

Book and Serial Union Catalogs: A Symposium

The following three papers were presented at the meeting of the ALA Board on Resources of American Libraries, Los Angeles, California, June 25, 1953.

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Library of Congress Book Catalogs: Proposed Expansion into Current Author and Subject Catalogs of American Library Resources

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WE HAVE ALL NOTED with regret the absence of Halsey William Wilson at the meetings of our 72nd Annual Conference. I am informed that there is probably no one of us who can remember an Annual Conference of the ALA at which Mr. Wilson was not present. Just as so many of the great monuments of the American bibliographical scene, the *CBI*, the many indexes, the card service, and the *Union List of Serials* mark high the place that Mr. Wilson and the H. W. Wilson Company hold in the realm of library services in this country, so also was it Mr. Wilson's vision that foresaw not only the development of the *LC Catalog* but also its potential development into a tool which would hold a key to the resources of American libraries. In his *Proposed Plan for Printing Library of Congress Cards in Cumulative Book Form* published in 1946, he suggested that this catalog should also show the holdings of other American libraries. From the beginning, the Edwards Brothers catalog and the subsequent *LC Catalog* have included the entries prepared under the cooperative cataloging program and, by showing the name of the library preparing the copy, have thereby partaken in a limited measure of the nature of a union catalog. In the summer of 1952 the administration of the Library of Congress deemed the time ripe for a serious investigation of the full potentiality of the *LC Catalog*

as a current catalog of national library resources. A committee was appointed to this end and it is largely from the report of this committee that my remarks this afternoon are drawn. This report has been received by the Library administration but has not as yet been given active consideration. It was thought, however, that the profession at large should know its contents and should consider the proposed expansion of the catalog in terms of its desirability, in terms of the particulars of its various features, and in terms of its financial practicability.

The committee approached its assignment pragmatically. That is to say, it concerned itself primarily with the nature, quantity, and quality of the bibliographic raw materials presently available, the characteristics of the bibliographical tools now in existence, and the methods and procedures of demonstrated effectiveness. It sought to reveal what seems to be presently possible with the means at hand in order that a useful beginning might be made in the near future which might, as time goes on, be developed, improved, or expanded in accord with improvements in inter-library cooperation, methods, bibliographical interrelationships, and the like.

In developing its proposals for the expansion of the *LC Catalog* into what would in effect be a current national union catalog, the committee felt that the *Catalog's* present character as a display of and an index to LC printed cards should in no way be altered. It was recognized that this would mean a composite

catalog exhibiting one set of criteria for LC cards and another set for other cards but it was felt that this theoretical inconsistency will not have any substantially adverse effect on its usefulness as a tool for serving many varied bibliographical and bibliothecal purposes.

A determinant of many of the characteristics of the publication as proposed was its relationship to the National Union Catalog (NUC) on cards and to the proposed published version of the same. The basis for expanding the present *LC Catalog* would be the reports received by the NUC of titles held by American libraries. These reports are of two general types: those which represent current cataloging and those which are records of the entries in entire catalogs or regional union catalogs, or of entries in large sections of the same. Since, as will be seen below, the committee is recommending the inclusion of only recent imprints in the expanded catalog, it is proposed that only the group representing current cataloging be searched for eligible titles since the yield of unreported titles of recent imprint from the other group would hardly justify the expense of handling. The present average annual receipts by the NUC of reports of titles currently cataloged by other libraries and of titles cataloged by LC but for which cards are not printed is about 400,000 cards (plus or minus 15 per cent). These would constitute the source from which new titles and locations of titles would be obtained.

The committee did not consider that this proposed expansion of the present *LC Catalog* should depend in any way on whether or not the NUC is to be published. The base imprint date of the entries to be included in the expansion of the present *LC Catalog* would, however, provide a convenient imprint termination date for a published NUC. If and when the latter is published the scope of the current catalog as to imprints included should be carefully reconsidered.

