

VARIATIONS ON A THEME: A HARD NUT TO CRACK

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Introduction to Moving Image Archiving and Preservation
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Variety is the spice of life and nowhere is that choice as bountiful than in that old holiday chestnut, *The Nutcracker*. From the venerated New York City Ballet to a local ballet troupe in Mississippi, there is always a production with hopeful ballerinas flitting around during the winter holiday season. And the variation in choreography is dizzying as well. There's Balanchine's sleek interpretation after the original Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov model and Nureyev's more Soviet-era infused choreography at the Paris Opéra. If that wasn't enough, there is the Mark Morris 1960s update of the libretto with his troupe doing the twist and frug to Tchaikovsky's classical score. It could give an archivist a migraine. And this is only looking at the ballet. There's also related material including the E.T.A. Hoffman tale and the Tchaikovsky symphony that is the basis for the ballet.

This particular choreographic piece was chosen specifically to illustrate the difficult task at hand in cataloging and collocating different variations of the same ballet. Is it a book version, a review of a performance, or an extant dance notation belonging to one of the choreographers? This paper proposes to focus on dance as a moving image—no doubt a double-edged sword when differentiating between a public performance and the filming or taping of the event. What is most interesting in this research is the variations that seem to exist in cataloging performing arts as a moving image. Even for the same work, one size does not necessarily fit all. There is also the issue of the sheer volume of backlog that can consume an institution as more and more performances are easily acquired thanks to the relatively low cost of digital production. How can archives and libraries keep up to date with processing their holdings without sacrificing the quality needed to produce an effective finding

aid? What this process should ultimately lead to is ease of access and depth of knowledge for the user. In the new millennium, however, there is a generation who would prefer to surf YouTube to research moving images rather than go to the library to use carefully guarded resources that are not streamed online. How does a library or archive reach out to a public that prefers to do most of their research at home?

To start at the beginning of the process, how does a library create a record for their catalog that would provide their users with the best way to find variations of the same item in one place? Two performing arts libraries, one academic and one public, take slightly different approaches in their styles of cataloging the three versions of *The Nutcracker* mentioned above.

Since its inception, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (LPA) has taken an exacting, in-house approach in cataloging their collection. Catalogers take the time to do the research necessary for end-users to easily find what they are looking for. Supervising Librarian Tom Christie observed that LPA currently uses MARC21 as their structure standard with Resource Description and Access (RDA) for their descriptive metadata.¹ How do these standards affect the collocation of the three variations of *The Nutcracker*?

RDA structures its entities, relationships and attributes on FRBR (Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records). The entities are grouped on four levels—Work, Expression, Manifestation and Item. To categorize *The Nutcracker* using this

¹ “Interview with Thomas Christie, Supervising Librarian, Special Formats A/V Media Group for the Library of the Performing Arts.” Personal interview. 3 Dec. 2014.

hierarchy, the tale of the nutcracker would constitute the Work, the symphony and the ballet would be the Expression that would “Manifest” itself in the different productions of the ballet that abound. The Item level, in the terms of this paper, would either be a film, a videocassette, or a DVD. According to the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA,

Work and expression level records can be used to collocate manifestations in a way very similar to uniform titles, but with greater precision than previously possible. These records can then be used to create usable and meaningful displays for users, while still ensuring that libraries can share data effectively.²

Uniform titles were conceived for the purpose of variations and were effectively used in cataloging musical works; namely, title and composer. For a choreographic work, however, the title is qualified by the phrase “choreographic work” which is then followed by the name of the choreographer (figure 1). This functions as a collocational device. If “Nutcracker” is entered into the NYPL search engine, the user will find 2,228 results that range from still photographs, albums, books and reviews to the filmed performances the user may be looking for. In Mr. Christie’s interview, he suggested that in order to search “Nutcracker” in an added entry for audio/visual that has multiple titles add analytic entries along with a relater term.³ Adding “video” to the search term turned up all three variations of the ballet, including *The*

² “RDA: Resource Description and Access,” *Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA*, accessed October 28, 2014. <http://www.rda-jsc.org/rdafaq.html#1>.

³ “Interview with Tom Christie, Supervising Librarian, Special Formats A/V Media Group for the Library of the Performing Arts.” Personal interview. 3 Dec. 2014.

Hard Nut. When looking at the record for *The Hard Nut* in MARC view, it is clear that the cataloger chose to use the 245 “Title Statement” field with the RDA “Variant Title” description *Nutcracker*, making it easier for a user to find this particular variation—especially if the title had been forgotten (figure 2).

