5.3. Input rules tutorial

Overview

This tutorial presents guidelines for creating Appendix C, Record content and input rules, for the Information Organization Project (IOP). Input rules are guidelines for entering the data that comprise the content of database records.

Before you start writing the rules, read the project assignment, online modules, and assigned readings.

As you develop the rules, think about how they are used. The rules are only for technical users who create the records (indexers or catalogers), not for technical users who create the database (database designers) or for end users (searchers).

The record creators may not be entirely familiar with the information objects or the database. They tend to consult each rule as needed rather than read the rules consecutively. The rules must be explicit and detailed, with core information repeated in every appropriate rule.

Tailor your rules to your own information organization system and information objects. Follow the assignment and this tutorial. Although your wording for some rules may be similar to that in other projects, do not blindly copy the examples below. Your database may not have fields shown in the examples.

Appendix C is developed in three stages. For draft 2, follow steps 1 to 5; for draft 3, steps 6 to 9; and for draft 4, step 10. Steps 11, 12, and the conclusion apply to all drafts.

To avoid confusion, you are advised to follow the steps in order, completing each of the five rule subheadings for all fields before moving on. In other words, fill in all field names, then all semantics, etc. When steps 1-5 are completed, the rule for a field might look like this:

Example

Field name: RecordDate
Semantics: Date and time record was created or modified
Chief source of information: Automatically input by database
Input rules: Automatically input by database
Example: 9/1/2003 10:40:19
Draft 2

1. Copy rule subheadings for every field and fill in field names.

The five rule subheadings reflect the basic components of all major rule standards. Each component serves a specific purpose. The first component, field name, helps the record creator find the rule for a specific field in order of the field's appearance in the record structure.

- Repeat the five subheadings for every field in the record structure in Appendix B, in the same order. Boldface the subheadings and place them flush left on the page. Include the record-management fields RecordID and RecordDate and the placeholder fields Subject and Classification. If you are positive you have no subject representation, you may omit the subject element (Appendix A) and subject field (Appendix B) from draft 2. If you are unsure, wait until draft 3.

- Fill in the name of each field. Spell the name exactly as it appears in Appendix B, including capital letters and spaces.

- You may choose to enter only the field name for the placeholder fields Subject and Classification and leave the rest of the rule areas blank until draft 3.

**Example**

[RecordID]

Field name: RecordID

2. Copy or write semantics.

Semantics define the meaning of field content, or the data contained in the field. You may copy semantics directly from Appendix A. Revise the semantics for any element that translates into more than one field. Write semantics for RecordID and RecordDate (see Inmagic helps).

**Examples**

[RecordDate]

Semantics: Date and time record was created or modified

[Title]

Semantics: Name given to CD-ROM

[Author]

Semantics: Person(s) responsible for creating intellectual content
3. Write chief source of information.

The chief source of information explains where to find information to enter in the field as data. Usually this location is in or on the object itself, but it may be elsewhere, such as a separate reference source.

- Determine the location by examining your sample information objects. If the information appears in multiple or varied locations, list the chief location first, then alternative locations. For RecordID and RecordDate, state that input is automatic.

- Be as specific and concrete as possible (e.g., "verso of the title page," not "in the object").

- If you have more than one media format, list the chief source of information for each format. Present these in the same order for every field (e.g., book always first, then video).

- After filling in chief source of information for any field containing personal or corporate names, you may choose to leave the rest of the rule areas (input rules and examples) blank until draft 4 (step 10).

**Examples**

**[RecordDate]**

**Chief source of information:** Automatically input by database

**[Title]**

**Chief source of information:** Title page of book; jacket label of video

**[Author]**

**Chief source of information:** Title page or, if author is not listed there, verso of title page

**[Format]**

**Chief source of information:** Physical container of the information

4. Write input rules.

Input rules prescribe how to enter data accurately, consistently, and completely. Good rules are clear and concise, yet thorough in anticipating variations and exceptions.

Write rules in short but complete sentences, structured as orders that begin with active verbs (e.g., "Enter title . . ."). For RecordID and RecordDate, state that input is automatic. Try to present the same kinds of rules in the same logical order throughout Appendix C. Do not try to include all of the rules below, but only rules that apply to the individual field.

- Are there multiple possible entries in the chief source of information (e.g., multiple copyright dates)? If so, state the criteria for choice (e.g., choose the most recent date).
• Most data are entered exactly as found in/on the information object, with some minor style changes allowable for data consistency. General guidelines:

  o Data such as titles should be complete and in natural order, as they appear in the record display. Do not change spelling (e.g., the British spelling "catalogue"). Do not omit stop words such as "the" (stop words are only for internal database indexing and searching functions). Do not invert word order (e.g., do not put "The" at the end).

  o Capitalization rules for entries such as titles may prescribe title style or sentence style for consistency, but should not prescribe all-caps style because it is harder to read. Always capitalize proper nouns (names, places, etc.).

  o Punctuation is seldom changed except to add/delete punctuation in a code or number (e.g., ISBN, telephone number).

