

LIBRARY JOURNAL



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Processing for the People

BY THE YEAR 2000, unless something happens to deflect the current juggernaut, all processing will be solely Library of Congress (LC) based, or worse yet, will emanate from LC and the uncontrolled data base of the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC), consistent with policies determined by a research library biased American Library Association (ALA), and studies funded by the Council on Library Resources (CLR).

This possibility is not new, at least regarding LC and ALA, but its realization grows closer:

The rules issued by the ... catalog committee of the American Library Association (ALA) are expressly designed to be made for the use of a learned library. The old catalogs were not made for children, but the modern ones have to be, especially in a circulating library, for the children are the library's best clients. That the [ALA catalog] committee has always understood the public's views, estimated correctly its power of changing them, and drawn the line in the right place between a conservative regard for custom and a wish to lead the public toward a desirable simplicity and consistency is too much to assume. ¹

Charles A. Cutter stated this at the turn of the 20th Century in the introduction to his final edition of cataloging rules, and more importantly on the occasion of the end of the "golden age of cataloging." The "golden age" was ended with the anticipated universal availability of LC cards; essentially each library would no longer need to do its own cataloging nor have its own staff of catalogers except for those few needed to handle the small percentage of titles not covered by LC.

In the late 1960s, Cutter's warning became even more urgent. Prior to 1968, libraries had many sources from which to meet their cataloging needs, plus some remnants of a local staff. In 1964² and 1969,³ articles appeared in *Library Resources and Technical Services* (LRTS) and in other places listing processing center products and services, both nonprofit and commercial, available in the United States. An examination of those listed reveals that a full range and variety of cataloging services were available. Some nonprofit ones provided

by Maurice J. Freedman

full LC cataloging and others used Sears subject headings, abridged Dewey numbers, and title page author entries. Some commercial firms furnished one or the other, or a choice of the two. (Although cataloging and processing are not synonymous, for this paper's purpose they will be used somewhat interchangeably. As it is the basic cataloging data which forms the nucleus for all processing services, such components as pockets, spine labels, etc. cannot be created without the prior production of the cataloging record.) In addition to LC as a main source, many cataloging services were available either on a regional basis, primarily used by public libraries, school systems and in some rare cases even academic libraries; or nationally, commercial services used mainly by college, public, and school libraries. Centralization and standardization before the advent of MARC and massive computerization allowed various kinds of libraries to select either jointly or separately a processing service which furnished cataloging data tailored or suited to their respective libraries. The diversity of distributors and their lack of absolute dependence on a single source for cataloging data permitted them the freedom to choose from among the many established authorities and to attempt to be more responsive to the diverse needs of their customers or users. In a 1964 article, for example, Elizabeth Adcock pointed out that in a response to a vote of one center's users and a change in policy by one of the center's commercial sources, the center changed from LC to title page author entry.⁴

The existence of a variety of commercial and centralized processors, many of whom independently selected and defined the content of the catalog records they created and distributed, had benefits and drawbacks. On the positive side, they could attempt to meet the needs of their narrowly defined constituencies. Already cited was an example of a given processor which switched to title page author entry because of its greater suitability for its member libraries. Some of LC's subject terms are particularly unsatisfactory for nonresearch libraries. For example, the *Sears List of Subject Headings* uses the explicit and direct term, "Busing (School integration)," while LC calls it "School children - Transportation." Card formats from central processors are frequently simpler and more intelligible than the LC card, eliminating such descriptive items as city of publication, spine size, and lengthy notes, while providing valuable annotations. In Westby's directory of processors, there are sample cards illustrating this point.⁵ Note that LC currently provides annotations and alternate headings for children's books - a valuable service.

But the multiplicity of standards and the various exceptions to the standards contributed to conflicts in the individual catalogs. One can find a short history of processing services embedded in many public library catalogs. LC cards, LJ cards, Wilson cards, local processor cards, and handwritten nonprofessionally produced cards, intermixed in the same catalog with their concomitant inconsistency in entry and format, frequently added up to a dismal situation for their patrons.

