

Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue: A Medical Model of the Costs of Participation by Specialized Collections

The success of the Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue/North America depends upon the voluntary contribution of bibliographical records by libraries. Smaller specialized collections often hesitate to participate because they suppose the costs will be high and because they do not realize the importance of their contributions. This paper uses the medical school library rare-book collection as a model to familiarize specialized collections with the ESTC/NA project and the value of their contributions to it. Initial fears are delineated and the management data needed to contradict these fears are provided so that smaller specialized collections can make the decision to participate.

INTRODUCTION

The Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC) is an international bibliographical project to identify and locate all titles published in the British Isles and the colonies and all titles published in the English language anywhere in the world during the eighteenth century. The initial database, estimated to contain 150,000 items, is at the British Library.¹ The National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation are funding the North American part of this project (ESTC/NA) at Louisiana State University. This unit, founded in 1979 and directed by Henry L. Snyder, is matching records, recording holdings, and entering new cataloging for titles owned by North American libraries. More than 300 such libraries were participating in this project as of December 1981.² In July 1981,

ESTC/NA reported that it had processed 333,700 records and was processing 3,000 submitted titles per week. This rate is expected to increase after the initiation of searching of the British Library tapes deposited in the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) as the matching procedure.³

The original ESTC project was initiated in 1976 at a conference sponsored by the British Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The goal of the project was the development of a new tool for historical research. The plan was for a catalog to ". . . fulfil one important function of historical bibliography—the nourishment of historical disciplines."⁴ The ESTC is now well under way, carrying on and extending the tradition of Wing,⁵ and Pollard and Redgrave.⁶

The roles of those older catalogs were to identify titles and to locate them in a few libraries in a union list. The ESTC is expanding the location function by the inclusion of a far greater number of recording libraries. Another expansion is the use of a complete descriptive record rather than a short title in

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the identification—making this in reality a long-title catalog. The ESTC should therefore be of great value to future historians as a bibliographically organized union catalog.

Although this mass collocative function is indeed valuable, emphasis should be placed on Alston and Jannetta's estimate that "a very high proportion of the items which ESTC will record will be represented by fewer than five copies."⁷ Even more important, the ESTC is expected to record a lot of previously unknown material, and the North American contribution of such material is proving to be greater than expected. In addition, access to the ESTC records will be easier than access to earlier short-title catalogs because the British Library is making the record of its holdings available on computer output microfiche (COM). It is projected that a COM file of British Library holdings will be available in 1983, with worldwide holdings following in 1986 or 1987. The British Library is depositing its magnetic tape in RLIN; North American locations will be available there.⁸

Thus, the catalog will be a great boon to scholars, uncovering new resources, locating them in a researcher's own country or in a nearby state, or even a local library. In times of tight travel budgets, the location of a copy nearby becomes an invaluable service. However, full value of this reference tool is dependent upon full participation by libraries everywhere. Our use of the medical school library rare-book collection as a model for specialized collection contributions began with an examination of the list of participants in those earlier short-title catalogs, Wing and the STC. We found that only a few medical libraries were named as individual participants—the Cushing and Fulton libraries at Yale, the New York Academy of Medicine, the UCLA Biomedical Library—although others doubtlessly did contribute, as did our sample library, the Owen H. Wangensteen Historical Library of Biology and Medicine, under the name of their university libraries. It is important to scholarship in medical history that more medical libraries participate in the ESTC. While we are pleased to report that the National Library of Medicine, the largest medical rare-book collection in North America, is submitting an estimated 7,000 titles to the ESTC,⁹

we feel that to serve scholarship well, every medical rare-book collection should submit records.

MEDICAL SCHOOL LIBRARY PARTICIPANTS IN ESTC

After the Wangensteen Library decided to participate, we became interested in how many other medical libraries were doing so. To identify other participating medical school collections, a brief questionnaire was sent in November 1981 to 119 medical school libraries identified by matching entries in the Association of American Medical Colleges' *Medical School Admission Requirements 1982-83*,¹⁰ and the *Directory of Health Sciences Libraries in the United States, 1979*.¹¹ One hundred nine, or 92 percent, of the questionnaires were returned. Of these 109 responses, 83 libraries (or 76 percent) replied that they had a medical rare-book collection. Of the 83 libraries possessing such a collection, a surprisingly small number, 37 (or only 45 percent), are currently planning to submit records to ESTC.

The range of estimates of records to be submitted by these 37 libraries is from 1 to 7,000. Figure 1 shows estimations of how many titles they will be submitting. Of the 37 participants, 5 were unable to provide any estimate of how many records they would be submitting. Of the 32 participants who knew exactly, or were able to estimate their contribution, 50 percent were submitting 150 or fewer records. Ninety percent of the libraries (29) estimated that they were submitting fewer than 1,000 records. As you can see, only three libraries are submitting more than 1,000 records. Please recognize that the small submissions represent contributions equally valuable as those of 1,000 because of the possibility of uncovering a previously unrecorded title, or one previously unrecorded in North America. The estimate of "available in fewer than five copies" by Alston and Jannetta should definitely be kept in mind.