SCOPE

Physical Form: The present *LC Catalog* includes the following types of materials: books, pamphlets, serials, and photocopies of the same (*Books: Authors* and *Books: Subjects*); motion pictures and film-strips (*Films*); *Maps and Atlases*, and *Music and Phonorecords*. Reports of holdings of other

libraries of any of these materials would be included.¹

Bibliographical Form: The only bibliographical categories that would be excluded are telephone directories, talking books for the blind and books in raised characters, current general daily newspapers, reprints of articles appearing in indexed or abstracted periodicals and journals (unless cataloged for LC printed cards), and fiction issued by the standard publishers of the American book trade. The committee rejected telephone directories as a category generally not retained in collections (except for the latest issues). Talking books for the blind and books in raised characters are already under special and well organized controls in this country. Current general daily newspapers are generally not cataloged and are easily locatable. The content of reprinted articles from periodicals and journals is likewise easily available if these publications are covered by general or specific indexing or abstracting services. It was felt that reports of holdings of fiction issued by the standard publishers of the American book trade could be eliminated as a category because: 1. entries for about 95 per cent of these works would be available in the form of LC entries, 2. the receipts of reports of holdings of these works is fragmentary in the extreme, 3. the works in question are normally widely available, and 4. as a category, fiction would have a low rank in research importance as compared with other types of materials.

The committee considered other categories of works which LC would not ordinarily catalog but thought it best not to recommend excluding them. It reasoned that just as LC may waive its general policy and catalog some of this material if it is deemed exceptional, so it may be assumed that cards for such material received from other libraries (which generally observe similar policies in cataloging) have been cataloged and reported only after a screening has found the material to be of some particular consequence. Very little such material is currently reported to the NUC and it would be of only very minor significance so far as workload is concerned. In respect to serials and the implications of *New Serial Titles* to this publication, it was

¹ From this point on all statements of qualification for inclusion will be made on the assumption that other qualifications for inclusion have been met.

felt that it would be premature at this time to adopt a policy of excluding serials.

Language: Entries for works in all languages using the Cyrillic, Greek and Roman alphabets would be included. Entries for works in languages using the Cyrillic alphabet and for which no LC card has been printed, would appear in transliterated form. Entries for works in languages using oriental characters or alphabets would be excluded, at least until such time as satisfactory solutions are found to the personnel, editorial, and typographical problems which they present.

Subject: Although the LC *Catalog* and the NUC receive entries for works on all subjects, it is especially to be noted that the principal responsibility for acquisitions in the field of agriculture and medicine, so far as the national library complex is concerned, is that of the Department of Agriculture Library and the Armed Forces Medical Library. These two libraries issue the major bibliographical publications in these fields, the *Bibliography of Agriculture* and the *AFML Catalog*. The committee was of the opinion that the most effective place to record holdings of American libraries in agriculture and medicine would be in these publications, in which case they should be excluded from an expanded LC *Catalog*. Until such time as the *Bibliography of Agriculture* and the *AFML Catalog* are expanded to include the titles and locations reported by other American libraries, the committee felt that holdings of American libraries in all subject fields should be recorded in the expanded LC *Catalog*.

Imprint Dates: The committee felt that the only prospect of an expanded catalog which could be self-sustaining or close to self-sustaining would lie in confining the titles and locations to be added to those which are currently being reported to the NUC; and these only if confined to imprints of very recent years.

All reports to the NUC of imprints beginning with 1952 have been segregated from the other cards of the NUC supplement and are therefore ready, so to speak, for processing for inclusion in the proposed expanded catalog. Until such time as the NUC may be published the committee did not feel that even the currently received reports of pre-1952 imprints should go into the expanded catalog; these should more properly be kept for inclusion in such a published NUC. It furthermore

seems to be wise to begin the operations involved in an expanded catalog on a scale which would not require an excessive increase in workload and in the cost of the publication. Therefore, the committee recommended that the reports of imprints of 1952 and later be included in the expanded catalog.