Although there have been many social and political

er slanted headings perpetuated by LC's canonization of prevailing bigotries (e.g. "Mammies," "Kafirs," "Women as librarians," "Yellow peril," "Jewish question," etc. ad nauseum);⁶ LC's anachronisms such as "European war, 1914-1918," "Motor-trucks," "Moving pictures," etc.; and LC's failure to recognize new terms before a large segment of materials on that topic are cataloged under an improperly general term, such as "Rock music" being put under "Jazz" years after rock was created, all of these criticisms were basically ignored by the dominant cataloging authorities.

Because there were a large variety of processing services and still some local cataloging staff, at least some of these centrally disseminated horrors were properly dealt with and not enshrined in some neighborhood 3 x 5 card tray. As we approached the present era of automation, standardization and inflation, there did exist some variation in local practice, and as pointed out, not all of it for the good. Processing for the people, certainly as coming from LC, was not a reality, but on the other hand cataloging had not yet been totally divorced from the reality of local needs.

Automation and standardization

Automation in libraries did not begin to have a major impact until the late 1960s and early 1970s. The automated cataloging systems in various stages of development around the country were built to accept or enter into the computer, cataloging data, but not to provide bibliographical control. With one exception, the New York Public Library automated system,⁷ these systems did not automate any of the professional cataloging functions such as authority checking, establishment of entry, cross-reference control, etc.⁸ (This is an especially important point to keep in mind regarding the OCLC system and data base.) By 1975 the impact of automation has become overwhelming. The three largest library jobbers all have MARC (*Machine Readable Cataloging*) based catalog card and processing services. (MARC is the service wherein LC currently sends out weekly in computer readable form its current cataloging information for English language and some other Roman language titles.) LC's Catalog Distribution Service (formerly the Card Division) is sending to its subscribers computerized "letterpress quality" MARC based cards (as well as letterpress, offset, and photocopies of other cards), and the Ohio College Library Center, the nation's most ubiquitous alternative, is mailing out over half-a-million cards per week (as of July 11, 1975).⁹

However, the OCLC system has some drawbacks. Insofar as there is no rigorous bibliographical or authority control built into the system controlling the entry of cataloging information into the OCLC data base, OCLC is a threat to the traditional integrity of the catalogs of all of its member libraries, not just the nonresearch libraries. But it is important to note that "integrity," such as consistency in the form, spelling and fullness of entries, is no longer a universal value. Many librarians feel that the re-

tention of traditional cataloging values is no longer economical. To them the sloppiness embodied in several entries for the same work, a not uncommon occurrence in the OCLC data base, is not a drawback. To me it is bad service because it will lead, at least in some cases, to the user not finding a work that is in the collection. The traditional integrity of the catalog, be it on-line, card, book or microform, does not necessarily, have to be sacrificed in the name of automation and cooperation.¹⁰

ISBD-the wrong kind of rule

Concomitantly the drive toward standardization, advanced in the names of international cooperation, economics, and efficiency (Motherhood was omitted), and substantially financed by the Council on Library Resources, has seen an almost lemming-like pursuit of "international standards," or most recently, "universal bibliographical control" (UBC). Originally billed as an optional format required for the purposes of computerizing catalog data, the International Standard Bibliographical Descriptive (ISBD) with its esoteric punctuation conventions and Latin abbreviations was adopted officially as a tool enabling the research libraries of the western world to communicate cataloging information.

Many public librarians feel that ISBD has little value, that it will further confuse their users. While no study has been attempted demonstrating this negative effect on the user, the original ISBD proponents did no formal user study either. Assuming that the lack of studies are a tradeoff, other considerations could be most informative. Seymour Lubetzky, one of the greatest theoreticians of descriptive cataloging, publicly decried the ISBD as being unnecessarily redundant because it requires the author's name after the title, even when it is identical to the main entry, and it introduced confusing punctuation.¹¹ Lubetzky's objections were numerous, but in brief he rejected ISBD.