Added Title	Nutcracker (videorecording)
	Nutcracker (Choreographic work : Balanchine after (Ivanov))
ISBN	0790723492

Figure 1 – Uniform title (Title/Choreographic Work/Choreographer)

007	vf cbahos
008	030502s2002 nyu099 \$\$\$\$\$ vleng dcgm a
035	\$a(WaOLN)Y010000018\$
040	\$aNN-PD\$cNN-PD\$eamim\$dOCOLC
245 04	\$aThe hard nut\$h[videorecording] /\$cpresented by Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the Mark Morris Dance Group ; choreography by Mark Morris ; based on <i>Nutcracker</i> and <i>Mouseking</i> by E.T.A. Hoffmann ; music by Piotr Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (<i>Nutcracker</i> , Op. 71)
257	\$aU.S.

Figure 2 MARC “Title Statement” field 245

LPA is considering a future migration from MARC to Bibframe, but they feel that using RDA is the first step towards using linked data. The current bibliographic records at LPA of *The Nutcracker* include links to other lists within the New York Public Library database where a user can find more depth in researching an individual person or other choreographic works. But the issues that LPA have encountered using RDA through MARC is that it is not relational in nature and is focused more on describing the “item in hand” than on describing multiple

versions.⁴ There is a concern, however, that exporting a MARC record and creating a crosswalk to Bibframe could create data loss.

Researching the process of cataloging at the Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media at NYU's Bobst Library was an enigma. When queried about the process, the initial answer was that the library tended to do "copy cataloging". This is when an item comes in from another library and the initial information may be sparse. The endgame of the workflow is to get it on the shelf and fill the details in later if possible. Unlike, LPA, the majority of Bobst's records come from other repositories. This statement made during a brief interview with librarians at Avery Fisher was retracted and the detective work began. To Bobst's credit, the user is able to see all their holdings in MARC view. The next test was entering "Nutcracker" into their search engine. The results were impressive with video results heading the list in what appeared to be a uniform title listing (figure 3). The only issue was that not all of the library's holdings appeared under this title—only eight variations were listed including Nureyev's production. Balanchine's production appeared further down the list and Mark Morris' *The Hard Nut* had to be accessed by inputting additional qualifiers in the search field. By drilling down into the eight listings to see what field in MARC could possibly hold them together, it came as a surprise to find out that none of the variations, including Nureyev's, had either a 630 or 730 Uniform Title

⁴ Tom Christie, email message to the author, December 8, 2014.

The screenshot shows the NYU Libraries search interface. At the top, the NYU Libraries logo is visible. Below it, the search path is 'NYU Libraries > BobCat > Books & More > Results'. The search bar contains the text 'Nutcracker'. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Limit to' (All items), 'that contain my query words', and 'Anywhere in the record'. A 'Search' button is present. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Advanced Search' and 'New Search'. On the left side, there is a 'Limit My Results' sidebar with various filters like Availability, Resource Type, Subject, Library (New York University), Library (other institutions), Author/Creator, and Language. The main search results area shows 'Displaying results 1-10 of 164'. The first result is '8 versions - Nutcracker', which is marked as 'Available' and has a 'Video' icon. The result details include a list of performers and conductors: David Arce; Matthew Diamond 1952-; James F Ingalls; Davit Karapetyan; Maria Kochetkova; Martin Pakledinaz; Hans Petri; Elizabeth Powell; Damian Smith; Yuan Yuan Tan; Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky 1840-1893.; Helgi Tomasson 1942-; Pierre-François Vilanoba; Martin West conductor.; Michael Yeargan; Vanessa Zahorian; San Francisco Ballet.; San Francisco Ballet. Orchestra. S.I. : Opus Arte;p2007. There is a 'Cover image not available' warning icon next to the result.

Figure 3 – Uniform Title – Bobst Library

field indicating title, choreographic work and choreographer. Further inspection of the Balanchine and Morris records indicate that they both had these fields with *The Hard Nut* including the cross-reference of “Nutcracker” in the 500 field. Harking back to the “undocumented” interview at Avery Fisher, the conclusion is that the eight-grouped video variation may have come to Bobst as an existing collocated record. Comparing all the records, there didn’t seem to be much consistency in how they were cataloged.

