

# BPL Incunabula cataloging guidelines

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## Overview

The following guidelines were developed organically over time. These guidelines are intended to enhance application of the DCRM(B) standard to the cataloging of BPL incunabula in order to achieve several outcomes:

1. The full and accurate description of each item in the BPL incunabula collection with respect to content, material characteristics, and provenance
2. The reduction of inconsistencies and confusion that commonly arise as researchers navigate across the various descriptive conventions used by major incunabula databases, namely ISTC, GW, and BMC
3. Enhanced ability to search the BPL catalogs for incunabula based on common areas of interest, including format, provenance, binding style, and typographical evidence

In order to achieve these goals, certain clarifications and modifications to the DCRM(B) standard have been adopted. These modifications were developed in keeping with the functional objects of DCRM, as enumerated in DCRM(B) section III.

In some cases, the following procedures were adopted in order to work around limitations of the BPL catalogs that affect the indexing and display of MARC data.

## Incunabula cataloging rules

### 0. Preliminary rule: adherence to DCRM(B)

When cataloging incunabula, follow the rules as set forth in DCRM(B), except with respect to the instructions listed below.

### 1. Publication information (MARC 26X and 500)

#### 1.1 Abbreviated statements

Enter abbreviated publication information in English in the MARC 26X field, generally following the format used by the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (day/full month/year, for example, *13 February 1490*). Put each subfield within square brackets.

#### 1.2 Transcription of colophon in note

If present, transcribe full publication information from the item in a 500 note, prefaced by a description of the source, for example, "Imprint derived from Colophon (s6 verso):" Transcribe colophons, or other sources, in the fullest form possible. Follow DCRM(B), expanding contractions into square brackets and transcribing early letterforms and symbols as instructed in appendix G.

### Example

Finis Narragonicę nauis per Sebastianum Brant  
vulgarĩ sermōe theutonico quondā fabricatę: atq;  
iampridem per Iacobum locher cognomento phi-  
lomusum in latinũ traductę: perq; pręactũ Seba-  
stianum Brant denuo reuisę: aptissimisq; concor-  
dantiis & suppletionibus exornate: In laudatissi-  
ma Germanię vrbe Basiliensi / nup̃ opa & p̃moti-  
one Iohannis Bergman de Olpe Anno salutis nrę  
Millesimoquadringentesimononagesimoseptimo  
Kalendis Martiis. Vale inclyte Lector.

MARC 26X: \$a[Basel] : \$b [Johann Bergmann, de Olpe], \$c [1 March 1497]

MARC 500: \$Imprint derived from colophon (t1 recto): *Finis narragonic[ae] nauis per Sebastianum Brant vulgari sermo[n]e Theutonico quonda[m] fabricat[ae], at[que] iampridem per iacobum Locher cognomento Philomusum in Latinu[m] traduct[ae], per[que] pr[ae]tactu[m] Sebastianum Brant denuo reuis[ae], aptissimis[que] concordantiis & suppletionibus exornate. In laudatissima Germani[ae] vrbe Basiliensi, nu[per] o[per]a & [pro]motione Iohannis Bergman de Olpe anno salutis no[st]r[ae] millesimoquadringentesimononages i m o s e p t i m o kalendis Martiis. Vale inclyte lector.*

**Background and reasoning.** Colophons in incunabula are often extremely long and detailed, containing a great deal of information, both directly and indirectly related to publication. While full transcription of colophon information is useful to researchers, the rules of both MARC cataloging and DCRM(B) often result in a reordered presentation, broken out across separate fields, that can make interpretation extremely difficult. These complexities are further compounded by the ways that BPL online catalogs break apart and present publication data.

Because there is value in both concise, uniform presentation of publication information and in full transcription of colophons, we have opted to do both. Thus, in the BPL catalog, 26X publication data is intended to facilitate quick and accurate identification of materials when browsing. This data is then supplemented by full transcription in notes, providing further evidence about production, and often revealing information critical for identifying editions and states.

## 2. Extent (MARC 300 \$c)

For editions lacking foliation or pagination, record extent in terms of leaves, rather than pages.