• Some rules depend on specifications in Appendix B. Do not restate the specification, but do be aware of it when writing the rule.

  o If the field is specified required entry, determine whether data will always be available to enter. If not, write a rule for what to enter if data are missing (e.g., "None" or "Unknown"). If entry is not required, you do not need a rule for missing data, but you may choose to state that the field can be left empty.

  o Unless a field is specified single-only, write a rule for multiple entries. In Inmagic, the record creator must press the F7 key to separate the entries, so include this in the rule. If the order of entries is important, write a rule for that, too.

Examples

[RecordDate]
Input rules: Automatically input by database

[Title]
Input rules: Spell title exactly as found. Use sentence-style capitalization. If poem has no title, enter "Untitled." If poem has title and subtitle, enter them separately (press F7 for new entry).

[Abstract]
Input rules: Enter abstract exactly as worded and spelled in published article. Do not add quotation marks or otherwise change punctuation. If article has no abstract, leave field empty.

5. Fill in example.

The example illustrates the rules. Draw the example from one of your sample objects. The examples for RecordID and RecordDate should be in the format specified in Appendix B and exhibited in your records.

• Fill in one example per field (the sample records show others). One exception is a field under control of a content validation list (step 6): you may delay entering the data values until draft 3, but indicate this with a note in brackets: "[validation list]." Another exception is a field with notably different types of data values, as from the thesaurus (step 8) or name authority file (step 10).
• Fill in the example as stated in the rules, or exactly as the data value appears in a record. Do not add any punctuation that is not part of the data entry or explanation.

Examples

[RecordDate]
Example: 9/1/2003 10:40:19

[Title]
Example: For whom the bell tolls

That's all the rules for draft 2! Now skip to steps 11 and 12 and the conclusion.

Draft 3

In section 3 you choose fields for three kinds of authority control: content validation (optional), thesaurus, and name authority. All are created in draft 3 except name authority control, which is created in draft 4. The steps below follow the order of the IOP assignment.

6. Write rules for field(s) under control of content validation

Content validation is optional. It is specified separately for individual fields. Some projects may have content validation specified for several fields and others may have none. If you do specify content validation, you are not required to create actual content validation list(s) in Inmagic.

• Specify content validation list for field in Appendix B. Edit narrative sections 2.3 and 3 if necessary.
  
  • Complete the input rules in Appendix C.
    
    o The first rule should say to choose a term from the validation list. In Inmagic, one must press F3 to display the list. No style limitations (spelling, caps, etc.) are necessary because the terms are already in the list.
    
    o If you think the content validation list for a given field may change, write a rule saying to add a term to the validation list if none exists. Include style limitations with this rule (see step 4).

• In the example, include all the data values if the validation list is short, or a sample of data values if the list is long. Alphabetize multiple entries and separate them with semicolons.

Examples

[Format]
Input rules: Choose term from validation list (press F3).
Example: book; video

[Genre]
Input rules: Choose term from validation list (press F3). If a term is not available, add it to the list, using lowercase characters only.
Example: mystery; romance; western
7. Add or edit subject fields.

In section 4.1 you determine the number of subject fields needed. Add any new fields to the record structure in Appendix B, then add the same fields, in the same order, to the rules in Appendix C.

- For field name and semantics, follow steps 1 and 2 above.

- The chief source of information for a subject concept may be difficult to determine. Think carefully about the location of clues to intellectual content. Subject analysis, or the process of identifying subject concepts and terms, may require scanning all or parts of an information object. Focus on the location(s) of only the kinds of concepts represented in the specific subject field. See step 8 for examples.

- Input rules and examples for subject fields may vary widely. Fields that are not under authority control are natural-language fields; follow steps 4 and 5. For any field under control of content validation, see step 6. For the one field under control of a thesaurus, see step 8.

8. Write rules for field under control of thesaurus

A thesaurus is required for one field only. The thesaurus for most projects is applied to a subject field. For a few projects with no subject representation, the thesaurus is applied to a physical description field.

- Create the sample thesaurus in Appendix D and write the narrative for section 4.2. In Appendix B, do not specify content validation (which would be redundant) for the thesaurus field.

- Complete the input rules in Appendix C:
  
  o The first rule should say to choose terms from the thesaurus in Appendix D. No style limitations (spelling, caps, etc.) are necessary because the terms are already in the thesaurus.
  
  o Indicate the number of terms to be assigned to this field, consistent with your decisions on specificity and exhaustivity in section 4.2.
  
  o See step 4 for guidance on other rules, particularly rules for multiple entry. Some thesaurus rules include a rule for the order of multiple entries.
  
  o Write a rule for adding terms to the thesaurus. Include style limitations (see step 4).

- In the example, include one term from the thesaurus, or two if they illustrate different parts of the rules (remember that all terms are available in the thesaurus). Order any multiple examples either alphabetically or in order of the rules and separate them with semicolons.

