MSP-5
SUNY Consortium Metadata Policies
Policy: Single vs. separate records

Policy Justification: Traditional national practice has been to catalog every manifestation of a title on its own bibliographic record (“separate records”). Exceptions have been made for electronic resources, first for serials and then for monographs: an electronic version is added to the same bibliographic record for a print resource (“single record”). At the current time, separate records are the dominant approach, but single records are accepted as a variant practice. A limited use of single records may need to remain for the long term due to established national practice: for example, print and microform records for the U.S. Newspaper Project.

- SUNY libraries must use separate bibliographic records for each format of a single title.
- Consortium members are not required to convert migrated single records. Specific conversion projects may be undertaken to solve problems in the new system.
- Limited single records may need to remain due to established national practice: for example, print and microform records for the U.S. Newspaper Project.

Additional Rationale:
Separate records provide for simpler maintenance, particularly in a batch load environment, but may require more effort to create new records. Single records, on the other hand, provide a simpler user experience and may save time in the creation of records, but are very difficult and expensive to maintain when batch loading is involved.

In a shared catalog, a fundamental principle is that each title should be treated only one way; that is, it does not make sense to have both separate records and a single record for a given title. In our shared LSP, where records come from many sources and many libraries work on them, separate records for electronic resources seems the only workable alternative. If we were to use single records, problems with batch load conflicts would be very difficult, if not impossible, to resolve.

Another reason to use separate records is that the LSP allows users to refine their searches using facetting by format, which is dependent on the coding in the bibliographic record. For facetting to work accurately and comprehensively, resources must be on bibliographic records that specifically describe their formats. LSP icons also serve as guides to selection of materials and they rely on coding in the bibliographic record in order to correctly correspond to the resource.