**Background and reasoning.** Within the literature, specific leaves, not pages, tend to be cited. This is particularly true when editions lack pagination, which is the case for most editions. In order to make internal citation and overall navigation easier, a great deal of effort is expended in matching extent to signature or collation statements. Adding inferred pagination places another layer of complexity into a description.

## 3. Signatures (MARC 500)

Precede the signature note with the word *Signatures* followed by a colon. Formulate signature note following Gaskell or, when necessary, Bowers

### Examples

*Signatures: a<sup>10</sup> b-z<sup>8</sup> &<sup>8</sup> [con]<sup>8</sup> [rum]<sup>8</sup> A<sup>8</sup> B<sup>6</sup> C-R<sup>8</sup> S<sup>6</sup>.*

*Signatures: a-f<sup>8</sup> g<sup>10</sup>.*

### 3.1. Full collation statements

Unless the edition is extraordinarily rare, give a signature statement rather than a full collation statement. If the edition is extraordinarily rare, or if a full collation statement (or the equivalent thereof) is not available elsewhere, give a full collation statement if considered useful, again following Gaskell/Bowers.

### Examples

*Collation: 4to: a-k<sup>8</sup> l<sup>6</sup> [\$4 (-a1, l4) signed; missigning h3 as h2]; 86 leaves, unnumbered (l6 blank)*

*Collation: 8vo: Aa<sup>8</sup> Bb<sup>10</sup> a-h<sup>8</sup> i<sup>10</sup> [rum]<sup>12</sup> A-D<sup>8</sup> [\$2 (-Aa1, +Bb4, Bb5, i5) signed]; 136 leaves, unnumbered. Signature on the first leaf of gatherings a-i preceded by a lowercase "p". In gathering f, the lowercase "p" is on both signed leaves.*

### 3.2. Interpolating signatures for unsigned editions

If the edition described is unsigned, formulate a *numerical* signature statement, putting the entire statement within square brackets. Do not interpolate alphabetical signatures. Do not use symbols to indicate that a gathering contains prefatory matter.

Follow the bracketed signature statement with a note, in parentheses, stating "all leaves unsigned."

### Example

*Signatures: [1-6<sup>10</sup> 7<sup>4</sup> 8-19<sup>10</sup> 20<sup>4</sup> 21-38<sup>10</sup> 39<sup>4</sup>] (all leaves unsigned)*

### 3.3. Referring to interpolated signatures in notes

When referring to interpolated signature numbers in notes, bracket the gathering number. When referring to individual leaves, bracket the gathering number only and follow it directly with a subscript leaf number, i.e., [39]<sub>4</sub>.

### 3.4. Blank leaves

In the signature note, mark the presence of blank leaves in parentheses, just after the signature statement. Use the format ([leafX]=blank)

#### Examples

*Signatures: [1-6<sup>10</sup> 7<sup>4</sup> 8-19<sup>10</sup> 20<sup>4</sup> 21-38<sup>10</sup> 39<sup>4</sup>] ([39]<sub>4</sub>=blank; all leaves unsigned)*

*Signatures: a-f<sup>8</sup> g<sup>10</sup> (a1=blank)*

Do not mark the presence of blank pages in the signature note. If considered particularly important, include that information in a separate note. Generally, note irregularities in signing or foliation in a separate note.

### 3.5. Signatures different from printed references

When a signature statement differs from the British Museum catalog, or from any other reference cited within the record, point this out in a separate note.

## 4. Bibliographic format and typographical information (MARC 500)

Record paper size/bibliographic format and typographical information in a single note, directly following the signature statement. If the signature statement is followed by notes about irregularities in signing or foliation, put this note after those.

This note should contain the following information, in the order presented here:

- ⌘ Paper size and bibliographic format
- ⌘ Number of columns (if more than one)
- ⌘ Number of lines and size of printed area, in millimeters, of a page of type that best represents the majority of the edition (preceded by an identification of the page from which this information was taken). Generally, use the first typical page in the edition. For example, if the first 8 leaves comprise a table printed in double columns of 20 lines, but leaves 9-100 are printed uniformly in a single column of 32 lines, take measurements from the recto of leaf 9. Note the page from which the measurement was taken by leaf number+recto or verso, e.g., "a4 recto."
- ⌘ A full list of types used in the edition (generally following *BMC*, but referring to *Typenrepertorium der Wiegendrucke* as necessary). When possible, note in parentheses where and how the types are used.
- ⌘ Miscellaneous typographical or illustration features (initial spaces with or without guide letters, woodcut initials, woodcuts, color printing, etc.)



