

# Defining Unique Bibliographic Entities for Shared Print Infrastructure

## Introduction

The following guidelines have been developed on behalf of the Unique Materials & Metadata Task Force of the Infrastructure Working Group of the Partnership for Shared Book Collections.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, “unique” refers to a distinct manifestation of a work, not an item (specific physical object). This definition is useful for systematic, potentially automated, identification of candidates for retention commitments or withdrawal. Applying this definition is challenging because more than one bibliographic record may describe the same manifestation; a single record may be used for more than one manifestation, either in error or due to differing interpretations; and manifestations may differ subtly, making it easy to conflate distinct records.

The guidelines outlined here focus on the complex relationships among manifestations and the records that describe them. This is not intended to negate the importance of items with special characteristics that differentiate them from other examples of the same manifestation (notable provenance, marginalia, fine binding, etc.), which is beyond the scope of this document.

The question of what constitutes a unique print monograph can be answered using guidelines as defined by Resource Description and Access (RDA)<sup>2</sup>, the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules 2nd Edition (AACR2 - superseded by RDA)<sup>3</sup>, the Library of Congress-Program for Cooperative Cataloging Policy Statements (LC-PSS PS)<sup>4</sup>, the Library of Congress Rule Interpretation (LCRI - superseded by LC-PSS PS)<sup>5</sup>, and guidelines published by the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services, *Differences Between Changes Within: Guidelines on When to Create a New Record*.<sup>6</sup> OCLC has synthesized these guidelines to formulate a concise description of when to input a new record.<sup>7</sup> These OCLC guidelines will be used as a basis for our definition of what constitutes a unique bibliographic item. OCLC guidelines should be consulted for more in-depth discussion of what constitutes unique as defined by when to input a new OCLC record.

## Means of Comparison

Uniqueness can be estimated using the following means of comparison:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sharedprint.org/about/working-groups/infrastructure/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aacr2.org/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://access.rdatoolkit.org/PolicyStatement/Index?externalId=en-US\\_lc\\_ps\\_landing](https://access.rdatoolkit.org/PolicyStatement/Index?externalId=en-US_lc_ps_landing)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/cds/products/product.php?productID=43>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ala.org/alcts/sites/ala.org.alcts/files/content/resources/org/cat/differences07.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oclc.org/bibformats/en/input.html>

- Item in hand with item in hand.
- Item in hand against bibliographic record
- Bibliographic record against bibliographic record

## Comparison - Primary Data Points

### In General

- Item to item comparison: Items should match exactly except where noted, below. Jacket art or book binding art may differ across a publication where all other determinations of uniqueness are identical. Depending on the context for determining uniqueness, one may or may not want to deem these iterations as unique. Strictly speaking, items such as these are considered identical in terms of bibliographic description. In situations such as these, there generally should be an accompanying note in the bibliographic description that says something to the effect of, “Cover art varies.” A local note may indicate which version the library holds, for example, “Library holds ‘autumn fields’ binding version.”
- Bibliographic record comparison: For all fields, any differences in abbreviations, forms of numerals, capitalization, diacritics, ellipses, initial articles, punctuation, or special characters should not be considered when determining uniqueness. Variances are generally the result of cataloging decisions, local cataloging procedures, or changes in transcription practice between AACR2r and RDA.

### Primary Data Points

- Form of Item:
  - Item to item comparison: Should match exactly.
    - For example, print to print, or microform to microform.
  - Bibliographic record comparison ([008/23](#)): Should match exactly.
- Type of Publication:
  - Item to item comparison: Should match exactly.
  - Bibliographic record comparison ([008/06](#), [5XX](#)): reproductions, facsimiles, Xerox copies, and reprints are considered to be unique from the original publication.
- Script:
  - Item to item comparison: Language script should match exactly. For example, Cyrillic versus Romanized Russian. Consider to be unique where all else is identical. Note that an item may not have had parallel script cataloging applied yet to an otherwise matching bibliographic record.
  - Bibliographic record comparison: Language script alphabet should match exactly. For example, Cyrillic versus Romanized Russian (Roman) alphabet. Consider to

be unique where all else is identical. Note that an item may not have had parallel script cataloging applied yet to an otherwise matching bibliographic record.

- Binding:
  - Item to item comparison: Where all other data points match, the only difference being the binding, the item is considered to be identical.
  - Bibliographic record comparison: Where all other data points match, the only difference being the binding, the item is considered to be identical.
- Language:
  - Item to item comparison: Language of items should match exactly. Do not consider language of cataloging in determining uniqueness. Consider to be unique where all else is identical.
  - Bibliographic record comparison (008/35-37, 041): Language of material should match exactly. This is not to be confused with the language of the cataloging used to *describe* the item. Consider to be unique where all else is identical.
- Author:
  - Item to item comparison: Should match exactly.
  - Bibliographic record comparison (MARC 1XX): The absence, presence, or difference in choice of form of author's name does not indicate uniqueness. Variances can be the result of cataloging decisions, local practice, or authority record variances.
- Title Statement:
  - Item to item comparison: Should match exactly.
  - Bibliographic record comparison (MARC 245): Variation in length of title resulting from cataloging decisions as to length of title proper (including parallel titles) should not be considered unique, nor should variations resulting from a difference in selection of title proper, for example, "Poetry" by John Keats (with Keats at head of title page) vs. "Keats Poetry." Any specific differences in wording of a title proper other than as noted, indicate a unique title. Differences in title subfielding should be ignored, e.g., where an entire title has been input into the \$a subfield versus splitting the title into \$a and \$b portions.
- Edition Statement:
  - Item to item comparison: Absence, presence, or difference in expanded forms of abbreviations, numerals, etc. (2nd vs second), can be ignored. Ignore "book club edition," "first edition," or binding statements like "paperback edition" where the other item is lacking. Otherwise, any differences can be considered to be unique.
  - Bibliographic record comparison (MARC 25[045], 5XX): Absence, presence, or difference in expanded forms of abbreviations, numerals, etc. (2nd vs second), can be ignored. Ignore "book club edition," "first edition," or binding statements like "paperback edition" where the other record is lacking. Otherwise, any differences can be considered to be unique.
- Publisher:

