

KORMARC in the cataloging of rare works: brief historical and documentary observations between MARC21 in Brazil and KORMARC in South Korea*

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ABSTRACT

The Korean Record Management Standards (KORMARC) format, first published in 1993, is the standard for cataloging collections in most information units in South Korea. The institution is distinguished by its efforts to preserve and make accessible rare and antique works originating from the country's ancient culture. The objective of this article is to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of KORMARC's application in the cataloging of rare works. To this end, it offers brief comparisons with MARC21, the standard most used in Brazil today. An investigation was conducted into its history and conceptual characteristics, and an examination was made of the most used bibliographic record fields for rare works in both standards. This article employs a qualitative and exploratory approach, with data collection procedures that include bibliographic and documentary methods. It was concluded that the main differences that KORMARC can offer for the cataloging of rare works are some specific fields, the way other fields are used, and that the cataloging of rare works in Brazil can evolve with the adaptation of some fields and with an understanding of the complexity of the concept of rare works.

KEYWORDS

MARC21; KORMARC; Cataloging; Rare works.

* As will be explained in greater detail in the introduction, this article has chosen to use the term “rare works” and the word “work” primarily in the sense of “rare item,” as this is a convention within the field of rare collections studies; this clarification is necessary due to the difference in the meaning of the word “work” in the bibliographies of the two fields discussed here.

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Introduction

Cataloging, in its simplest form, is defined as the description of items within a collection, including the gathering of information about them, their authors, and, most importantly, their characteristics. Mey (1995) argues that cataloging, beyond merely listing items in a collection, also individualizes them, rendering each item unique within that context while enabling the grouping of items according to their similarities within the catalog.

The catalog, in turn, is understood by the *Declaration of International Cataloging Principles* (IFLA 2016) as an effective and efficient instrument that enables users to find bibliographic resources, identify a bibliographic resource or entity, select the resource that best meets their needs, acquire or obtain access to the sought item, and navigate and explore resources within the catalog.

Over time and with technological advances, it became important for catalogs and the bibliographic records that comprise them to be created and consulted using electronic devices, which have become increasingly present in everyday life. This context gave rise to one of the formats still widely used in cataloging by many institutions and countries, namely MARC, which enabled the creation of collection records through the use of machine-readable characters, fields, indicators, and subfields (Furrie 1999).

In their work, Martínez García and Olan Múgica (2011) point out that MARC has become one of the most widely used standards worldwide because it is implemented in major national libraries, despite not having originated from international standards or being the product of an international agreement. This widespread adoption has contributed to future global interoperability among libraries. Similarly, Modesto (2009) notes that some countries, such as Brazil, chose to adopt MARC directly and use MARC21, while others introduced modifications in order to preserve national cataloging traditions, as in the case of South Korea.

MARC21 and its derivatives enable the sharing of records among units, facilitate the exchange of bibliographic metadata, and reduce rework within information units. In addition, they support the formation of cooperative networks and contribute to the standardization of bibliographic records (Avram 2009). Despite the emergence of other formats, the broad applicability and the benefits outlined above justify the inclusion of MARC21 within the scope of this article.

Since the 1960s, following the creation of the first MARC format, discussions have taken place regarding the international standardization of metadata, with particular concern focused on the variations of the format that have emerged in different countries (Rowley 2002). In these adaptations, each region sought to address local issues related to the representation of bibliographic data that were not covered by the international standard.

Thus, the study of the different variations derived from MARC makes it possible to understand and analyze the solutions adopted by each community, while also contributing to critical reflection on how the fields, subfields, and indicators of MARC21 are currently used in Brazil. *The Korean Machine Readable Catalog* or *Korean Literature Automation List*, also known by the acronym KOR-MARC, is one of these MARC-derived versions and constitutes the primary object of analysis in this article.

The KORMARC format, published in 1993, is used to catalog a wide range of material types and formats in most information units in South Korea (National Library of Korea 2014). Its prominence in the representation of rare and ancient works derives from efforts to preserve, make

available and provide user access to these millennia-old materials. This process is closely related to the country's cultural practices and the documentation of nationally produced knowledge, which has been increasingly disseminated and sought by students, researchers, and scholars of Korean culture.

