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Re: Transcription of diacritics

“0.4.12.2 Optionally, when converting uppercase to lowercase, add diacritical marks that are not present on the source of information in accordance with the pattern of usage in the text.”

**I am writing in strong opposition to the inclusion of Rule 0.4.12.2 in DCRMR.** The rule will cause numerous problems for languages where diacritics are an element of spelling, and where spelling rules have varied over time.

(My examples below are taken from French because that is the language other than English that I know best. Similar issues occur in the transcription of 19th century Latin American Spanish, and I think for early modern German, but these are not my areas of expertise.)

1) **The most important problem I find is that the rule is optional**. One purpose of accurate and complete transcription is to create a surrogate that can predictably help identify variants. If we are using different transcription rules, I will not know whether the word I see on my title page as PRIVILEGE is what you saw, but have transcribed as privilège. This problem becomes especially acute for illegal texts in multiple editions, such as clandestine French Revolutionary pamphlets, where subtle differences may identify different editions.

(Other optional rules may not present this problem: transcribed punctuation can usually be easily distinguished from ISBD.)

2) **The rule only applies to case conversion.** So EDITION can be transcribed as édition, but not as Édition? **Why?**

3) **The “pattern of the text” in early modern spelling can be difficult to discern without some advanced knowledge**, unlike the analogous situation with u/v, where the distinction is purely typographical and the cataloger can search for the word in the text (VN = un or vn?) Many catalogers might know the difference in French between “a” and “à”, or between “sur” and “sûr”, so they might know that “il a besoin” tells us nothing about A PARIS. But I have noted more complicated patterns, such as what I see in lower case on a title page from 1571: “lettres patentes qui ont esté publiées apres l'impression … commencee, & qui partant n'ont peu estre rengées … ” where an accent aigu seems to appear and disappear at random in feminine plural endings. What is the pattern of the text?

My fear is that catalogers will simply add accent marks where they would be expected in modern usage. This, I think, which would be the equivalent of correcting spelling rather than using [sic]. In the example above, we would not correct “peu” to “pu”. Why would we correct NOUUELLE EDITION to nouuelle édition (but not nouvelle édition)?

4) **Spelling conventions may vary from place to place in the same text**, often in surprising ways. I routinely see lower case “a” without diacritic used as a preposition on nineteenth-century title pages, but almost never in nineteenth century texts. What is the correct way to transcribe A PARIS in such a case?

**In general**: I would prefer that DCRMR retain the rule from DCRM(b) to require transcription of diacritics as seen on the piece (with required exceptions such as those for superscript “o” or “e”). I believe rule 0.4.12.2 will introduce needless complication and confusion.