Separate each section in the note with a semicolon. Present the information in the format of the following examples.

### Examples

*Chancery quarto; a4 recto: 31 lines, 142 x 96 mm; types: 92G (heading on a2 recto), 91G (text), 91Gk (a few words); heading on a2 recto printed in red; woodcut initials.*

*Chancery quarto; printed in double columns, a2 recto: 35 lines, 150 x 91 mm; types: 160G, 80G; initial spaces with guide letters.*

*Median folio; [1]<sub>3</sub> recto: 41 lines, 224 x 137 mm; types: 110R(2), 110Gk; initial spaces with guide letters; also spaces for headings and for Greek.*

*Chancery folio; printed in double columns, a3 verso: 47 lines plus headline, 213 (227) x 139 mm; types: 180(a) (title, headlines, etc.), 90 (text); initial spaces, most with guide letters.*

For further information about paper size and format, consult the [Needham Calculator](#). For further information about identification and classification of types, see Alfred W. Pollard's introduction to the British Museum incunabula catalog. The discussion of classification of types begins on page xix.

### 5. Citations (MARC 510)

Always cite at least the British Museum Catalogue, GW, Goff, and ISTC, even if bib data did not directly rely on them all. Cite any other resources as necessary, following the RBMS standard citation format.

### 6. Item-level descriptions (MARC 590)

Record item-level description in three separate MARC 590 fields, in the following order: copy notes, provenance, binding, bound-with [if applicable]

#### 6.1. Copy notes

Record here any information about the physical copy itself, besides binding and provenance information. Always note any missing leaves or portions of leaves, significant damage or repairs to the text block, rubrication and/or manuscript foliation, manuscript catchwords, presence of bearer types, illumination or hand-coloring, and leaf dimensions. Note other details as necessary.

Generally, the first portion of the note should record any missing content. The final portion of the note should record leaf dimensions. See below for examples.

Precede the text of each note with: *COPY NOTE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy [call number]*

### Examples

COPY NOTE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.402.11 no.2 FOLIO rubricated in red throughout. Blind impressions from bearer types on y5 verso. Leaf dimensions: 299 x 211 mm.

COPY NOTE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.401.2 FOLIO imperfect: vol. 2 only. Leaves 2y5, 2y6, and 3c12 wanting. Leaf dimensions: 362 x 247 mm.

COPY NOTE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.400.1 FOLIO imperfect: parts 1 and 2 only (through leaf [263], i.e., [28]<sub>9</sub>). Leaves [1]<sub>1</sub> and [2]<sub>1</sub> (both blank) wanting. Initial on [2]<sub>2</sub> historiated and illuminated in silver, showing a Dominican friar holding an open book, with vines in blue, green, pink, and silver running into the inner, top, and bottom margins. Rubricated in red throughout, with the large initial at beginning of part II in blue. Leaf dimensions: 458 x 325 mm.

COPY NOTE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.401.27 pf printed on vellum. Imperfect: comprised of 332 leaves, wanting [1]-[3]<sup>10</sup>, [5]<sup>10</sup>, and [39]<sub>4</sub> (i.e. leaves [1]-[30], [41]-[50], and [373]). [15]<sub>4.7</sub> (i.e. [138] and [141]) bound-in before [15]<sub>3.8</sub> (i.e. [137] and [142]). Pairs of pinholes (85 mm between each hole) in upper and lower margins of most leaves. Blind impressions around columns of text throughout, similar to those described by Schwab in "Some Signs of Stereotyping in the Yale Vellum Copy of the Mainz Catholicon." Two- and three-line initials, line fillers, section headings, capitals, and paragraphs rubricated in blue and red. Larger initials in blue and red with red filigree. Many leaves signed in early/contemporary manuscript. Modern pencil foliation in upper right corner of each recto. Leaf dimensions: 400 x 292 mm.