Another challenge facing the cataloging and archiving of recorded dance performance is its dual nature. In her study on Bibframe AV modeling, Kara Van Malssen accurately describes the challenges in describing time-based media content:

... audiovisual resources almost always capture live action (with some exceptions including animation and computer-generated works), or what the viewer/listener perceives as live action/real-time events, and

therefore the relationship of the content to an event or action that took place in space and time is often important, as is the action of capturing that event through a device and fixing it to a carrier. This characteristic means description of time-based content often necessitates an event-centric approach, rather than a strictly work- or object-centric one. The event-centric nature of time-based media and requirements for event description is not necessarily centered on a single event or action, but can be represented by a continuum of activities that results in a product for publication or exhibition.⁵

Ms. Van Malssen goes on to say that the relationship between time-based media and the devices they are dependent on for playback are inextricable and as a result, preservation is necessary in the face of format obsolescence.⁶ It is important for collection managers and researchers to know the technical provenance of the work to get a clearer understanding of how migration from an original format to another may have impacted the audiovisual quality of the work. Ms. Van Malssen correctly argues that even though the content is the most important piece of the preservation puzzle, the technical details such as frame rate, aspect ratio, gauge and broadcast standard are “integral to the content’s persistence through format and generations.”⁷

LPA researches and tracks the provenance and the preservation of their holdings. These records are kept separately along with their technical metadata in

⁵ Kara Van Malssen, “Bibframe AV Modeling Study: Defining a Flexible Model for Description of Audiovisual Resources,” *Library of Congress: Bibframe*, last modified May 15, 2014: 5, <http://www.loc.gov/bibframe/pdf/bibframe-avmodelingstudy-may15-2014.pdf>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*

the repository and are not available for public viewing.⁸ A privileged glimpse into one dance record indicated that descriptions of the Manifestation's content (for example, is it a master or a source tape?) as well as steps taken in the preservation of the content are all placed in a MARC 599 "Local Notes" field. It's a fascinating look into the lifecycle of a dance event as a moving image. LPA also uses the 534 "Original Version" field to describe the original format when they have transferred from one format to another.

In LPA's public record of Balanchine's *Nutcracker*, it is noted in the "Description" field that the current holding is on videocassette and notes the running time, sound, color, gauge and broadcast standard, but it goes a step further. The record also notes that it was originally released as a film in the MARC 500 "Notes" field. It also describes the filming occurring at the Performing Arts Center at SUNY Purchase in New York under the MARC 518 "Events" field. The same level of documentation also occurs in the record of *The Hard Nut* where it is noted that the original performance was videotaped and even notes its provenance in the MARC 541 "Source of Acquisition" field. The Nureyev *Nutcracker* also has donor information available in the public-facing MARC record, however this time it is listed in the 799 field. Interestingly enough, 799, a Local Added Entry field, is no longer listed in the master MARC records. However, it is still retained in archive and institution records. The Nureyev holding was the only record that lacked any viewable notes about when the live performance took place although it mentions in

⁸ Tom Christie, email message to author, December 8, 2014.

the “Note” field that an informational booklet accompanies the video and the information may be found there.

Probing Bobst ‘s MARC records on all three ballets, it was discovered that under MARC field 538 designated for “Technical Details”, all that was found was the description “DVD”. There were two additional 538 fields in the Nureyev record that described sound, encoding and speed. The 300 field was used for physical description of the items, using subfield “a” to describe the format and running time, “b” to describe other physical details such as presence of sound and color, and “c” to describe the dimensions of the item. In the “General Note” field (500 field) for the Balanchine record, there was a similar description to the LPA “Notes” field noting that the recording had originally been a film. *The Hard Nut* record also contained the original performance date and appears in MARC’s 518 field that designates date, time and place of an event. With minute differences in descriptions, Bobst and LPA both manage to differentiate between the live event and the recording of the event. What would be useful for an audiovisual researcher and even to a dance researcher, however, is a more granular approach to describing the provenance and the preservation activities in terms of original formatting as it pertained to the technical aspects of the recording of these performances. Other useful information might include other formats available for viewing (for example, streaming video) and where the original recording is housed.