If 1954 were to be the first year of expansion of the catalog on the basis outlined above (i.e., to include imprints of 1952-54), more cards, more new titles, and more expense would be involved than in any year for many years to come, due to the fact that in one year a 3-year accumulation of reports would be processed and published. It is estimated that in 1954 200,000 locations would be added to the present catalog. Of these about 97,000 would be new titles. If reports were to continue to be received at present rates it would be another ten years before the volume of locations in any year would equal this total (assuming that 1952 were to continue as a base imprint date) and it is anticipated that the number of new titles would level off by 1960 at around 75,000-80,000. However, it must be borne in mind that if this project were to be undertaken successfully, it is possible that participation in this union catalog endeavor might expand considerably and thereby increase the effectiveness, size, and cost of the catalog.

Two alternatives to retaining 1952 as a base imprint date year after year would be:

1. to limit the coverage to three years by picking up each year the current year and dropping the oldest year. This would result in 1955, for example, in 27,000 fewer locations and 11,000 fewer new titles than if 1952 imprints had not been dropped out. Under this alternative the annual number of locations would run about 113,000 of which about 54,000 would be new titles. This is to be compared with the estimate of about 200,000 locations and about 80,000 titles which could be added about the year 1964 if 1952 were retained as the base imprint date. The cost differential would be roughly proportional;
2. to retain 1952 as a base imprint date but also to pick up, after publication of the NUC, all titles new to the NUC, regardless of imprint date. This alternative would, of course, result in a considerably larger catalog in the years subsequent to publication of the NUC. No estimate of the degree to which it would enlarge the catalog is available at the present time.

EDITORIAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Main and Added Entries: Cards for works within the imprint scope of the expanded catalog would be sorted out from the reports of holdings of other libraries received by the NUC and would be sent to the Cumulative Catalog Section which is responsible for the preparation of the present *LC Catalog*. They would be searched in the author catalog of the Card Division at the Library of Congress. Those for which LC printed cards are found would be recorded as additional holdings on the card in the Cumulative Catalog Section's file. Those for which no LC printed card is found would be typed on a proportional spacing typewriter with suitable small-sized type in enough copies for author and subject needs. Cross references for necessary added entries would also be made at this time. Whenever necessary, headings would be adapted to conform to ALA rules for choice of entry and established LC headings.

Essential added entries would be made even if not traced on the entries as received. Full descriptive information as contained on the contributing library's card would be given. Editing of description would be confined to standardizing paragraphing, capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations. Tracing of subject headings and of added entries, both as edited for the expanded catalog, would be given. LC and Dewey Decimal class numbers would appear when available. The minimum requirements for inclusion of any entry would be author (if any), title, date, and location.

Subject Entries: Insofar as possible all new titles would be entered under subject headings in *Books: Subjects* or in the subject indexes of the parts for nonbook materials. The degree to which subject coverage would be possible is largely a function of the willingness and ability of the contributing libraries to furnish on the cards they send to the NUC the tracing of the assigned subject headings. The cards presently received by the NUC are found to have traced subject headings on only 57 per cent of the cases where such subject headings would be expected. It is not proposed that the editors of the *Catalog* attempt to subject catalog titles without the aid either of assigned subject headings or of assigned classification numbers. In the absence of the former, however, an effort would be made to convert class numbers into an equivalent

subject heading.

Since it is the policy of the present *Books: Subjects* part of the *Catalog* to include under suitable headings all works, even those not normally entered under subject headings in card catalogs, the cooperation of contributing libraries must also be enlisted to supply a notation as to literary form, nationality of literature, autobiographical nature of the work, and the like in the case of titles which are not ordinarily assigned subject headings and whose titles do not clearly reveal the information essential to supplying suitable form headings for the purposes of the published catalog.

