When to Import a New Record vs. Attach to an Existing Record

A refresher



Do you have attachment issues? Join the club!

THE GOALS OF THIS PRESENTATION

1) To walk you through the basic tools and guidelines we use to decide whether we need to create a new record.

2) To cover some real-life exceptions/gray areas that come up.

This refresher will be referring A LOT to a document titled **"Differences Between, Changes Within: Guidelines on When to Create a New Record"** by the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services. [This document is no longer available ~ams 2026]

http://tpot.ucsd.edu/toolbox/training/files/differences07.pdf

(All quotes from this source unless otherwise noted)

Okay, so you have an item in hand that MIGHT match an existing record, but you're not sure.

What do you do?

Step 1: Identify the differences between the item you have and the record you are looking at.

Elements to check for potential differences (not an exhaustive list):

--Title and Statement of Responsibility.

-Is the title/author of your item ***exactly*** the same as the existing item?

-Is there a different translator or a new preface? If so, you'll need a new record.

--Edition statement.

-If your item says something like "Revised edition" or "6th edition" or "Special Anniversary Edition", you most likely need a new record.

--Publisher.

-Is the publisher the same?

--Extent.

-Is the pagination the same? A 5 page difference is allowable.

-Does your item have the same number of discs?

-Is the run time the same?

--Dimensions.

-A 2 cm size difference is allowable.

--Material type.

--Special features/technical specifications.

-Especially important for A/V materials.

Step 2: Decide whether the differences between your item and the existing record are important.

"Not all differences or changes are of equal importance. To determine whether a new record is necessary for some differences or changes, a cataloger needs to look at all aspects of the resource and consider them in conjunction with the specific guidelines for the type of manifestation." (p.2)

Two types of potential changes/differences:

--A MAJOR difference requires a new record.

"Any MAJOR difference between resources or a MAJOR change between existing components of an existing manifestation in any area of the description requires a new record." (p. 2)

Example: The title of the newest edition of *1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12* was changed to *1-2-3 Magic: The New 3 Step Discipline for Calm, Effective, and Happy Parenting*.
Changes in the title are a MAJOR change and require a new record.

--A MINOR difference doesn't usually require a new record, even if there is more than one MINOR difference.

"A MINOR change, if considered important, may require adjustments to the description of the existing bibliographic record and additional access points... Generally, multiple MINOR differences or changes do not add up to a MAJOR difference or change. There are cases, however, when MINOR differences or changes considered in conjunction with other aspects may point toward a MAJOR difference or change. Catalogers need to use their own judgment in such cases. When in doubt, edit the record to match the resource rather than creating a new record." (p. 2)

Example: When attaching a paperback to record for the hardcover edition, you might remove an edition statement that says 'First Hardcover Edition.'

How do you know what is a MAJOR difference vs. a MINOR difference?

"Differences Between, Changes Within" walks you through the process.

Let's take a look!

Examples of MAJOR changes:
--A change in the title
--A new edition statement
--A different set of special features
--A different aspect ratio

Examples of MINOR changes:
--A slight variation in a publisher's name
--A 1 cm difference in dimensions.
--The absence of the phrase "First edition."

"Presence or absence of information within the bibliographic record alone does not constitute a MAJOR difference. If information is absent in the bibliographic record but present on the resource, and that information is not contradicted within the bibliographic record, assume that the record does represent the resource and edit it for use accordingly." (p.3)

To prevent the catalog from becoming too unwieldy, Minerva allows several exceptions to the guidelines in “Differences Between, Changes Within.”

Exceptions allowed in Minerva:

From “Attaching vs. Creating a New Bib” on Maine Infonet. https://www.maineinfonet.org/minerva/support/cataloging-serials/cataloging-rules-and-instruction/attaching-vs-creating-a-new-bib/

1. When cataloging video recordings of older titles that have been released by multiple publishers and distributors, you may attach to existing bibs even if the publishers do not match as long as the format and color are the same.

2. Paperback editions of print books may be attached to bibs for the hardcover editions as long as the paperback is not a revision, does not include added material, and is within plus or minus 4-5 pages in length as the original.

3. An audiobook on CD may be attached to an existing bib for the same title that may have been released by a different publisher if the duration, number of discs, and narrator are the same.

Have you decided to attach your item to an existing record?

--Make sure you also add a 020 or 024 field that reflects the info for the item you're adding.

--Add any appropriate notes in the 500 fields.

So how does this apply in real life?

Q: I have a book that says 'revised edition' but otherwise it matches a record already in Minerva. Can I attach?

A: Sorry. New editions, especially revised editions, usually mean the content has changed. That's a MAJOR change and therefore requires a new record.

Q: I have a Scholastic edition of a book. Can I attach it to the original edition's record?

A: Sorry. You'll need a new record. A change in publisher is a MAJOR difference.

Q: I have a book that was originally published by Random House. Now it's been reprinted by the Ballantine imprint of Random House. Everything else is exactly the same. Can I attach my reprint to the original record?

A: Let me confuse you! I know I *just said* that a change in publisher is a MAJOR difference. But if it is clear on the book that the imprint belongs to the same publisher that is listed in the bib record, you can attach--but ONLY if everything else matches. Use some caution here. This is a practice that is allowed in Minerva, but does differ from the guidelines in "Differences Between, Changes Within."

Q: The author of the 2020 edition of Frommer's Italy is different from the author listed in the Frommer's Italy bib record. Do I need a new record?

A: No. You can most likely attach to this record. Travel guides are often serial publications. For serials, a change in the statement of responsibility from issue-to-issue is a MINOR difference.

Q: The latest issue of *This Old House* magazine is missing its issue/volume number. Now it just says Spring 2021. Do I need to create a new record?

A: Probably not. Changes in series numbering for monographs is MAJOR, but changes in series numbering issue-to-issue in a serial is usually MINOR. If there are no significant changes to this issue, you can attach it to your existing record.

Q: I have an Indiana Jones DVD box set. Can I split these movies up and attach them to existing Indiana Jones records?

A: Do the specifications/special features/run times/etc. of these items match existing Indiana Jones records? If so, then attach away! If there are any differences between your items and the existing records, make sure you investigate whether these are MAJOR or MINOR differences first.

Q: I have a book that has the same title/author as another book in Minerva. But the ISBN is different and the verso states, "This edition published..." Otherwise it looks like there are no other differences. Can I attach to the existing record?

A: A different ISBN on its own is often a MINOR change, but it often goes hand in hand with other changes that may be more significant. The phrase "this edition" is a little suspect. It could mean that the content has changed or it could mean that it is simply a reprinting of the original edition. If you can physically compare it to an item on the existing record, that would be ideal. But overall, since there are no other apparent changes, it seems more likely to be a simple reprint. I would most likely attach to the existing record. Ask yourself, if I bring in a new record, will a patron be able to tell the difference between the original record and the new record?

Finally, use your judgement—there will be gray areas!

The most important thing is whether a patron can look at a record and tell if it *reasonably* describes the item they want.

Too many records for the same title creates an unwieldy catalog that is difficult for a patron to navigate.

Too few discrete records results in patrons not knowing what they are getting.

We're looking for balance between those two extremes.

Do your best.

Ask questions.