

## **Data Mapping Project: Comparing MARC, PBCore and VRACore**

The purpose of this paper is to do a comparative analysis of three different metadata standards considering its applications to the description of moving images. The selection of each standard was made under the criterion of having a representation of different fields – libraries, broadcast and images - in order to see if moving images are well described in standards that were not necessarily designed for their description with the final purpose of analyzing a possible metadata exchange. Therefore, I selected MARC (Machine-Readable Cataloguing), PBCore (Public Broadcasting) and VRACore (Visual Resources Association).

The MARC standard was created by the Library of Congress in the late 60s to provide an easy exchange of bibliographic data between institutions. It is a highly granular standard and, in spite of its age and complexity, it is still wide used. Thus, I decided to use it for this project, in order to test the ability of this format to describe moving images. The numerous fields and subfields offer a wide coverage of descriptions, from titles to other more detailed data such as funding or target audiences. It also offers a certain degree of flexibility, offering fields with controlled vocabularies and other without, which makes it useful for the description of many different items, including moving images. During the mapping exercise, all the fields proposed were covered by MARC, although some characteristics were not considered

directly in some fields, there was always the chance to accommodate the field to make it suitable for audiovisual description. However the main drawback was trying to find the exact and correct field – or subfield - in some cases the many different descriptors existing for one type of data, say date, makes very difficult to determine which one is the one you are looking for and field descriptions tend to have slight and not so obvious differences. To be able to use MARC an institution should consider that creating records in this standard requires trained staff, mainly because of its complexity and code system, and most of the times that translates to higher costs and time, but this aspect may be compensated with the ability of sharing data with other institutions.

PBCore 2.0 was a standard designed in 2011 by the Public Broadcasting Community, especially for audiovisual media (television and radio) for the description of analog and digital formats. PBCore was chosen for this mapping project to have at least one specific audiovisual standard to compare with the others in order to determine if a specific descriptor is the best choice for audiovisual archives. Based in Dublin Core Standard the objective of PBCore was to provide a way to fit information with other systems and to facilitate information exchange. Less granular than MARC, PBCore has 18 containers to include a total of 53 different elements. It is a very flexible and moldable standard; it has only three mandatory elements, allowing the inclusion of materials with little information. It has clear hierarchical structure and human readable fields that enables a fast recognition of data. It suits very well for audiovisual material, including fields related to this area, such as duration, color, tracks, channels, etc., and it considers data about digital files, including fields such as

encoding, data rate or bit depth. A very special feature is the Instantiation elements, which allow describing different moments in the life of the object, a very good tool for production and preservation purposes, although there are not specific fields for preservation data. However, it does not provide too much information about copyright or access restrictions, probably because it is designed for TV production, where public access is not a priority.

VRACore is a standard created especially for the description of visual works and image documentation. It was chosen for this exercise to provide a contrast between three very different standards. After doing the mapping exercise one can clearly tell that the standard does not work for the description of audiovisual materials, because it lacks of basic elements related to the description of time-based material and other relevant information such as summary or generation. However, one can find very detailed fields for the description of images and visual art works, such as agents, style period and technique, fields that would clearly not be useful in moving images. In terms of restrictions, VRACore has more controlled data values than PBCore, which reaffirms the flexibility of PBCore, although the use of controlled vocabulary is recommended in some fields to facilitate information search. VRACore also presents the information in a hierarchical structure, but that structure is ordered in sets, making the mapping process very hard.

As a conclusion, I would say that VRACore would not be a good choice to describe audiovisual materials, unless the institution can benefit from it, for instance a museum that holds visual artwork and audiovisual material where the metadata

system must be coherent to be able to share information between different departments in the same organization, for instance.

MARC and PBCore can both be used for describing moving images, but the implementation of MARC can be much more expensive and time consuming.

### **References:**

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