## 6.2. Provenance notes

Record here any information about provenance. Include descriptions of both visible evidence (bookplates, stamps, inscriptions, dealer's notes and codes, etc.) as well as inferred information about previous ownership taken from other sources, such as accessions paperwork or published descriptions. Use discretion in deciding when and when not to transcribe inscriptions.

Include in the provenance note descriptions of any evidence of use or reading, including marginalia, underlining, striking out of text, etc. If marginalia or inscriptions appear contemporary or nearly contemporary to the edition, generally prefer the descriptor "early/contemporary," for example, "Early/contemporary marginalia throughout." If later, date by approximate century when possible, for example, "Ca. 17th-century inscription on title page."

Do not describe illumination, coloring, foliation, and signatures (in the bibliographic sense) in the provenance note. The final portion of the provenance note should include type of acquisition, source of acquisition, and month/year of acquisition, for example, "Purchased from E.P. Goldschmidt in October, 1927."

Precede the text of each note with: *PROVENANCE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy [call number]*



## Examples

*PROVENANCE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.405.76 purchased in April, 1937.*

*PROVENANCE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.405.107 with early/contemporary inscription on verso of final leaf: "Ces presentes heures appartiennent a dame Blanche rat. fame de sire Jehan pichonat, Marchant demorent en la ruee saint denis a lenseigne de saint nicolas pres saint Innocent a Paris." Early inscription in lower left margin of title page erased. This copy described in the catalog of the Didot library. Purchased from Rosenthal in March, 1939.*

*PROVENANCE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.404.91 FOLIO with early/contemporary Latin liturgical inscription on front pastedown and free endpaper. Early/contemporary marginalia, in various hands and in red and black ink, throughout. Date and source of acquisition unknown.*

*PROVENANCE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.404.74: on front pastedown, two Latin epigrams in the same early hand. The first: "Germanos dicit stolidi ebrietate teneri // Italus: Et sensus praecipitarimeo. // Ita lete dico pueri terebrare cloacas, // Naturae leges: et pia iura negans. // Quis tollerabilior quaeso dic Itale morbus: // Nos capit Bachus, te maledicte Venus." The second: "Nux pontica. // Nil mihi duricies prodest: si molliore essem, // Parceret a tritu petra lapisque meo." Earlier heading on pastedown -- perhaps an ownership statement -- erased and replaced with "Ex lib: St. Magni." Three impressions of the same purple ink stamp effaced on both pastedowns and on title page. Title-page inscription: "S. Magni in Fuessen." Early/contemporary marginalia throughout. Purchased from Art Ancien, S.A., in April, 1941.*

### 6.3. Binding notes

Record here any information about the binding, including material (for example, wooden boards), leather (sheepskin, goatskin, calfskin, deerskin, etc.), decoration and tooling, furniture (clasps, catches, bosses), etc. Describe labels (spine labels, labels affixed to covers, edge titles, etc.) Also include in this note description of manuscript or printed waste, whether used as coverings, pastedowns, endpapers, spine liners, sewing guards, etc.

Precede the text of each note with: *BINDING: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy [call number]*

## Examples

*BINDING: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.405.36 bound in contemporary blind-tooled pigskin over wooden boards fastened with a single brass clasp. Two modern black leather spine labels, with early library shelf number in red ink (M 413). Ink label along fore-edge of text block. Hinges comprised of medieval manuscript waste.*



*BINDING: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy BR65.A89S4 1500x no.1 bound in early limp tacketed vellum with head-, tail-, and fore-edge cover extensions. Remnants of early ties. Early manuscript label at head of spine.*

*BINDING: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.400a.7 FOLIO bound in early/contemporary quarter blind tooled pigskin over wooden boards. Metal catches, clasps no longer present. Vellum thumb index tabs labeled in manuscript.*

*BINDING: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.403.78 FOLIO bound in contemporary brown sheepskin paneled and tooled in blind over wooden boards. Two contemporary paper labels on upper cover (title, and early library shelf mark "313"). Clasps and catch plates removed. Rebacked in early tan sheepskin, with paper manuscript label at head of spine. Title inscribed across lower edge of text block.*

#### 6.4. Bound-with notes

When a copy is bound together with additional, separately printed editions of texts, describe the full contents of the volume in a "bound-with" note. Generally, use abbreviated author/title/date info, with ISTC number, if considered useful.

