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Access to Moving Image Collections
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Metadata Mapping Project

For this project I chose to compare MARC, PBCore, and CEN metadata standards. I wanted to tackle MARC, given its granularity and importance in cataloging. I was particularly interested in familiarizing myself with PBCore, as it is a Dublin Core standard created specifically for audiovisual media and I had noticed that many archives working with moving image work used PBCore. Finally, I was curious to look into CEN, as it has also been designed with moving image work in mind.

MARC is overwhelming in its granularity and broad scope. It would seem there would be little pertinent information that could not be worked into MARC. However, it is therefore a challenge to work with for someone not well trained or very familiar with cataloging and so might pose a challenge for smaller archives, libraries, or other collections with limited staff that may have to take on multiple roles and not be overly familiar with a highly detailed system like MARC. One surprising discovery for me was that, given its enormous scope and granular focus, MARC did not offer as much in the way of detailed fields regarding preservation actions and the preservation history of an item as I expected. This is perhaps reflective of the time in which it was developed and the fact that it was not meant for moving image works (which would require a relatively stronger emphasis on migration and preservation) specifically. Over all, however, MARC offered a wealth of fields, so finding fields for detailed physical or technical information about moving image works was not a problem.

PBCore was by far the most useful and easy to work with standard of the three, I found. It seems to strike the right balance between the simplicity of Dublin Core (or CEN) and the needs specific to cataloging and searching for moving image works. Its language-based tags are far easier to work with than the codes of MARC. I can easily see why PBCore seems to be such a commonly chosen standard for moving image collections. One aspect of PBCore that stands out is its differentiation between an original work and an instantiation of that original. This is a simple but important innovation that reflects the way PBCore is designed for moving image works.

CEN is clearly designed to deal with film works, but is perhaps too limited in scope. Too many fields vital to moving image (even specifically film-based) works seemed lacking in CEN, such as generation or aspect ratio. It is important to offer a simple to use, language-based standard for moving image works, which are often archived by people without specific information science training, but CEN seems incomplete. In the final analysis, it is PBCore that seems to strike the right balance between ease of use and a strict focus on the needs in describing moving image items, on the one hand, and a certain level of granularity and a large enough scope on the other.