According to the *Korean Old and Rare Collection Information System* (National Library of Korea 2021), KORMARC for old literature is defined as a set of rules that enable the standardized processing of works with regard to cataloging methods for antique literature. KORMARC was also selected because, during the bibliographic research described in the methodology, no Brazilian articles on cataloging practices in South Korea were identified. By contrast, there is a substantial body of international research on KORMARC, particularly in South Korea, its country of origin. The comparison between MARC21, used in Brazil, and KORMARC, used in South Korea, is intended to encourage professionals to consider the possibility of adapting bibliographic records to incorporate local needs, based on an international example that features very strong cultural aspects. The comparison focused on rare books due to the lack of attention paid to the details required for cataloging this type of material in Brazil. The need for a high level of detail makes the cataloging of rare books more labor-intensive and, consequently, less desirable and less likely to be chosen by catalogers in general, who tend to opt for simpler cataloging (Sundström and Silva 2018).

In this sense, Burym and Christophers (1993, X) emphasize that “the librarian’s purpose in cataloging old and rare books is not merely to describe an old object but, more importantly, to convey the text and the features that distinguish editions”. Accordingly, the study of solutions developed in contexts that demonstrate greater affinity with this type of collection and its technical processing can be highly beneficial. Through the exchange of information and experiences, it becomes possible to improve the practices and standards adopted, thereby contributing to greater efficiency. Considering the emphasis on the representation of rare works, this article aims to present KORMARC, the standard used in South Korea, by briefly highlighting some similarities and differences in relation to the Brazilian standard. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to understand KORMARC from both historical and conceptual perspectives and to identify the fields most commonly used for the cataloging of rare books in South Korea and Brazil.

It is important to note that there are terminological inconsistencies that become evident when we combine the literature on rare works with the literature on cataloging. Perhaps the main inconsistency is the use of the word “work.” While, within the bibliography devoted to rare collections, some may use “work” as a synonym for “item” in expressions such as “rare work” and “work of art,” conveying the idea that an item or a collection is rare, others — the most recent cataloging standards and theories — use “work” to refer to the intellectual or artistic content found within an “item.” This current understanding of the concept of “work” in cataloging was strongly influenced by the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) conceptual model, first published in 1998, and consolidated by the IFLA Library Reference Model (IFLA LRM) (Riva, Le Boëuf, Maja Žumer 2017), published in 2017 to replace FRBR.

Both fields of study—cataloging and “rare works”—have their own traditions and theoretical frameworks, and an in-depth discussion of terminological differences or even a redefinition of the concept of “rare work” based on the IFLA LRM is not the objective of this paper. Thus, the term “work” is used here to refer primarily to a rare item or a collection containing such rare items,

with a view to the stability the term carries within Brazilian — and even international — library studies, and so that this article may be understood by professionals in both fields.

Rare Works

An information unit that maintains a rare collection requires the ongoing selection of items to be included in that collection, and the criteria typically applied depend on factors such as the focus of the information unit and the interests of its users. According to Schweitzer (2018), “there is no single formula for determining the rarity of a book that is universally accepted across all times and places” (34). This is because the rarity of a work depends on the context in which it is situated, who evaluates it, and its significance for a particular community (Pinheiro 2016).

Rodrigues (2006) notes that rare books include both works that are relevant to a specific field of knowledge and titles that are significant to a nation, its historical development, and the local community. Santos (2015) supports this view by arguing that definitions of rarity vary from country to country due to differences in social and political formations, as well as variations in the development of graphic production within their territories, which may also differ among institutions within the same country.

Despite the variability in the definition of rare works and in the criteria institutions may adopt for their selection, certain criteria are more frequently applied. These include historical relevance and chronological limitation, cultural value, difficulty of acquisition, and bibliological aspects such as illustrations, production methods, and materials used, as well as peculiarities, precious qualities, rarities, and curiosities of specific copies (Rodrigues 2006; Pinheiro 1996).