After the different variations of *The Nutcracker* have been cataloged and made available, the final issue for libraries is ease of access. Both FRBR and RDA identify four user tasks that bibliographic records are created to fulfill:

- Find — to find resources that correspond to the user’s stated search criteria
- Identify — to confirm that the resource described corresponds to the resource sought, or to distinguish between two or more resources with similar characteristics
- Select — to select a resource that is appropriate to the user’s needs
- Obtain — to acquire or access the resource described⁹

It is the task of obtaining which has lately started to present an issue. How do libraries provide outreach to a population that has become more and more accustomed to researching alternate sites online? Though many libraries have online catalogs with eBooks available from their collections, there is still a dearth of streaming audiovisual content. Bobst’s online library links to Alexander Street Press, but their dance collection is limited. Entering *The Nutcracker* into their search engine results in only two streaming versions of the ballet. LPA also has a site with streaming videos available online which include an impressive variety of dance, but many of the ballet performances have lock icons in the bottom corner of their thumbnail pictures. The only items that are viewable are limited to a handful of non-classical dances and interviews. In order to view these videos, as well as all the *Nutcracker* videos listed on both the Bobst and LPA online library sites, one must visit the library. According to Tanisha Jones, Director of the Moving Image Archive for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at LPA, there are copyright issues connected to accessing an online collection. Underlying rights, such as publicity and privacy issues, are attached to all dance performances and it can be a daunting task to clear

⁹ “RDA: Resource Description and Access,” *Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA*, accessed October 28, 2014: 1, <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/5rda-scoperev4.pdf>.

them.¹⁰ The Dance Heritage Coalition states that “copyright compliance practices sometimes stand between Dance Collections and the fulfillment of their mission.”¹¹ Performing arts libraries such as Avery Fisher at Bobst and LPA have invaluable resources for the researcher, but are unfortunately torn between the need to adhere to copyright law and the need to provide greater access to their users.

As a result, many dancers, choreographers, historians and filmmakers are finding other online resources to conduct their research. Noted Dance Historian Elizabeth Kaye finds that YouTube is “a substantial resource and a far more direct way of obtaining material, especially when you want to view different versions of a particular ballet or variation.”¹² And there are many who agree. In a study on YouTube’s impact on academia and university libraries, an overwhelming percentage of librarians who responded to the survey confirmed that they used YouTube in many facets of their work.¹³ With the lure of wide variety, instant gratification and ease of access, including *The Nutcracker* video from top-rated companies and dancers, YouTube has become a wild-west saloon where copyright

¹⁰ “Interview with Tanisha Jones, Director of the Moving Image Archive for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the Library of the Performing Arts.” Personal interview. 3 Dec. 2014.

¹¹ “Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use of Dance-Related Materials,” *Dance Heritage Coalition*, accessed December 3, 2014, 2.
http://www.danceheritage.org/DHC_fair_use_statement.pdf.

¹²Elizabeth Kaye, email message to author, December 7, 2014.

¹³ Kirstin Dougan, “YouTube Has Changed Everything”? Music Faculty, Librarians, and Their Use and Perceptions of YouTube,” *College & Research Libraries* 75, no. 4: 575-589, 2014: 579, *Library & Information Science Source*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 2, 2014).

laws were made to be broken. Even the Balanchine Trust constantly monitors the site for any small infringement of their copyright, insisting YouTube take down little Debbie's dance recital if her mom dares to post her child's performance of Balanchine's Sugar Plum Fairy variation without permission from the Trust. According to the Dance Heritage Coalition, Dance Collections staff realizes the importance of the Internet as an instrument for access. They feel that making their collections available through safe access on the web will not only attract more researchers to their institution but will widen the net by bringing dance to a broader audience.¹⁴

Both LPA and Bobst excel in implementing tools to bring streaming video to their patrons. Pamela Bloom, Librarian for Theatre and Performance Studies at Bobst confirms that they have partnered with Swank Motion Pictures and brought their Digital Campus distribution system to safely stream feature length films to NYU students enrolled in a film class. Bobst is also looking into more streaming opportunities in the future. LPA was a pioneer in streaming files online. Through their NYPL Digital Collections video tools, the dance scholar can view many variations simultaneously. And in an unparalleled gesture of outreach, LPA has included a radio button that allows the user to choose streaming video from YouTube as well.

In conclusion, there are many triumphs and challenges in the world of performing arts collections. Streamlining the process of cataloging without losing the quality of

¹⁴ "Statement of Best Practices," 16.

research necessary for a granular bibliographic record as well as settling on specific data standards and descriptions can meet the overwhelming needs of ever-evolving collections. Protecting online collections by limiting use only to patrons by controlled access will enable dance archives and performing arts libraries to update their methods of serving the public and provide better access to rare and wonderful works of art.

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