordinates in the bibliographic record, whether they appear on the map or can be determined from other sources. This is why Rule 3.3D in AACR2, 2002 Revision does not go any further in detail than asking the cataloger to give coordinates, which makes the interpretations for this rule as established in *Cartographic Materials: A Manual of Interpretation for AACR2, 2002 Revision* extremely important. It is within *Cartographic Materials* that the variety of circumstances surrounding the application of coordinates in the bibliographic record is provided in great detail, and with accompanying illustrations that make this process even more understandable. Unfortunately, most catalogers choose not to spend time giving coordinates as a part of the bibliographic description simply because it is Optional and does take a bit more time to do.

Although it is optional within AACR2 rules, current practice also says that one should provide a set of bounding coordinates when they do appear on the map, whether they appear at the corners or have to be extrapolated to form a bounding box around the extent of the mapped geographic area of concern. This author would like to urge all catalogers to provide coordinates in the record when they are given on the map, at a minimum. The reason for this plea is that coordinates are a very powerful means of describing a geographic area, allowing for the retrieval of maps and other cartographic items, and even other formats of materials if they have been georeferenced, which includes all or part of the area included. It is said that at least 80% of all information, no matter its form, has a link to one or more places. The Alexandria Digital Library's search engine has offered searching capabilities by this means since the early 1990s, and other ILS systems have, or are, building in similar capabilities. Imagine the power of attaching "place," other than through the use of textual geographic subject headings and subdivisions, to monographs, art works, serials, musical works, and all other forms of information and being able to allow our patrons to retrieve information on a cross-format basis!

One final argument for including coordinates in our bibliographic records rests in a new Library of Congress initiative to record geographic coordinates in the MARC 21 authority format, by adding the 034 field's coordinates content into authority records for places. MARC Discussion Paper No. 2006-DP01 will come before MARBI at the American Library Association's 2006 Midwinter conference for discussion and possible formal implementation. So, with systems in place to use coordinates as a retrieval mechanism, as well as this new LC effort to include coordinates in authority records to further enhance their use in bibliographic records, it only makes sense for all catalogers to assist in making geographic coordinates work beyond just being another line of data in a descriptive record.