Especially considering that KORMARC excels in representing the old and rare works, it is essential in this study to highlight the distinction between rare works and old works. Although some authors use these terms interchangeably, Moraes (1998) proposes criteria to differentiate them, with the principal one being demanded for the work. According to the author, what renders a work rare is the extent to which it is sought after, in addition to the set of factors and particularities inherent to each work.

The cataloging of rare and antique works also differs in the quantity and variety of fields and information included in the record. While antique works tend to resemble modern works, rare works require a greater degree of exhaustiveness in cataloging, particularly with respect to their physical and bibliographic characteristics and, above all, the historical and cultural context that surrounds them (Sundström and Silva 2018). In your work, (Silva 2023) highlights the verification of a work’s rarity as the first step in the process of bibliographic cataloging of rare works, which requires the professional to take a keen look at aspects related to manufacturing and production processes, historical, cultural, and social contexts, as well as physical characteristics and the significance of the subject matter.

In Brazil, each institution has the autonomy to define the level of specification applied to the bibliographic records of rare books. As a result, there is considerable diversity in policies and perspectives regarding the technical treatment of these materials. Examples include the *Manual para entrada de dados bibliográficos em formato MARC21: ênfase em obras raras e especiais*, da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (*Manual for Entering Bibliographic Data in MARC21 Format: Emphasis on Rare and Special Works* from the Federal University of Minas Gerais) (Mes-

sina-Ramos 2009), the Manual de Catalogação de Obras Raras da UFRJ, da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (*Cataloging Manual for Rare Books* from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) (Silva 2023), and the o Padrão para inserção de dados na base bibliográfica do sistema de bibliotecas da UFF: obras raras da Universidade Federal Fluminense (*Standard for Inserting Data into the Bibliographic Database of the UFF Library System: Rare Books* from the Federal Fluminense University) (Superintendência de Documentação 2015).

To develop the manuals and internal policies used by institutions, it is common for established standards and guidelines to serve as a foundation, alongside the criteria that each institution considers necessary for the cataloging of rare works. Silva (2023) notes that the *Anglo American Cataloguing Rules*, AACR2, the *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Old Monographs*, ISBD A, *Machine Readable Cataloging*, MARC21, and *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials*, DCRM, are commonly used for this purpose, in addition to the Plano Nacional de Recuperação de Obras Raras, PLANOR (National Plan for the recovery of rare works) (Governo Federal, and Fundação Biblioteca Nacional n.d.).

Challenges related to the cataloging of rare books in Brazil include issues in the management of financial resources, the costs associated with maintaining rare collections, the scarcity of information in bibliographic records, limited institutional interest from authorities responsible for information units, and insufficient professional training in librarianship (Pinheiro 1990; Sundström and Silva 2018). Viana and Lourenço (2025), in their study examining the relationship between the RDA and the DCRM with the cataloging of rare books, noted that there is a scarcity of Brazilian publications on topics related to the cataloging of rare books and that providing more detailed descriptions in the cataloging process may be the solution to bringing visibility to these collections. In South Korea, the cataloging of rare works has been promoted through initiatives aimed at the preservation and conservation of Korean culture. These efforts have gained momentum alongside the growing global popularity of South Korea across multiple spheres. Such initiatives include the *Digital Library of Korean Literature*¹ (Literature Translation Institute of Korea n.d.), the *Korean Association for the Preservation of Old Books* (KAPOB), and the *Korean Old Rare Collection Information System* (KORCIS) (National Library of Korea 2021).

In addition, numerous museums throughout the country, as well as universities and institutions abroad, maintain Korean collections. Examples include the University of Oxford, the University of Washington, Columbia University, Harvard Yenching Library, and the Library of Congress. These and other institutions rely on KORCIS for the technical processing of their materials in order to make them available through the Comprehensive Catalog of Old Korean Documents (National Library of Korea 2021).

With regard to institutional policies on the cataloging of rare books in South Korea, relatively little is known, as cataloging practices in the country remain in constant development, much as in Brazil. Scholarly works by Lee and Kim (2006), Lee (2009; 2010), and Rho and Lee (2014; 2022) address necessary improvements to KORMARC in relation to the cataloging of both modern and rare works. These studies primarily focus on enhancements to specific fields, broader updates and revisions, and research concerning the planning of the inclusion or adaptation of RDA within KORMARC.

