Achieving the functions of a Uniform title, without a Uniform title?

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My perspective

- Familiar with American cataloging practice
- Work heavily outside of MARC
- Focus on metadata interoperability

Current environment

- Increasingly advanced retrieval systems
- Increase in metadata *not* in MARC/AACR
- Development of RDA

Now is the time to step back and think about Uniform titles. What are their functions, and are current practices the best way to achieve those functions?

Functions of a Uniform title

- Collocation
- Disambiguation

- Often *poses* as a work identifier
- Convenient label

Factors affecting the syntax of a Uniform title

- Structure
- Policy

Collocation and disambiguation

- Still essential functions of a catalog(ue)
- Uniform titles originally achieved these goals by generating a (pseudo) unique name-title combination, and using that string for (most) every occurrence of that work
- Relational databases and related technologies can achieve these goals with back end structure, regardless of the form of the name-title string
- Many ILS have made the switch, transparently to catalogers

Matching a query to a work

- No longer acceptable to expect a user to type in the exactly correct string in order to get the right results

- Many strategies must work together to match queries to the correct work:
  - Authority files
  - Matching algorithms from the IR community
  - Disambiguation steps

Work identifiers

- Uniform titles are *not* consistently work identifiers
    - Selections
    - arr.
    - Etc…

- Need to move towards:
    - System for true work identifiers (a [uniform] title could be simply a label)
    - Encoding relationships between works

Display issues

- Need a compact label to display to users to help them identify the correct work

- This label doesn't necessarily have to be stored; could be generated when the page is rendered

- Elements users need to see may depend on:
  - Search conducted
  - Type of work
  - Types of resources matched
  - Scope of catalog

- Will require structural changes to catalog beyond just Uniform titles

Some (incomplete) display possibilities

- Parts and arrangements, current

- Parts and arrangements, possible

- Further choices after selecting a work
  - Instrumentation and format
  - Add choice of language

- Catalog displays *must* be flexible!

Functions of a Uniform title, revisited

- ~~Collocation~~
- ~~Disambiguation~~

- ~~Often poses as a work identifier~~
- Convenient label

This label can be anything we want; use as much or as little from current Uniform title practice as we like

Thank you!

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- These presentation slides: <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/
  ~jenlrile/presentations/iaml2006/uniformTitles.ppt>