E. Wyndham Hulme's Classification of the Attributes of Books: On an Early Model of a Core Bibliographical Entity

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Modelling bibliographical entities is today a prominent activity within knowledge organization. Current models of bibliographic entities, such as Functional Requirements for Bibliographical Records (FRBR) and the Bibliographic Framework (BIBFRAME), take inspiration from data-modelling methods developed by computer scientists from the mid-1970s on. Thus, it would seem that the modelling of bibliographic entities is an activity of very recent vintage. However, it is possible to find examples of bibliographical models from earlier periods of knowledge organization. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to one such model, outlined by the British classification theorist E. Wyndham Hulme in his essay on "Principles of Book Classification" (1911–1912). There, Hulme set forth a classification of various attributes by which books can conceivably be classified. These he first divided into *accidental* and *inseparable* attributes. Accidental attributes were subdivided into edition-level and copy-level attributes and inseparable attitudes, into *physical* and *non-physical* attributes. Comparison of Hulme's classification of attributes with those of FRBR and BIBFRAME 2.0 reveals that the different classes of attributes in Hulme's classification correspond to groups of attributes associated with different bibliographical entities in those models. These later models assume the existence of different bibliographic entities in an abstraction hierarchy among which attributes are distributed, whereas Hulme posited only a single entity—the book—, whose various aspects he clustered into different classes of attributes. In this, Hulme's model offers an interesting alternative to current assumptions about how to conceptualize the relationship between attributes and entities in the bibliographical universe.