¹ <http://library.litkorea.or.kr/>

Methodology

Several methodological procedures were employed in this study in order to arrive at the results presented in the following section. In terms of approach, the article is characterized as qualitative and exploratory and is based on bibliographic and documentary research analyzed using Bardin's approach (2011).

The study has an exploratory character, as it investigates a subject with the aim of making it better known and of providing additional information, in this case KORMARC, which constitutes the object of analysis. Exploratory research is understood as research whose purpose is to present information on a given topic or to introduce new perspectives on the subject under examination (Prodanov and Freitas 2012).

The qualitative approach is justified by the descriptive nature of the data, which were collected through bibliographic research and documentary analysis. These procedures were combined with the comparative method, making it possible to examine similarities and differences between the objects and societies analyzed in this article (Marconi and Lakatos 2003).

The authors further note that “the comparative method is used both for comparisons of groups in the present, in the past, or between existing and past groups, as well as between societies at similar or different stages of development”. This approach is beneficial to the advancement of rare book cataloging in Brazil, as it allows the adoption of practices developed in other societies, in this case South Korea.

Accordingly, the first step consisted of conducting a bibliographic survey based on previously published material (Prodanov and Freitas 2012). The search term “KORMARC” was applied to the following Brazilian databases: BRACPI, SciELO, and BDTD, yielding zero results in all three. The same term was used in the following international databases: Emerald, Mendeley, KCI, and KoreaScience, resulting in 10, 25, 20, and 90 academic works on the topic, respectively.

Regarding data collection procedures, documentary research was conducted using KORMARC (National Library of Korea 2014), bibliographic MARC 21 (Network Development and MARC Standards Office and Library of Congress 1999), the *Manual for Bibliographic Data Entry in MARC 21 Format with Emphasis on Rare and Special Works* (Messina-Ramos 2009), and the *Standard for Data Insertion in the Bibliographic Database of the UFF Library System: Rare Works* (Superintendence of Documentation 2015) as sources for the theoretical framework and analysis. According to Sá-Silva et al. (2009), the use of documents supports the historical and sociocultural contextualization of the research topic, which is particularly important for this article, as it seeks to place side by side two standards adopted in different countries.

The analysis will be structured to present the fields most frequently used in the cataloging of rare works in Brazil, which will be displayed in table 1 to facilitate understanding, followed by brief considerations on these fields. The same logic and sequence will be applied to the fields used in the cataloging of rare works in South Korea, which will be presented in table 2.

Finally, table 3 will highlight the differences identified between the fields most commonly used for cataloging rare works in the two standards. This table will summarize the findings and, since it will not be possible to discuss all distinguishing fields, only selected fields will be examined in greater detail.

KORMARC

Designed to accommodate bibliographic information from books, whether printed or digital, electronic materials, cartographic materials, audio and video recordings, old books, and continuing resources, the KORMARC format was created in the 1980s (National Library of Korea 2014).

At that time, computers were becoming indispensable in libraries throughout the country, and the format was developed with consideration for both the cataloging rules already in use and the MARC formats created by the Library of Congress, which had already gained global relevance. This approach aimed to enable the conversion of bibliographic data and to support global interoperability (Doh 2002).

The placement of KORMARC within the history of MARC formats will be illustrated in the timeline presented in Figure 1, where the broader MARC developments are represented by a gray line and KORMARC by a red line.