ISBD is the wrong kind of cataloging rule to be taken up at the international level. In a discussion of what

should be the concerns of an international cataloging code, as well as national, regional, local, and bibliophilic codes, S. R. Ranganathan was most helpful. For Ranganathan, when librarians of different nationalities sit down to create an international code, they should only accept past practices of permanent value, be free from

lower emotions, such as decadent imperialism, inhibiting camp bearerism, prejudice of colour, east-west or realistic-practical, and every other kind slogan-phobia. As a meeting of intellectual peers ... brought together to find what is best and true, the Round-Table should first determine the normative principles to guide their further work Unlike classification, catalogue *cannot use a purely artificial international symbolic language*.¹²

In specifically taking up international catalog codes, and in view of the groundwork he has already set forth, Ranganathan stated that such matters as normative principle, choice of heading for main entry, etc. "...can be bodily adapted by...[national] codes...[but]...an international code on rendering of names and style of writing can only be taken as directives by a [national] code."¹³ The Japanese language illustrates why international legislation for detailed punctuation and rendering routines are necessarily bound to failure. Japanese sentences have no punctuation marks. As a result of the impossibility for the Japanese to use ISBD's codes for Japanese language cataloging records going into Japan's catalogs, a JSBD had to be developed.¹⁴ Ranganathan's "Law of Parsimony" is violated when the occurrence of an author's name after the title duplicates the main entry. Ranganathan would have many reasons to find ISBD most objectionable. The IFLA cataloging experts who created ISBD and who have more goodies coming our way should give Ranganathan's *Heading and Canons* (from which all of these quotes were taken) a most careful reading.

ISBD is a most unfortunate development, probably a precursor of even greater calamities for the users of America's nonresearch libraries, and a perfect example of what Cutter was warning us about. It is ironic that over 70 years later his words could again be timely and even urgent.

The Library of Congress, in the words of William J. Welsh, director of the world's largest processing department, has publicly avowed that "LC's first constituency

is in fact the research community."¹⁵ This statement in the proceedings of an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) program, coupled with his American Libraries article (September 1975, p. 459) constitute a mandate for America's public libraries (and to some, all of the non-research academic libraries),¹⁶ to look for an alternative to the LC standard. It is most important to underscore the need for an alternative standard as opposed to an abandonment of standards.

Narrowed options

Options have continuously narrowed through the closings, bankruptcies, and consolidations of commercial and nonprofit processors. Several commercial card and/or processing services have recently gone out of business, and the largest ones remaining are mainly computer based. In the commercial sphere, the H.W. Wilson Company, Richard Abel, Canadian Book Wholesale Company, and most recently Ingram have all gone out of the card business. (Abel and Canadian Book went out of business altogether.) Inflation, the inability to successfully utilize the computer and/or other considerations have resulted in the California State Library processing center (CLASS), the Iowa State Library processing center, and the Colorado Academic Library Book Processing Center (CALBPC) getting out of the processing business. Josten's Catalog Card Corporation, Bro-Dart, and Baker and Taylor, the biggest commercial services, and OCLC and LC's Catalog Distribution Service in the nonprofit sphere, are all providing MARC based cards with the aforementioned defective LC authorities and ISBD conventions. OCLC does give its users the option of changing any portion of the catalog record LC or any member library has entered in the system. Albeit a somewhat time-consuming manual process, it is the positive side of the nonbibliographical control of its data base. None of the commercial services provide this option.

At much greater cost to them, the commercial firms mentioned are also providing title-page entry, Sears headings, and abridged Dewey cataloging to their customers. All of this requires original cataloging for the limited titles they cover, plus input to the computer. It is less and less economical for them to continue to provide alternative cataloging services because they require both professional staff and keyboarders. These people costs

are always the most expensive elements in an automated production system.

Further changes in the cataloging rules will of course be incorporated into the MARC record LC distributes to these and other major disseminators of cataloging products. Libraries producing their own cards using the LC unit record (be it a proof slip, NUC record, microform copy of same, etc.) as a master will put all of those "goodies" such as ISBD on every card they make. This means that all of the public, school, and other non-research libraries using LC-based cataloging products are getting cataloging data from a "national" library which regards their needs as - at best - its second concern. Consequently ISBD and other superfluous data is showing up in library catalogs all over the country.

Who makes the rules?

