Association for Library Collections and Technical Services Task Force on Non-English Access

September 18, 2006

I. Executive summary

The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (**ALCTS**) Executive Committee established the ALCTS Task Force on Non-English Access in October 2005 with the following charge:

> The Task Force shall examine ALA's past, present, and potential future roles in enabling access to library resources in all languages and scripts and in addressing the needs of users of materials in all languages and scripts through the development of library standards and practices.

The task force gathered information from ALCTS and American Library Association (**ALA**) groups, other library organizations, the Library of Congress (**LC**), the bibliographic utilities (OCLC and RLG[1]), and library system vendors. The task force found that substantial activity has taken place over many years to address the complex issues associated with multiscript and multilingual access. A summary of findings is included below and in more depth in the *Overview* section. Detailed reports are attached as appendices.

Supporting access to non-English materials in the context of an English-language catalog requires significant additional resources. To that end bibliographic utilities and integrated library systems are making substantial progress in adding scripts that have not previously been supported in the bibliographic environment. This task is complicated by the need to agree on the technical standards that are vital if record retrieval and exchange is to occur without data corruption. Name Authority Cooperative Program (**NACO**) institutions are adding non-Roman data to authority records. The bibliographic utilities are acquiring non-English language records from book trade companies, and are also providing cataloging services to libraries overseas.

There are several additional requirements to make library resources available to a person whose first language is not English. The most easily achieved requirement is the addition of user instructions and online help in additional languages to library systems. Many integrated library systems already provide for this. The ability to search in a language other than English requires either that records include multilingual access points, or alternatively that searching is redirected through the use of multilingual thesauri and

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[1] Note: At the time this report was written (June 2006), OCLC and RLG were separate organizations. No attempt has been made to revise the report as it will be affected by the up-coming integration of RLG network resources into OCLC.

authority files. Noting that catalogs are intended to meet the needs of their respective user communities, provision of non-English access points and other information will be a library-specific decision. Record acquisition by the utilities from foreign sources will certainly facilitate such cataloging. The current NACO file provides name/title access in languages written in Roman script. Addition of non-Roman script capability will provide for access in other languages. Thought must also be given to providing multilingual and multiscript subject access. The need to present search results in language-specific sort order must also be carefully evaluated.

The following recommendations address specific actions to move this work forward, as well as ongoing needs for education, communication, and staffing.
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