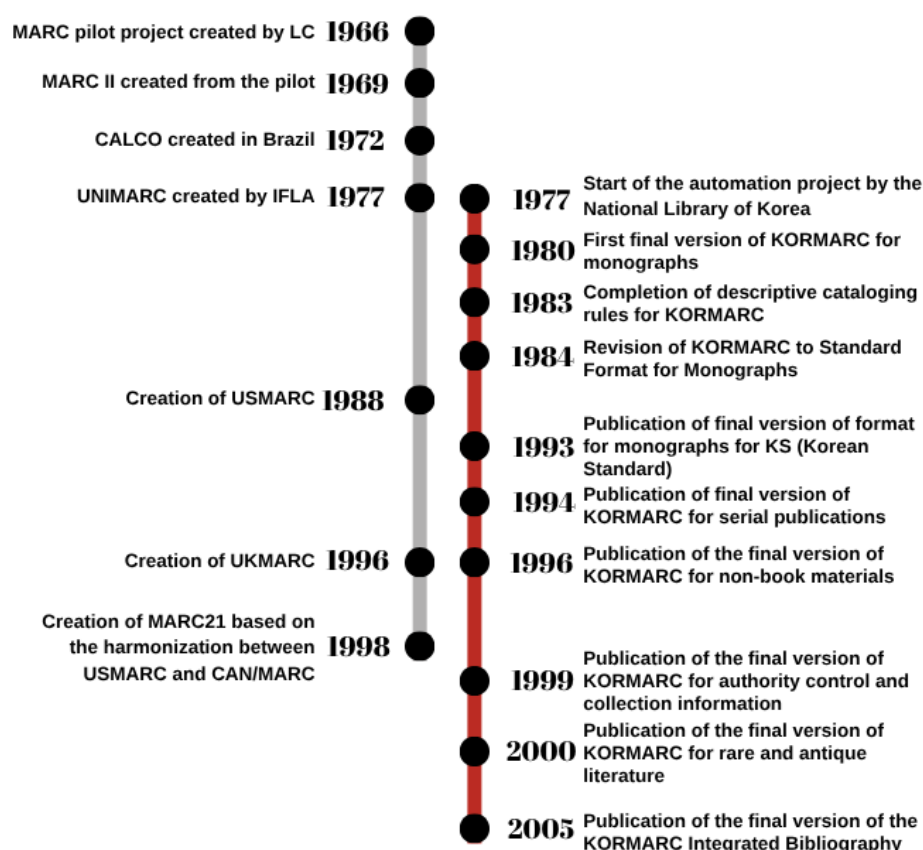


Figure 1. KORMARC timeline. Source: own elaboration.

As Oh (1992) notes, the final version of KORMARC for monographs, represented in the timeline, was the first format created in the country and was primarily based on LC MARC, also known as MARC II. This format later evolved into USMARC and, together with CAN MARC, subsequently gave rise to MARC21, which is currently used in Brazil (Furrie 1999; Assumpção and Santos 2015).

With regard to the structure of KORMARC, Oh (1992) explains that it is composed of five parts: the Leader, the Directory, the Control Fields, the Variable Fields, and the Record Terminator. This structure reflects the foundations upon which KORMARC was developed, namely the International Standard Bibliographic Description, AACR2, USMARC, and the Korean Cataloging Rules. The latter are currently in their fourth edition and closely resemble AACR2 (Li 2017; Korean Library Association and Cataloguing Committee 2002).

Currently, the objectives of KORMARC include providing data to facilitate the exchange of bibliographic records among library systems, enabling data exchange among different types of materials, and, most importantly, converting bibliographic records into machine readable form for the creation of physical and digital library catalogs (National Library of Korea 2014).

KORMARC shares similarities with other MARC formats, particularly the American MARC, currently known as MARC 21, which served as the basis for its development. However, certain characteristics distinguish it from other formats. Examples include characters 26 and 27 of field 008, which refer to publications from Korean universities, and characters 38 and 39 of field 008, which refer to publications issued by the Korean government (Oh 1992).

In addition, differences can be observed in the use of specific fields, subfields, and indicators. Field 045 contains a more detailed table for encoding dates. Subfields related to chronology, such as the \$y subfield of fields 650 and 651, may be used to indicate dynasties. Furthermore, the first indicator with value 3 in fields 100, 600, 700, and 800, which denotes a family name, is commonly used, reflecting the importance of family in Korean culture (National Library of Korea 2014).

Discussion of Results

Based on the *Manual for Entering Bibliographic Data in MARC21 Format: Emphasis on Rare and Special Works* (Messina-Ramos 2009) and the *Standard for Data Insertion in the Bibliographic Database of the UFF Library System: Rare Works* (Superintendence of Documentation 2015), the fields commonly used in Brazil for the description of rare works, as presented in table 1, can be identified as follows.

