VRA Core 3.0

INTRODUCTION

The VRA Core Categories, Version 3.0 consist of a single element set that can be applied as many times as necessary to create records to describe works of visual culture as well as the images that document them. The Data Standards Committee followed the "1:1 principle," developed by the Dublin Core community, i.e., only one object or resource may be described within a single metadata set. How the element sets are linked to form a single record is a local database implementation issue. The order of the categories in the VRA Core 3.0 is arbitrary, and local implementations are encouraged to determine their own field sequence that will appropriately describe their data.

The VRA Core 3.0 is intended as a point of departure—not a completed application. The elements that comprise the Core are designed to facilitate the sharing of information among visual resources collections about works and images. These elements may not be sufficient to fully describe a local collection and additional fields can be added for that purpose. We also recommend the use of qualifiers with certain elements in the VRA Core 3.0 so that the data values contained in the element may be more precisely identified   For instance, a "Notes" qualifier to clarify the data may be an appropriate addition to many of the current elements. Furthermore, every element may be repeated as many times as necessary within a given set to describe the work or image.

How does VRA Core 3.0 relate to VRA Core 2.0?

The VRA Core 3.0 conflates the Work (W) and the Visual Document (V) element sets from VRA Core 2.0 into a single universally applicable element set. Core 3.0 retains the same order of elements, and where possible, the same category titles and definitions that were used in Core 2.0. Users of the Core 3.0 will wish to rearrange these elements in their local applications into sequences which reflect their needs.

Because work and image records use the same element set, a new element—Record Type—was added. This element defines the type of resource that is being described. While the Core elements pertain to only two types of records - the work and the image, it is understood that other types of records such as authority records may be included in a database structure. Like VRA Core 2.0 , VRA Core 3.0 refrains from recommending any type of data structure. Instead, it is hoped that the core elements will help to determine the types of data recorded in a visual resources database and that the concepts can be used to map between databases. However, two elements in VRA Core 3.0 - Record Type and Relation - describe or point to the record itself. A consideration of the record and its relationship to other records requires the acknowledgement of data structure particularly evident in the Relation element.

VRA Core 3.0 also includes a new "Rights" element as well as new category qualifiers.

What is a Work?
In the context of the VRA Core 3.0, a work is a physical entity that exists, has existed at some time in the past, or that could exist in the future. It might be an artistic creation such as a painting or a sculpture; it might be a performance, composition, or literary work; it might be a building or other construction in the built environment; or it might be an object of material culture. Works may be single items, or they may consist of many parts.

What is an Image?
An image is a visual representation of a work. It can exist in photomechanical, photographic and digital formats. In a typical visual resources collection, an image is a reproduction of the work that is owned by the cataloging institution and is typically a slide, photograph, or digital file. A visual resources collection may own several images of a given work.

The term "visual document", which was used in the VRA Core 2.0, has been eliminated because a visual document could be defined not only as an image but as a type of work, such as a preparatory sketch or an architectural plan for a building.

How do Work records and Image records link to each other?
How the VRA Core 3.0 element sets are linked to form a single record is a local database implementation issue; however, it is assumed that work records will be linked to the relevant image records. For many collections, the creation of two linked element sets to describe a work (e.g., a painting) and an image (e.g., a slide of that painting) will be sufficient. In other cases a work (e.g., a building) might be linked to multiple images (e.g., digital images showing different aspects of the building). However, it will become increasingly common to associate two or more image records with a given work record to document the existence of different formats—slides, digital files, photographs, etc. Naturally most people will not want to create more levels than necessary in order to describe the sequence from work to image. Often only two element sets will be necessary; however, sometimes intermediate sets will be unavoidable.

It is possible to repeat and link together the VRA Core 3.0 element set in order to more fully describe a work for which a "visual document" (i.e., another work) exists. For instance, one might use an element set to describe a building's structure and another linked element set to describe the" visual document" (e.g., a site plan). The image record(s) will then be linked to the appropriate work record. This will allow views of the building to be associated with the primary work (the building) and images of the plan with the record for the "visual document."

How does one Work record relate to another Work record?
Relationships between two works may be either essential or informative. An essential relationship exists where the described work includes the referenced work, either physically or logically within a larger to smaller context. With works that have an essential relationship, it is recommended that the Title.Larger Entity qualifier always accompany the title for the part.

An informative relationship between two works exists when the described and referenced works could stand independently and the relationship is informative but not essential either physically or logically in identifying either of the works. The link between the works should be reciprocal and the data values should include the identity of the related work and a description of the type

of relationship. Core 3 Relationship types are consistent with the for the DC Relation element. Dublin Core Qualifiers (Element Refinements) for the DC Relation element. A detailed list of types and examples will be included in the Guide to Good Practice: Cataloguing Standards For Describing Cultural Objects and Images (expected publication, early 2003).

Am I required to use every category?
Only those elements which are relevant for a specific record should contain data. There is no need to place any data value, including "n/a" or "unknown" into these elements to indicate that they are blank. There is no requirement to include a minimum number of elements in order to create a valid record.

May I repeat categories?
All categories and qualifiers are repeatable. Moreover, identical data values may be used in more than one category. For Example, works with no title may require a description based upon values that define the object type, materials, original location, owenership, etc. Values used in the title may be repeated in other categories used to describe the work.

How do I control the data values for each element?
The Data Standards Committee recommends the use of controlled vocabularies, particularly the Getty vocabularies and other standard authorities for use with many of the categories. No single authority will suffice for the entire set of the VRA Core Categories, Version 3.0 or even in many cases for a single element in the set. We suggest that collections compile a list of data content vocabularies and authorities which are appropriate for use for each field in their local applications. We also suggest that each collection limit the number of authorities or vocabularies used in each field, and, if possible, to indicate which authority has been used. We recommend that collections develop uniform ways of entering data into the fields of their local applications. Some of these issues will be addressed and resolved by the Committee when it compiles further guidance and recommendations for the use of controlled vocabularies.