Precede the text of each note with: *BOUND WITH: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy [call number]*

#### Examples

*BOUND WITH: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.405.8 no.1 bound with Martinus Dumiensis. De quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus, sive, De formula honestae vitae. Paris: Johannes Higman for Wolfgang Hopyl, ca. 1500 (ISTC is00422000).*

*BOUND WITH: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.405.129 no.3 is the third of three items bound together in a single volume. This volume includes: 1. Horologium devotionis / Bertholdus von Freiburg (ISTC ib00506000) -- 2. Centum meditationes / Heinrich Seuse (ISTC is008776000) -- 3. De spiritualibus ascensionibus / Gerardus de Zutphania (ISTC ig00177000). Each item is cataloged separately.*

#### 6.5. Example of a full complement of item-level descriptive notes for a single incunable

#### Examples

*COPY NOTE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.403.78 FOLIO imperfect: [22]<sub>10</sub> (blank) wanting. Woodcut illustrations and initials hand-colored. Ink-stained fingerprints on several leaves, most prominently on Clxiii. Blind impressions from bearer types on [22]<sub>9</sub>. Leaf dimensions: 285 x 210 mm.*

*PROVENANCE: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.403.78 FOLIO with engraved bookplate of the monastery of Saints Ulrich and Afra (Augsburg) on front pastedown. Presentation inscription on [1]<sub>2</sub> recto: "Presens liber oblat[us] est Monasterio*

*S[an]cto[rum] Udalrici et Aphre In Augusta ob Salutem et remedi[u]m anime Martin Griesse quondam noster cellerarij, 1483." Ca. 18th-century inscription at head of [1]<sub>3</sub> recto: "Imp. Monast: SS: Udal. & Afra Aug. Vindel." Purchased from Maggs in August, 1939.*

*BINDING: Boston Public Library (Rare Books Department) copy Q.403.78 FOLIO bound in contemporary brown sheepskin paneled and tooled in blind over wooden boards. Two contemporary paper labels on upper cover (title, and early library shelf mark "313"). Clasps and catch plates removed. Rebacked in early tan sheepskin, with paper manuscript label at head of spine. Title inscribed across lower edge of text block.*

## 7. Genre headings (MARC 655)

Use standard genre headings to bring out important information about provenance, notable material characteristics, binding information, and general genre information. Apply any genre headings needed, but at a minimum, always apply the headings below when corresponding evidence is present:

- Bookplates (rbms)
- Stamps (ink, embossed, perforated) (rbms)
- Inscriptions (rbms)
- Price inscriptions (rbms)
- Marginalia (rbms)
- Illuminations (gmgpc)
- Woodcuts (rbms)
- Bearer impressions (rbms)
- Wooden boards (gmgpc)
- Limp bindings (rbms)
- Vellum bindings (rbms)

### 7.1. Incunabula by country, and format

When cataloging materials printed before 1501, always also include:

655\_0\$aIncunabula.

655\_0\$aIncunabula \$z [country].

655\_0\$a[Paper size and bibliographic format]

Apply genre *Incunabula* to materials printed before 1501 only. Applying the genre heading *Incunabula* allows users to search the incunabula collection for only those items printed before 1501, i.e., true incunabula. This distinction is necessary in order to filter out those materials in the collection that are not, in fact, incunabula. Examples include editions formerly dated prior to



1501 in the standard literature, but whose dates were later revised. It also includes post-1501 editions bound into sammelbands along with incunabula.

Adding another heading subdivided by country subverts current systems limitations that do not allow users to browse/collocate records by country of production.

### **Examples**

655\_0\$aIncunabula.

655\_0\$aIncunabula \$z Italy.

655\_0\$aChancery folios.

655\_0\$aIncunabula.

655\_0\$aIncunabula \$z Germany

655\_0\$aMedian quartos.