Field type	Field
Control	001 – Control number 003 – Control number identifier 005 – Date and time of last transaction 006 – Fixed extension data elements – Additional material 008 – Fixed extension data elements
Numbers and codes	020 – ISBN number 022 – ISSN number 040 – Cataloging source 041 – Language code 043 – Geographic area code 045 – Chronological period code 080 – Universal decimal classification (CDU) number 082 – Dewey decimal classification (CDD) number 084 – Other Classification Number 090 – Local call number

Main entry	100 – Main entry – Personal name 110 – Main entry – Corporate name 111 – Main entry – Meeting name 130 – Main entry – Uniform title
Title	240 – Uniform title 245 – Title statement 246 – Variant form of title
Edition and printer	250 – Edition 260 – Publication, distribution etc.
Physical description	300 – Physical description
Series	490 – Series indication
Notes	500 – General note 501 – Note with: 502 – Dissertation note 504 – Bibliography note, etc. 505 – Formatted content note 520 – Summary note 533 – Reproduction note 534 – Original version note 541 – Acquisition note 546 – Language note 550 – Edition information note 583 – Processing note 590 – Location note
Subject access point	600 – Subject Added Entry – Personal name 610 – Subject Added Entry – Corporate Name 611 – Subject Added Entry – Meeting Name 630 – Subject Added Entry – Uniform title 650 – Subject Added Entry – Topic subject 651 – Subject Added Entry – Geographic name
Secondary entry	700 – Added entry – Personal name 710 – Added entry – Name of entity 711 – Added entry – Name of event 730 – Added entry – Uniform title 740 – Added entry – Related and analytical title not controlled 800 – Added entry for series – Personal name 810 – Added entry for series – Name of entity 811 – Added entry for series – Name of event 830 – Added entry for series – Uniform title
Location	856 – Electronic access and location

Table 1. Fields commonly used in cataloging rare works in Brazil. Source: own elaboration.

It is evident that most of the fields presented may be used in any type of cataloging, whether the work in question is old, rare, or modern, since they correspond to the minimum elements required for second level cataloging, according to rule 1.0D2, Second Level of Description, of AACR2 (Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR 2021), which served as the basis for the MARC21 format.

The fields 541 (Acquisition note), 550 (Edition information note), and 583 (Processing note) stand out as distinguishing elements between modern and rare works, in addition to variable fields that are used only when required by the characteristics of the item, such as note fields and secondary entry fields.

Based on the *Guide on Cataloging Old and Rare Collections for Librarians* published by the National Library of Korea (Bong et al. 2020) and on information provided by the *International Network for Korean Studies Librarians of the National Library of Korea* through personal communication,² it was possible to identify the most frequently used fields. These fields are presented in table 2.

Field type	Field
Control	001 – Control number 005 – Date of last processing 006 – Encoding information field – Additional data 007 – Technical fields 008 – Encoding information field
Numbers and codes	012 – Korean National Library control number 020 – ISBN number 035 – Partner organization control number 040 – Cataloging source 041 – Language code 049 – Content code 052 – National Library of Korea claim symbol 056 – Korean decimal classification symbol 080 – International decimal classification (CDU) 082 – Dewey decimal classification (CDD) 085 – Other classifiers
Main entry	100 – Main entry – Personal name 110 – Main entry – Name of organization 111 – Main entry – Name of meeting 130 – Main entry – Uniform title
Title	245 – Titles and responsibilities 246 – Variant forms of title
Edition and printer	250 – Edition 260 – Publication, distribution, and manufacturing
Descrição Física	300 – Physical description
Series	440 – Series indication – Supplementary titles 490 – Series indication

² Nanyoung, “Material Related to KORMARC,” email message, September 2, 2024.