The committee recommended that the general editorial policy for subject entries be to integrate all such entries as closely as possible with the LC subject heading system. LC forms of subject headings would be used and effort would be made to bring all subject headings into conformance with LC policies of assignment of subject headings. Unless *Books: Subjects* and the subject indexes for the non-book materials are kept within a unitary system, it is felt that the utility of the subject organization of materials would be seriously diminished. Studies indicate that in 90 per cent of the cases the subject headings supplied by contributing libraries are either in accord with LC form and practice as received, or may be converted to agree with LC form and practice with little difficulty.

Preparation of Entries: There appear to be only two alternatives as to typewriters that will produce cards which will come close to matching the printed cards in point size and in condensation of type, important considerations in the economics of printing. One of these, the Coxhead composing machine, is now used in preparing added entry-cross references for *Books: Authors*. It has the advantage of matching more closely the type of the printed cards in type style, in point size, and in variety of type face. It has the disadvantage of much greater cost and of considerably slower operation. The second alternative is the IBM 8-point Textype typewriter. Its advantage is a much lower cost and a considerably faster rate of operation.

LOCATIONS

Additional locations of titles reported prior to the closing of an issue would be indicated

on the entries in the *Books: Authors* part and in the parts for nonbook material by the standard NUC symbols. In the case of typed cards the first symbol would be that of the library which either first submitted an entry or whose entry was selected as copy. No attempt would be made to keep the locations in alphabetical sequence. Locations received after the first appearance of an entry in the catalog would be published only when the entry comes up for republication in the next stage of the cumulative pattern. The committee did not feel it could recommend inclusion of locations additional to the first one on entries in the *Books: Subjects* part of the catalog because of the increase in the searching and typing costs that this procedure would involve.² It was thought that for most purposes it would suffice that additional locations of desired titles could be obtained from *Books: Authors*.

Locations for U.S. federal, state, and local government publications were thought to be unnecessary. Federal documents are available at depository libraries, state documents at state libraries, and municipal documents are generally not collected by libraries except the obvious local libraries, the Library of the Bureau of the Census and the New York City Municipal Reference Library. American doctoral dissertations do not require secondary locations since they can be obtained from the libraries of the institutions granting these degrees. Locations of analytical entries for periodical articles would not be included inasmuch as the latter are easily located.

FREQUENCY

The present *Books: Authors* section of the *LC Catalog* appears each year in nine monthly issues, three quarterly cumulations, and an annual cumulation (except that in every fifth year a quinquennial cumulation is published in lieu of an annual). In considering frequency the problem is to balance the need for up-to-date information about titles against the cost of repetitive printing in cumulations. The committee felt that the best balance would be had if new titles reported by outside libraries were published in the quarterly and larger cumulations. Publication only in annuals seemed to provide an unsatisfactory answer to the demand for up-to-date informa-

² Estimated to be about \$9000 in the year 1954. In the following years it would be less in proportion to the smaller number of cards to be processed.

tion. Semi-annual publication was rejected as inefficient. On the other hand, it was questioned that the need for monthly publication was great enough to justify the cost of printing and reprinting.

Cost: Present estimates indicate that if the less expensive IBM Textype equipment is used, the *Books: Authors* section of the *Catalog* could be expanded as described at a subscription price of about \$200 per annum. As compared with the present catalog the expanded catalog would contain roughly twice the number of entries and three times the number of locations at about double the present cost. It would be a remarkably comprehensive list of the current holdings of research interest of American libraries and would thus be a vital tool for the use of scholarship and research; it would have the potentiality of simplifying interlibrary loan work at the borrowing end (by showing what libraries are in possession of desired books) and at the lending end (by cutting down on the number of requests received for books not located in the library), and by making possible a more even geographical spread of interlibrary loans; and it would have still greater value than the present catalog as a tool for cataloging, reference, and acquisitions purposes by virtue of its greatly expanded coverage.

