PROBLEMS OF STANDARDIZATION OF MANUSCRIPT DESCRIPTION

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Bibliographic description of manuscript material is still mostly depending on local rules of libraries or bibliographic centres. Although there is an agreement among manuscript specialists community on the features of manuscripts and its fragments that should be part of each description, owing to the uniqueness of manuscript items the rules for manuscript description are not internationally standardized. There are some differences between rules for manuscript descriptions in different catalogues, as well as differences in metadata used in digital libraries of manuscript material. The differences are visible in the area of description, as well as in the area of authority data. As the searching and browsing of manuscript collection as well as access to (digitized) manuscripts highly depends on the elements of description and the usage of access points, the standardization is crucial in order to allow the interested community to find and research available manuscripts and its fragments.

The goal of this paper is to propose the features of manuscripts and its fragments that should be part of its description, as well as the types of authority data that should be used in manuscript description. Mapping of elements of description of selected contemporary local rules for manuscript description (Austrian, Croatian and German practices) will be presented. Terminology issues and other problems in manuscript description will be indicated. The results of study among researchers who are using catalogues and digital libraries of manuscript material on their user needs will be presented and compared to mapping of elements of manuscript description. Finally, elements for bibliographic description of manuscript material from the point of view of a manuscript specialist will be proposed with the indication on elements that are not present in ISBD, and/or in Croatian cataloguing rules.