- o Item to item comparison: Where order of publishers vary, do not consider the item to be unique. Where there are specific differences in the producer, publisher, distributor, or manufacturer (including printer), item can be considered to be unique. Any differences in abbreviations, forms of spelling, forms of numerals, capitalization, diacritics, ellipses, initial articles, punctuation, or special characters should not be considered when determining uniqueness of publisher.
- o Bibliographic record comparison (MARC 26[04]): Where order of publishers vary, do not consider item to be unique. Where there are specific differences in the producer, publisher, distributor, or manufacturer (including printer), item can be considered to be unique. Any differences in abbreviations, forms of spelling, forms of numerals, capitalization, diacritics, ellipses, initial articles, punctuation, or special characters should not be considered when determining uniqueness of publisher.
- Place of Publication:
  - o Item to item comparison: Where order of publication places vary, do not consider item to be unique. Where specific differences in the place of production, publication, distribution, or manufacture (including printing), consider item to be unique.
  - o Bibliographic record comparison (008/15-17, 26[04]): Where order of publication places vary, do not consider item to be unique. Where specific differences in the place of production, publication, distribution, or manufacture (including printing), consider item to be unique.
- Publication Date(s):
  - o Item to item comparison: Should match exactly. However, the absence or presence of a publication or copyright date, variation in copyright dates (by themselves), variation in manufacture or distribution dates (by themselves), do not indicate uniqueness. Where publication dates vary, consider item to be unique.
  - o Bibliographic record comparison (008/07-14, 260): The absence or presence of a publication or copyright date, variation in copyright dates (by themselves), or variation in manufacture or distribution dates (by themselves) do not indicate uniqueness.<sup>8</sup> Where publication dates vary, consider item to be unique.
- Pagination:
  - o Item to item comparison: The absence or presence of plates (by themselves), preliminary paging or post-paging (by itself), differences of less than 4 pages from total (by itself) do not indicate uniqueness, otherwise, consider to be unique. There can be situations where plates are tipped in, or provided loosely, so they may be missing because they have been lost, purposefully removed, or fallen out.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, if a copyright date has been renewed so that following a new printing, the copyright date would change, but everything else remains the same. The same could be true of a manufacturing date.

- o Bibliographic record comparison (300): The absence or presence of plates (by themselves), preliminary paging or post-paging (by itself), differences of less than 4 pages from total (by itself), differences chalked up to differing cataloging methods (for example, i-iv, 5-167 versus 167 pages) do not constitute uniqueness. Otherwise, consider to be unique.
- Size:
  - o Item to item comparison: A difference of more than 2 cm may constitute uniqueness.
  - o Bibliographic record comparison (300): A difference of more than 2 cm may constitute uniqueness.
- Series Statement:
  - o Item to item comparison: Should match exactly.
  - o Bibliographic record comparison (490, 830): Should match exactly where present. Otherwise, consider to be unique. If lacking in bibliographic record, but not item (or bibliographic record) in hand, it may be considered unique.
- Accompanying Material
  - o While accompanying material may be noted in the bibliographic record, for purposes of considering uniqueness of titles, the presence or absence of a piece of accompanying material (e.g., a CD-ROM) should not be considered. This is a matter of validation to be addressed by programs retaining such items.

## Comparison - Secondary Data Points

### In General

Control numbers should be used as supplements to verify whether an item is unique. The absence or presence of a control number, and whether it matches, should never be used as a singular means of determining uniqueness due to cataloging errors, errors in transcription, or automated data management errors. Primary data points should be reviewed and compared as definitive marks of uniqueness, while control numbers can supplement a unique status as definitive, or call for a closer look where they match, but primary data points do not.

### Secondary Data Points

- LCCN (MARC 010)
  - o Should match exactly where present in both. If lacking in one, do not consider unique.
- ISBN (MARC 020)
  - o A paperback and hardback copy may be identical in all respects but have been issued unique ISBNs. Where binding type is considered to be significant, then the

paperback and hardback may be considered unique; otherwise, these should be considered as identical despite being issued different ISBNs.

- OCLC Number (MARC 035)
  - Where primary data points are identical but OCLC numbers differ, the item is not considered to be unique. This can happen where records have been merged in OCLC but the bibliographic copy still has the older, deprecated number, or where there are duplicates in OCLC awaiting a merge.
  - Where primary data points match and the OCLC numbers match, the item is not considered to be unique.
  - Where primary data points have been compared and it has been determined that the item is unique, but the OCLC numbers match, then the item in hand/bibliographic record should still be considered unique.

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[See Appendix A for examples](#)