One of the chief reasons for ISBD and the previously cited name and topical headings has been the near absence of public library people on the standing ALA bodies which develop and administer cataloging policies and rules. Illustration A will graphically demonstrate the imbalances of representation. An examination of the membership of three key groups within the Resources and Technical Services Division (RTSD) for the 1974-1976 period, and one for the 1975-1976 year, should illustrate the problem. Out of 78 people, 57 are academic librarians, 14 are library school faculty, and four are public library technical services professionals.¹⁷

This almost total absence of the public library view on RTSD cataloging committees is at least in part the fault of public librarians. At least some, especially administrators, see the catalog as a necessary evil and have literally and figuratively relegated catalogers to the back room, given them the lowest status of their professional staff, and allotted meager funds for their attendance at meetings. Direct service to the public, building buildings, and nodding toward selection have been the foci of many public librarians and it shows in their representation in the ALA structure - they have not had their say in technical services matters because they in significant part have not recognized its importance. This is sad because they are spending money on processing but not really get-

ting full value for it, while others have to pay more than they really should to get reasonable public library cataloging services. For example, the Hennepin County Library has a most vital program, at least as evidenced by its *Cataloging Bulletin*, of enhancing, correcting, and changing LC cataloging so as to adequately serve its clientele. Unfortunately, Hennepin must bear all of the costs of its improved service because the "national" library output has public libraries as its secondary concern, and the ALA rule-makers are not representative of the interests of public libraries. The academic and library school monopoly of interest, and the lack of participation by public librarians through, in part, their own neglect, leaves us ever more mindful of Cutter's admonition about leaving it to ALA.

Forcing change at LC, CLR

LC staffers, regardless of their personal views, have basically maintained stolid conservative policies in terms of their contributions. Changes in large part, have come as a result of outside criticism and attack: such terms as "Kafirs," "Aeroplanes," "Electronic calculating machines," "Negroes," etc. were eliminated only after external pressure was exerted. This LC intransigence or at best, resistance to change, in combination with CLR appointed and funded bodies, is leading to cataloging policies which will even further disregard public library service, and will probably create some real problems for the academic library user. In its efforts toward national and international standardization, and through the massive input of funds, CLR has been a driving force to establish the **ISBD**. In other areas CLR has not seemed to be reluctant to establish and fund ad-hoc committees to develop standards which it finds desirable at a given time. It is true that the recommendations of CLR appointed bodies must be approved by the appropriate ALA committee. However the CLR subsidized group meets as frequently as is necessary. The members of ALA groups have no such ready availability of funds, meet twice a year at the ALA annual and midwinter meetings, and in effect have to deal with the almost *fait accompli* of the CLR committee recommendations in the very short time available.

For example, the Committee, on the Encoding of

Machine-readable Bibliographic Information (CEMBI) set up by CLR did work which had to be reviewed by the ALA RTSD/ISAD/RASD committee on Representation in Machine-Readable Form of Bibliographic Information (MARBI) for it to become an ALA standard. The problem was that CEMBI was better funded by CLR and could meet as often as necessary, while its ALA counterpart, MARBI, was limited to meeting twice a year. Neither ALA nor the institutions they represented could afford the expenses of frequent meetings. If a MARBI member wanted to study a matter in greater depth, the delay would be six months, until the next ALA meeting. That person would then be subject to criticism for delay, obstructionism, holding up national projects, etc. If MARBI rather than CLR's handpicked committee had been funded to originally study the matter, or at least had been kept closely abreast of the CLR group's activities, then that duplicative, time-consuming process might have been avoided, and the MARBI members would have had much better conditions under which to deal with CLR's proposals.

Of gravest concern is the current situation in which a the Advisory Group on National Bibliographic Control was established. This group of six people selected by CLR and the National Science Foundation (NSF) has at best two people on it identified with the library community (as opposed to publishing or abstracting and indexing): William Welsh of the Library of Congress, and Jerrold Orne, formerly director of the University of North Carolina library and now head of the University's library school. Orne is a key figure in the area of national library standards with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). In major part this Group will be following up on a CLR-NSF sponsored meeting (April 17-20, 1974) on "National Bibliographic Control." That meeting had 40 participants, none of whom was identified with a public library. There were six LC people, four were from CLR, six ARL people, and three library school faculty among others. The following general recommendation was made at the meeting:

The participants join in supporting an effort (by or through [CLR and NSF]) to identify or create an ongoing body ... that could ... take appropriate actions to advance social objectives and national needs in the fundamental aspects of bibliographical control including (but not limited to) such activities as developing national strategies, identifying areas for standardization, protecting system integrity, providing national direction for international participation, and assigning responsibility to accomplish specific tasks.¹⁸

Between the participants and the recently chosen Advisory Group on National Bibliographic Control, the bibliographic needs of the public library community are totally unrepresented. It is of the utmost importance that those who want to see the library catalog be a catalog serving the public libraries, and not just the needs of the international research library cataloging community, actively concern themselves with the confidential work of the Advisory Group's surrogates or working parties before it is writ in stone because, "Working papers ... will be treated as confidential until such time as it is appropriate to publicize results and invite public comment."¹⁹

LC used to be the premier supplier of card sets in the country. It still is selling more catalog cards than any other supplier in the country, but the nature of its business—the methods of card production, its clientele, its position of unquestioned leadership—has changed.

In the early 1960s, for a variety of reasons, LC's ability to provide a prompt and complete card service declined. In the late 1960s LC tried to create an automated system which would supersede the manual methods of card production and order fulfillment. A primary design goal was to reproduce in effect by automation, the traditional LC card which had been printed by hot-type and reprinted by photo-offset techniques.²⁰ The equipment available at that time was a high-speed electronic photo-composition device and the Videcomp, a particular model that was probably the best of its kind. Unlike the computer line printer with its single type font and type size which produces the catalog cards sold by Josten's, Baker & Taylor, OCLC, and a host of other services, the Videcomp, with the capacity for an unlimited number of type fonts and type sizes could be programmed to take a MARC record and produce offset masters for LC cards that are virtually identical to the hot-type cards traditionally printed by LC. In other words, the computer was used to produce the same LC product as before. In addition, another goal was to use automation to furnish the LC card set on demand. LC would stock no cards at all, but would only print the cards needed from its computerized data base when it received the order. This latter goal, according to current LC staff, was unrealistic. The equipment could not be economically utilized to print LC card sets on demand across the full range of card orders, although some individual orders are being fulfilled this way for infrequently requested titles. All of the high volume orders are filled from stocked, or, in effect, pre-printed cards.

The Card Division automation project eventually succeeded, although some of its goals changed. The multi-million dollar effort involving the state-of-the-art photocomposition equipment is successfully being used, but LC's card service has subsequently earned less money every year than it did in 1968.²¹ (The Card Division, while losing money, also lost its name: it became the Catalog Distribution Service Division.) What accounts for the diminished business, the state-of-the-art equipment notwithstanding? The computer line-printer, vis-à-vis OCLC, Josten's Catalog Card Corporation, Baker & Taylor, Bro-Dart and others, has been able to produce catalog card services in a manner more satisfactory to an increasing number of the nation's libraries than LC. The commercial firms offer kits with headings on appropriate cards and full processing. OCLC mails its card orders out in alphabetical arrangement. Using 20/20 hindsight, it is easy to second-guess about what LC should have done. Maybe a line-printer-based card and/or kit service would have been or still could be a good approach. But it surely would have been challenged by at least some of the library community which requires the highest quality product from LC, but has no qualms about accepting less

from others. The automation project did essentially deliver what it was supposed to, but the Catalog Distribution Service Division decreased sales attest to the fact that something else is needed.

LC is still the mecca of card suppliers in the United States, the 60 to 70 million cards sold per year is still unrivaled, but there are fewer libraries turning toward Washington to have their card needs met. The competition, although still not too close, is growing. On the other hand if all of the MARC based cards produced by OCLC, the commercial jobbers, and all of the other MARC subscribers who use MARC to print catalog cards were added to LC's output, LC would probably have an even larger percentage of the card sale market than it did in the Card Division's best years. LC's current position as MARC distributor and low profile card purveyor seems to be the position it wants.