Notes	500 – General note 501 – Note with: 504 – Bibliography note, etc. 505 – Formatted content note 506 – Access restriction note 515 – Numbering peculiarities note 520 – Summary note, etc. 533 – Reproduction note 534 – Original version note 535 – Original/duplicate location note 541 – Immediate source of acquisition note 545 – Bibliographic or historical note 546 – Language note 561 – Historical custody and ownership note 563 – Binding information note 580 – Binding entry complexity note 583 – Action note 590 – Local note
Subject access points	600 – Secondary subject entry – Personal name 610 – Secondary subject entry – Corporate name 611 – Secondary subject entry – Event name 648 – Secondary subject entry – Chronological term 650 – Secondary subject entry – Topic term 651 – Secondary subject entry – Geographic name 653 – Secondary subject entry – Indexing term – Uncontrolled 655 – Secondary subject entry – Indexing term – Gender/form
Secondary entry	700 – Secondary entry – Personal name 710 – Secondary entry – Corporate name 711 – Secondary entry – Event name 740 – Secondary entry – Related and analytical title, uncontrolled 830 – Secondary series entry – Uniform title
Relationships	780 – Previous work 785 – Successor work
Location	856 – Location and electronic access 890 – Display of non-typed characters
Locals	900 – Local marker – Personal name 910 – Local marker – Corporate name 930 – Local title – Unified title 949 – Local tables – General indicators 950 – Local information – Prices 980 – Local information – Collection table

Table 2. Fields used in cataloging rare works in South Korea. Source: own elaboration.

In the South Korean cataloging of rare books, it is possible to observe a greater number of fields that distinguish the cataloging of modern works from that of rare works. Fields related to notes and added entries are particularly prominent, as they include more specific elements such as field 545 (Bibliographic or historical note); field 561 (Historical custody and ownership note); field 583 (Action note); field 648 (Secondary subject entry – Chronological term); and field 655 (Secondary subject entry – Indexing term – Gender/form).

The differences between the fields commonly used in the cataloging of rare books in the two formats mainly arise from local issues associated with cultural differences and are summarized in table 3.

Field type	KORMARC	MARC21
Control	007	003
Numbers and codes	012, 035, 049, 052, 056 and 085	022, 043, 045, 084 and 090
Title	–	240
Series	440	–
Notes	506, 515, 520, 535, 545, 561, 563 and 580	502 and 550
Subject access points	648, 653 and 655	630
Added entry	740	730, 800, 810 and 811
Relationships	780 and 785	–
Location	890	–
Locals	900, 910, 930, 949, 950 and 980	–

Table 3. Differences in the fields used in cataloging rare works in South Korea and Brazil. Source: own elaboration.

It is important to note that KORMARC shares similarities with MARC21. These similarities are explained by the fact that both formats were developed from a common antecedent, LC MARC or MARC II, which evolved into USMARC in 1980. LC MARC had been designed solely for processing a single type of material, the book, whereas USMARC expanded its scope to include other types of materials and media. In the late 1990s, USMARC, together with CAN/MARC, gave rise to MARC21, which is currently used by many countries, including Brazil (Furrie 1999; Assumpção and Santos 2015; Dumer and Albuquerque 2020).

In addition to the fields, subfields, and indicators that differentiate the cataloging of rare books in Brazil and South Korea, there is also a notable difference in the number of fields used in cataloging. In Brazil, it is common to use 54 fields, whereas in South Korea 69 fields are used. This difference results from the presence of specific fields in the Korean context, some of which are discussed below.

The first field to be addressed is field 655 (Secondary subject entry – Indexing term – Gender/form). According to the *Manual for Bibliographic Data Entries in MARC21 Format with Emphasis on Rare and Special Works* (Messina-Ramos 2009), in the cataloging of rare works in Brazil, character 33 (Literary Form), of field 008 (Fixed-length data elements), is used with MARC21 options to describe the literary form and or genre.

In KORMARC, field 008 includes additional options beyond those found in MARC21. Option (w) encompasses three types of Korean poetry that were traditionally sung: hyangga, referring to native songs; sijo, referring to current melodies; and gasa, referring to verse forms (Korean Literature 2023).

The options used in both MARC21 and KORMARC are presented in table 4.

