To: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR

From: Matthew Beacom, Chair, JSC

Subject: JSC Format Variation Working Group

Below is the text of a letter written to members of the JSC Format Variation Working Group on 5 May 2004, informing them of the decision to discharge the group.

Dear JSC Format Variation Working Group Members,

At its most recent meeting (Ottawa, Canada, April 19-22, 2004), the JSC discussed the 6th interim report of the Format Variation Working Group. The JSC representatives and their constituencies were very appreciative of the work done on Chapter 25 and the proposal to work on GMDs and SMDs with the ALA group. The analysis of uniform titles and the suggested revisions to the concepts, terms, and rules for headings and titles were welcomed.   The willingness to work on GMDs and SMDs was appreciated. However, since the JSC discussed the Working Group report within the general context of shifting work from revising AACR2 to creating a new edition or AACR3, the JSC did not adopt any of the proposed changes to the rules at this time.

The JSC meeting focused heavily upon discussion of AACR3, especially the organization of Part 1, the role of a general editor, and a draft project plan for the completion of a new edition within three years. Thus, the primary focus of the JSC responses to the 6th Interim report in particular and to the future of the Working Group in general was the relation of the Working Group to further work on AACR3 under the direction of a general editor.

Overall, the plan for producing a new edition of AACR within three years suggests that the Working Group should now be discharged so that the incoming general editor (once hired) can direct ongoing efforts. The considerable contribution made by the Working Group will be forwarded to the general editor so that it can be incorporated into that process in some form.

The work on headings will be folded into the effort previously led by the Library of Congress to develop the AACR3 chapters on form of heading and, to some extent, into the work of the editor of the choice of access point chapter. The editor may well create a small group to work on this part of the new edition.

The editor will also subsume the work done on GMDs and SMDs. Initial decisions--starting points for the new edition--are to remake GMDs to capture both content information and medium (e.g. text and sound, map and image) and to analyze SMDs with a view to proposing generalizing or regularizing the structure of SMDs. Though it is

premature to say with any certainty now, SMDs may end up not changing much in the new edition. There is much work to come on GMDs and SMDs, and, again, the editor may wish to use a small group of people to develop this part of the new edition.

The Format Variation Working Group's liaison work with systems developers was seen by the JSC as vital. The JSC sees outreach efforts such as that of the Working Group as vital to the success of the new edition. This is far more than a product publicity matter. The AACR community and the JSC in particular need to develop rich relationships with external groups such as LMS system developers and the bibliographic utilities. As Chair of the JSC, I will be drafting a charge for a new JSC group that will focus on communication. Some of you may wish to be part of this communication-oriented group.

As Chair of the JSC, I want to thank you for the work you all have done. The Format Variation Working Group has in some sense been the JSC's Group of All Work. Whenever we had a task that needed some intelligent, concentrated effort by fearless librarians, the JSC re-charged the Working Group and set you all to work on a new task. You have performed wonderfully. This is truly a case in which the process is more than any particular end product. The Working Group energized the JSC, injected the JSC into new arenas--the MARBI Discussion Paper, the Friday FRBR meetings at ALA conferences and meetings, and gave the JSC a sense of what it could do as an active agent in the community. You have helped get us all--JSC, CoP, and constituent groups-- actively think through the consequences of applying ideas--new and old--to AACR2. Thank you.

Matthew Beacom
JSC Chair