It is more difficult to estimate the probable subscription price of *Books: Subjects* due to the more uncertain effect of the increase in the price on the number of subscriptions. It is probable, however, that the subscription would have to be at least \$250 per annum.³

It should be emphasized that the expansion of the author catalog is not dependent on a concurrent expansion of the subject catalog. If the subject were not to be expanded, however, the cost of expanding the author catalog would increase slightly, by about 2 per cent. This would be due to the fact that certain costs which could be otherwise shared by the two catalogs would then have to be borne entirely by the author catalog.

This, then, is a plan of what could be done. Many of its features are susceptible to change according to the needs of the potential subscribers, with or without consequent effect on the probable subscription price. More important than the details of the make-up of

³ Unless 1. quarterly issues are discontinued, and/or 2. *Books: Subjects* is converted from a catalog to an index.

the catalog, however, are these basic questions: Is the expansion of the LC *Catalog* into a current catalog of American library resources a desirable development? If so, is the time ripe for this development? If so, would the present subscribers be willing to pay twice what they now do in order to get this tool? If not, to what extent should subsidy be sought? In what direction? With what prospects of success?

It is up to you and your confreres who are present or potential subscribers to the *Catalog* to answer these questions. If we are really to expand the *Catalog* in 1954 we need to

know the answers fairly soon.

I hope that you will be willing to give this matter serious thought and that you will bring the proposal to the attention of your local and regional library organizations so that later, when the time comes for the Library of Congress to distribute a prospectus and a questionnaire, opinion may have reached a state of crystallization. In the meantime, the Library of Congress will be glad to receive your comments, questions, suggestions and the like. If you care to write, I suggest that you address your letters to John W. Cronin, Director of the Processing Department.

By CHARLES W. DAVID

The Reproduction of the National Union Catalog

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THERE IS A FASCINATION about the concept of a vast and all-inclusive bibliography of the printed output of the mind of man. We are all familiar with the unsuccessful attempts of some of the earlier bibliographers, who felt themselves adrift on a vast ocean of print, to produce such an index. As an example, though by no means the earliest, I may cite the *Mare Magnum* of the learned Florentine abbot, Francesco Marucelli, who died in 1703, leaving his work incomplete in 111 manuscript volumes.

In spite of failures the dream persisted, and what was acknowledged to be impossible by individual effort was undertaken by cooperation. Little encouragement is, perhaps, to be derived from the experience of the International Institute of Bibliography (founded in 1895 at Brussels) and its *Bibliotheca Universalis*. But the *Gesamtkatalog der Pruessischen Bibliotheken* of the Prussian State Library, which got under way in 1898 and began to be printed in 1931, has a much more encouraging record. Though wrecked by World War II, it would in a better world have been an undoubted success. Though at first legally and practically limited to Prussian libraries, it was inspired by the concept of a much broader inclusiveness, and in the end it was expanded to include all the important

research libraries of Germany, and even Austria was in process of being drawn into it. Had disaster been averted we would in fact have had a major portion of a manageable world bibliography.

Contemporaneously, American librarianship began to press for an expansion of the Union Catalog at the Library of Congress which would bring it to what was optimistically called "completion," and some minds began to entertain the thought of its publication in this expanded form, so that it could be made generally available to research libraries in various parts of the country. The key to success in such vast operations was of course to be found not only in the magic of cooperative effort but also in the technical revolution in communication with which we are all at least in some degree familiar.

In 1947 two Philadelphia librarians went still further out on a limb and in a brief article in the *Journal of Documentation* outlined a plan for a Cumulative World Thesaurus to be printed and widely distributed among research libraries all over the world.¹ In the light of the current rise in the cost of every library and publishing operation, the most charitable judgment which could be passed upon that article would seem to be that it may have been far in advance of its time.

¹ David, C. W., and Hirsch, Rudolf, "A Cumulative World Thesaurus," in *Journal of Documentation*, III (1947), 43-45.