The reason for this extensive examination of the quality of LC's cataloging, its research library commitment, and its comparatively less useful card service, is to provide a background against which to judge the valid-

ity of LC's claim that: "The Library of Congress is the logical agency to serve as the national bibliographic center."²² The national bibliographic center cannot put service to the majority of the nation's population second to the interests of the nation's research libraries and still be considered *the* national center. LC can be the national bibliographic center for research libraries, but not for the rest of us. Obviously, the nonresearch libraries of the country, certainly the nation's public libraries, need a national bibliographic service, but they must not accept one which subordinates their needs to those libraries on the membership list of the Association of Research Libraries.

Current alternatives

Coupling the developments of the availability of MARC and the viability of the line-printer, commercial processors, and others entered a whole new world of processing. Instead of storing cards for distribution, they can print the requisite card sets or kits as needed for actual orders. In addition through a little extra programming effort, machines could be made to pick out the trac-

ings and overprint them on the appropriate cards, a service not available from LC. The acceptance by the

bulk of the nation's libraries of computer line-printer cards was assured when they included fast turnaround, additional services, and low prices.²³

Automation has kept the purchase of cardsets and processing services economical and timely. Inflation and decreased funding (particularly the withdrawal of large federal subsidies) have driven libraries toward standardization and centralized and/or commercial, but unfortunately flawed, services. In view of the problems with OCLC's data base, including its lack of cross-references, OCLC is not an ideal alternative to LC. OCLC has been and will probably continue to be very successful, despite all of this criticism. Consequently the decline in the observance of traditional cataloging standards as evidenced by the OCLC data base will probably continue. For commercial processors the first priority is profit. It is not easy to get these days. For example, Josten's does not give service on the government documents included in the MARC data base, because it is not economical for them.

Another jobber will not take the ISBD punctuation out of the catalog cards it creates from the MARC data base because there has not been a sufficient demand to justify the programming costs involved. None of the commercial services alters the LC catalog record to make it more usable. Josten's, something of an exception, deletes some data elements so it can avoid the cost of printing continuation cards (one of the problems created by the line-printer's single type size), but it does not change the name and topical headings provided in the MARC record. The commercial services do not generally adapt the LC created cataloging they distribute, to meet the needs of their nonresearch library clientele. They have neither the resources to do so, nor the crystal ball to help them divine what would be acceptable and/or desirable to these customers.

The combination of rising local costs and MARC availability have driven many more public, and even school, libraries over to the LC cataloging entry and away from local processors, local practice, and a more local user oriented service. There is a new wave of converts to the unquestioned acceptance of LC cataloging. Only

Membership by affiliation of members of three key Resources and Technical Services Division groups, 1974-1976, and one key committee, 1975-1976. Source: *ALA Handbook of Organization, 1974-1975* and telephone conversations with ALA official.

Body	Library	Public/	Other	Academic	Total
	School	School			
1. RTSD Board	6	2/0	0	22	30
2. Cataloging & Classification Section Executive Board	5	0/0	0	17	22
3. Descriptive Cataloging Committee	1	0/1	1	11	14
4. Cataloging Code Revision Committee (1975-76 only)	2	2/1	0	7	12
TOTALS	14	4/2	1	57	78

the truly committed and adequately funded libraries can do otherwise. The internal costs are mounting beyond the financial capacities of taxpayers. The net result is that ISBD-like, research library oriented cataloging is becoming more widespread in libraries. Such questionable service should not be imposed on their users. The non-LC based services, Sears, abridged Dewey, title page author, etc., are diminishing, but at least some of the computerized commercial ones seem to be strong.

Several references have already been made to Sears as an alternative to LC for some libraries. Unfortunately the *Sears list of subject headings* is not an adequate list for most public libraries. There is no central disseminator of cataloging data with Sears terms, only several services, none of which are comprehensive. Sears is neither extensive nor specific enough to serve the broad collection needs of most medium and large public libraries. Finally, there is no updating service for terms covering topics which are introduced between editions. The Sears list is most valuable for small public libraries and school libraries. Some of its choices of terms could be a model for some LC headings which tend to adumbrate rather than enlighten. Sears would not be a satisfactory alternative to LC, but it is clear why it is of value to processors serving school and small public libraries.

Processing for the people?