Examples

Field name: Subject
Chief source of information: Table of contents. If necessary, scan preface and chapter headings.
Input rules: Choose authorized terms from thesaurus (Appendix D). Enter all appropriate terms exactly as they appear in thesaurus (press F7 between terms). Index as specifically and as exhaustively as possible. If an important concept is not represented in the thesaurus, add it. Use lowercase characters except for proper nouns. Prefer common acronyms to full names.
Example: grilled cheese; BLT
Field name: Genre
Chief source of information: Case containing video or label on videocassette. If these are insufficient, view the video.
Input rules:
Select terms from the thesaurus (Appendix D) that describe the topic at a summary level. Include no more than three terms, with the most important term first. Press F7 between multiple entries. If a new major subject occurs in a video, add it to the thesaurus. Capitalize the first word of every subject term and proper nouns within subject terms. Change spelling to American English if necessary.
Example: Contemporary western; Dust Bowl


The rules for classification are covered in Appendix E, so:

- For chief source of information and input rules in Appendix C, simply refer to Appendix E.
- The example in Appendix C can be the same as the example in Sec. 4.3 and Appendix E, but include only the classification code with no explanation.

Example

[Classification]
Chief source of information: See Appendix E.
Input rules: See Appendix E.
Example: Reg.Bla.1985.b/1

That's all the rules for draft 3! Now skip to steps 11 and 12 and the conclusion.

Draft 4

10. Write rules for field(s) under name authority control.

One name authority file can cover all fields in the record that contain personal or corporate names.

- Create the name authority file in Appendix F and write the narrative for section 5. In Appendix B, do not specify content validation (which would be redundant) for any field under name authority control.

- Complete the input rules in Appendix C for every appropriate name field:

  o The first rule should say to choose the authorized name from the name authority file in Appendix F and to enter it exactly as it appears there. Do not include style limitations unless they extend beyond those in Appendix F, specifically for this field.

  o Indicate the number of names to be assigned to this field.

  o See step 4 for guidance on other rules, particularly rules for required entry and multiple entry. Some name fields include a rule for the order of multiple entries.
Write a rule for adding a record to the name authority file. Do not include style limitations (which are already in Appendix F).

- In the example, put one authorized name from Appendix F, or two names if they illustrate different rules (e.g., personal and corporate names). Do not add any explanation (which would duplicate Appendix F). Order any multiple examples either alphabetically or in order of the rules and separate them with semicolons.

**Examples**

**Field name:** Author  
**Semantics:** Person(s) or corporation(s) responsible for creating intellectual content  
**Chief source of information:** Title page or, if author is not listed there, verso of title page  
**Input rules:** Choose authorized form of name from name authority file (Appendix F) and enter it exactly as shown there. Enter multiple authors in order of appearance in book. Press F7 key between multiple entries. If there is no author, enter "Unknown." If a name is not available in the name authority file, create a new name authority record for that author.  
**Example:** Hemingway, Ernest; Fish & Game, Inc.

**Field name:** Creator  
**Semantics:** Person(s) responsible for creating and/or modifying original content of the work. May include author, editor, illustrator, or translator.  
**Chief source of information:** Title page or, if not listed there, verso of title page  
**Input rules:** Select authorized form of name from name authority file (Appendix F). Enter name in Creator field exactly as found. Follow each name with person's role, abbreviated in parentheses: author (au.), editor (ed.), illustrator (ill.), or translator (tr.). If person has two roles, enclose both in parentheses, separated by comma. Enter multiple creators in order of roles above. Press F7 after each entry. If no creator is listed, enter "Unknown." If no name authority record exists for a creator, create one.  
**Example:** Maurice Sendak (au., ill.)  

**Note:** Role qualifiers are most helpful in the full display of the retrieved record. If users are likely to search by role, as in the case of children's book illustrators, break out a separate field for each role and simply enter the person's name in the appropriate field (e.g., "Maurice Sendak" would go in both author and illustrator fields).

**Field name:** Publisher  
**Semantics:** Company that manufactured and distributed the CD.  
**Chief source of information:** CD case liner notes or CD label.  
**Input rules:** Find company name in name authority file (Appendix F). Enter authorized version of name exactly as found. If the CD has more than one publisher, enter only the first one listed. If no name authority record exists for the company, create one.  
**Example:** Universal Music

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**11. Test and apply rules.**

Test your rules by having someone else try to follow them. Follow the rules yourself when creating sample records for Appendix G. The process of data entry may help to suggest refinements for the rules.

**12. Write narrative.**

Write/revise narrative for section 2.4. This should contain only enough information to respond to the assignment, not all details of decisions you made for Appendix C.
Conclusion

Instructions are a large part of technical writing by information professionals. Clarity, consistency, accuracy, and completeness are as vital in the input rules as in the data entries themselves. Rules vary widely depending on the specific information organization system. The basic wording of rules may be similar in different project reports, but your rules must fit your own system.

The instructors seldom deduct points for specific rules, so long as the rules are present and clear. However, they often deduct points for:

- Failure to adhere to the assignment
- Omission of appropriate rules
- Lack of consistency with other parts of the project report
- Failure to follow the rules when entering data in the sample records

To ensure the best possible evaluation:

- Read (and follow) the assignment (RTA), including boxes with additional tasks.
- Run the draft checklist on your own project report prior to the draft exchange.