

WHEN DO WE INCLUDE COORDINATES?

The attribute of geographic coordinates, while not considered a core element in RDA (see instruction 7.4), *is* a core element for those participating in the LC Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) – you must record coordinates of latitude and longitude whether from the resource or from another source. (See the **LC-PCC-PS for 7.4**.) Even so, it would be very beneficial to our users, and for extending the research value of digital cartographic resources, for all catalogers to always record them, even if one is not part of a formal program.

In OCLC it is required that we document coordinates in the bibliographic record if they appear on the map (it is *Required if applicable* whether cataloging at minimal or full levels). However, if coordinates do not appear on the map being cataloged one may *optionally* add these as determined from other sources, such as a world atlas or a similar map that does have coordinates on it. It is within *Cartographic Materials: A Manual of Interpretation for AACR2, 2002 Revision, Second Edition* that the variety of circumstances surrounding the application of coordinates in the bibliographic record is provided in great detail at **Rule 3D** “Statement of coordinates and equinox”. The accompanying illustrations make this process even more understandable. So, what was formerly an *Optional*-only step in the map cataloging process must now be incorporated into the cataloger’s work.

One should provide a set of bounding coordinates, whether they appear at the corners or have to be extrapolated when they don’t, to form a bounding box around the extent of the mapped geographic area(s) of concern. The reason for including coordinates in our records is that they are a very powerful means of describing a given geographic area; they are a retrieval tool that allows for finding maps and other cartographic items, and even other formats of materials if they have been geo-referenced, that includes all or part of the area covered. And from a GIS standpoint, coordinates allow for georectification of maps with specific points on the earth’s surface, which means we can do things like overlay a modern map on top of a historic one of the same place to see what has changed over time. 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. A very recent example of one of these new geospatial search interfaces is called MapRank, developed by Klokantech Technologies, <http://www.klokantech.com/mapranksearch/>. 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! Additionally, a recently new tool allows you to search for and add coordinates to your records even when they are not present on the map in an easy-to-use manner – the “Bounding Box Tool”, also by Klokantech Technologies, <http://boundingbox.klokantech.com/>

One final reason for including coordinates in our bibliographic records are that these are now required in the MARC21 authority record format, by adding the 034 field’s coordinate values into authority records for places. So, with systems in place to use coordinates as a retrieval mechanism, as well as the need to include coordinates in authority 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.