Things will get worse before they get better, if they get better at all. LC is still producing research library oriented bibliographical information. Sales of its card sets are on the wane. Computerized services outside of LC are having an increasingly dominant impact. Commercial processors whose clients are in both the academic and public sphere are now successfully selling MARC based cataloging services. OCLC has taken a preeminent position with its LC and local MARC records available in

increasing economic pressures. Some have failed, others require increased subsidies, and still others are cutting back on services. Dallas Shawkey, chairperson, RTSD Commercial Processing Services (ad hoc) Committee, reports that one state processing center was forced to ask legislature for a direct subsidy for the 1975-1977 biennium so as to avoid increased prices to its members. Another confided that his center would no longer be selling stand-alone cardsets-its members would have to buy processed books from the center, not just cardsets. The catalog rules will be changed more, consequently the LC catalog record created under them will be affected. These changes will have no useful results for the public library user's efforts to reach desired library materials and may even hinder them. With the increased help of automation and complementary technologies, that catalog record from LC will be placed into more and more catalogs in all formats.

National center for public libraries

There is an alternative: the establishment of a national bibliographic center for public libraries. This service would be concerned with cataloging rules as they relate primarily to the domestic public library user, and only incidentally to international and research library use. Catalog records in any form would then be designed to serve the overwhelming majority of America's library users.

The service would be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of ethnic, age, and sexual minorities. It would care whether a library patron could easily understand the information in the catalog, recognizing "new" terms like "Gospel music" (established by LC in 1975), "Rock music" (established by LC in 1972), and "Rhythm and blues" (still not established by LC) when they come into use rather than decades later. This service would provide full subject access to both adult and juvenile fiction, including "easy" books. The service would have to be computer based, have rigorous authority control, and first-rate professional catalogers who are aware of and in touch with public service concerns, as well as having the appropriate subject and specialty skills. It would have as its first priority the speedy availability of full and accurate cataloging records for current American imprints. While Cataloging In Publication (CIP), an LC service, has been proposed as a solution to this latter need, it has been oversold. CIP is incomplete, often inaccurate-far more so than the final LC record-and leaves individual libraries with the task of producing a physical catalog record.²⁴ There are still some major publishers not participating in the program. Finding and funding such an outfit in this or any later year of our Ford might just be a soma trip, but it would be far better than forcing the majority of library users to struggle with the esoterica and unreality of research library cataloging data.

Because LC has been so remote from the needs of most of the nation's library users, and has usually responded with resistance or palliative, it would take a

massive effort for LC to adjust to serve them. The only alternative is a consortium of public libraries, supported at the outset almost wholly by grant monies. If a national bibliographic center for public libraries could be established which would meet all of the requirements set forth

and serve public libraries with the same intensity of effort LC serves research libraries. public libraries would be far better served than they are at present. Commercial processors, presently saddled with the costly options and original cataloging they must provide the non-LC based libraries, would welcome a standardized machine-readable cataloging record and/or a standardized format for products which they in turn could sell to all libraries. ALA cataloging committees concern themselves almost solely with international, nay universal, bibliographical control. Achieving a standard for U.S. library users will take either special perseverance or a different route altogether. Centralized processors, would better serve their customers by dealing with a bibliographic center established primarily to serve them rather than a different constituency.

People's MARC

The goal in effect is a PEOPLE'S/MARC. MARC, the computer communications format for cataloging

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data, is a remarkably flexible computer format-it is neutral. It solely concerns itself with how cataloging information is to be organized in machine terms, but does not dictate what the content of the catalog record is to be. Simply put, MARC can be used as the communications format for the cataloging produced from a national bibliographic center for public libraries, a People's MARC.

Regardless of what agency, be it a rededicated LC, a consortium of public libraries, or some other alternative, a People's MARC from a national bibliographic center for public libraries is essential.

Those who care about the quality of the catalog as a public service tool essential to meeting and being responsive to the library needs of contemporary Americans must intensify their efforts to be heard, understood, and effective. The catalog must be a useable, responsive and vital tool. The alternative to such vigorous action is the complacent acceptance of the currently available and deficient options apparently accepted by the Cleveland Public Library, now in the process of converting from the Dewey to the LC classification scheme and joining OCLC. The Cleveland administration said that when all of this is accomplished, "...the library can get rid of its entire cataloging staff."²⁵

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