MARC21	KORMARC
0 – Not a work of fiction	b / – Not applicable
1 – Fiction (no further specification)	d – Plays and scripts
d – Drama	e – Essays
e – Essays	f – Novels
f – Novel	h – Satirical literature (excluding comics)
h – Humor, satire, etc.	i – Epistolary literature
i – Letters	j – Short stories
j – Short stories	k – Mystery novels
m – More than one literary form	l – Nonfiction (including reportage and documentary fiction)
p – Poetry	m – Travel writing, diaries, memoirs, and related genres
s – Speeches	p – Poetry
u – Unknown	s – Speeches and works related to oratory
l – Not coded	t – Editorial text
	u – Revision
	v – Collection of works
	w – Hyangga, sijo, gasa, and oral literature
	l – Not coded

Table 4. Options for character 33 of field 008 – Literary Form. Source: own elaboration (Network development and MARC standards office and Library of Congress 1999; National Library of Korea 2014).

However, KORMARC also includes field 655, which is used to represent genre or form as the subject of the work and may be employed to indicate to users the literary form of the item. According to the National Library of Korea (2014), this field is used because terms that indicate genre or form distinguish style or technique in relation to intellectual content, as they represent categories that are distinguishable by perspective, intention, specificity, publication status, and method of expression. The next field to be highlighted is field 561, which exists in MARC21 as field 561 (Historical custody and ownership note), and does not appear in any of the manuals previously mentioned. According to the National Library of Korea (2014), in KORMARC, field 561 is used to describe the ownership and history of the material up to the time it was acquired, as well as information such as when it was placed in its current location, the names of previous owners, and whether the work has been moved from that location.

The final field to be discussed is field 583 (Action note), which is provided in KORMARC by the National Library of Korea (2014) for the description of information related to the processing of materials, such as preservation treatment, current status, pending status, and the completion of preservation actions. MARC21 also includes field 583 as an Action Note; however, it does not appear in any of the manuals used for this study.

The need to describe provenance and rarity marks arises from the characteristics of the individual copy, which are considered among the criteria for a work to be classified as rare (Pinheiro 2009), as well as from its historical value.

In their work, Lima et al. (2023) argue that provenance marks reconstruct the history of rare books and assist in the reconstruction of the memories, interests, and ambitions of their owners, thereby contributing to the construction of individual profiles. According to the authors, these marks often go unnoticed by catalogers and are overlooked even during bibliographic processing. Because they are integral to the history of the book, rarity and provenance marks are of particular importance and should be described in all bibliographic records of rare works.

Conclusions

The main contribution of this work to the advancement of rare book cataloging lies in the dissemination of solutions developed within the KORMARC format, with the aim of addressing the needs of Brazilian information units and improving both the description of rare books and users' access to information. Familiarity with practices adopted by institutions in other contexts can support the development of solutions to challenges in internal processes and services, particularly in information units seeking to update and enhance the bibliographic records of their special collections.

Some of the fields discussed are employed because they reflect the historical context of the country and may serve as inspiration for the development of internal policies by Brazilian institutions, in ways that align with their specific realities and needs. Within the scope of this study, KORMARC demonstrates potential to enhance the cataloging of Brazilian rare books and, consequently, to contribute to the preservation of these works for future research.

It was concluded that the cataloging of rare books is evolving in Brazil and that, in order to sustain this process of improvement, several measures may be adopted. These include needs assessments, evaluation of work processes and practices, and the continuous updating of standards, models, and internal policies for viable solutions, as well as research into national and international examples, all of which contribute to the ongoing development of the field.

The practice of rare book cataloging must take into account the complexity of these materials, encompassing the elements that make them unique and essential for researchers and users from diverse fields. In turn, this comprehensive approach enhances the value attributed to these works, which hold particular significance for the communities to which they belong.

The KORMARC options presented illustrate how a format originally developed within the North American context, MARC, was expanded and refined to enable the representation of relevant characteristics in a different context, namely the Korean one. This development raises several questions, such as which particularities of other countries that use MARC21 and its derivatives may be underrepresented in existing fields, to what extent the standard can be customized to meet local needs without compromising the global interoperability of records, which is one of the defining features of the MARC21 standard, and what should be prioritized between local requirements and international concerns regarding record sharing.

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