MEDICAL SCHOOL LIBRARY NONPARTICIPANTS IN ESTC

Libraries reporting nonparticipation in ESTC were asked to state a reason. They were asked to check as many conditions that applied to them on a list of four reasons, and

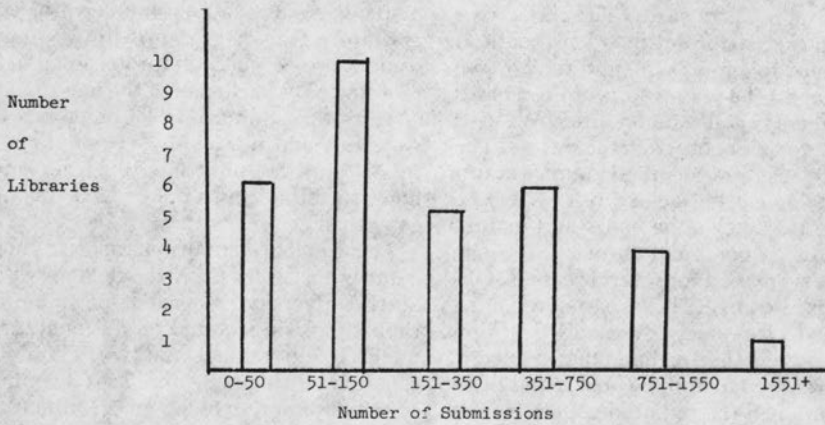


Fig. 1
Estimates of Submissions

were given space under "other" to specify alternative reasons.

Of the 46 libraries electing not to participate, an astonishing 46 percent checked "haven't heard of it" as a reason for nonparticipation. This occurred despite the appearance since 1976 of a book and of more than 20 newsnotes or articles in library journals describing the ESTC project.

"Other" was checked by 38 percent of the respondents and most of the specific reasons revealed a basic misunderstanding of the purpose of the ESTC or its collecting activities. For example, two libraries reported that they were not asked to participate in ESTC, even though invitations are not required and all libraries may participate; indeed, all are encouraged to do so. More disturbing, 70 percent of those checking "other" (or 25 percent of the total of nonparticipants) indicated in one way or another that their reasons for nonparticipation were that they had "too few books." There is no such thing as a contribution too small for this bibliographic project.

COSTS TO PARTICIPATING LIBRARIES

Quite understandably, the main reasons libraries hesitated to participate involved time and money. "Not enough staff time" was checked by 39 percent; "monetary costs of photocopying too high" was checked by 12 percent; "monetary costs of staffing too high" was checked by 21 percent.

We wished to demonstrate that these factors were not as great as might be anticipated and thereby encourage more medical librarians to submit records. To do this, we recorded the amounts of time used for the different steps of the project as carried out at the Wangenstein Library.

Records may be submitted to ESTC/NA in one of four ways; the options for submissions are:

1. A photoreproduction of the title, supplemented with some collation information.
2. An ESTC record card (BIBSLIP) for each title, following the guidelines given by the British Library staff.
3. Reproduction of regular library cataloging for eighteenth-century items, providing the cataloging contains all the requisite data. NUC symbol on all cards.
4. A printed catalog of the collection, providing it contains the requisite data.¹²

These submissions are then recorded at ESTC/NA as verified or unverified. In order to be verified, the library must supply "requisite data," which is a complete transcription of title, edition statement and imprint, complete pagination, and size or format; all these must match file records, currently those prepared by the British Library.¹³

At the Wangenstein Library, our actual procedure was to identify ESTC items in the chronological card file, which is composed of

copies of main-entry cards. The cards were pulled, jacketed for future identification, photocopied five to a page, and refiled. We then cut apart the photocopies of these cards and put them in call-number order. We used these slips to pull books from the shelves. The title page was photocopied, and a main-entry catalog card attached to it. We were then able to reshelve the books and mail in the records. A combination of options one and three were used for several reasons. Option one is rated by ESTC as easiest to match for a verified record.¹⁴ We added option three because we had on hand the photocopy of the cards used to pull the books, and those cards contained the required collation. The photocopied title page, together with the photocopied cataloging, provided enough evidence for a good match, and would probably enable many of our records to be entered as verified, thus reducing the number of questions that might come back to us from ESTC.

The procedure took a total of 53 hours to complete 1,285 titles. Table 1 shows the time required for various steps of the project. This averages out to 2½ minutes per title. At the University of Minnesota professional librarian salary rate of \$9.92 per hour, it theoretically cost \$525.76 for the project, or \$.41 per title. Obviously there are portions of the project that can be done by paraprofessional and/or student help, and the costs could thereby be reduced considerably. Photocopying costs were \$128.50 for title pages, and approximately one-fifth that (or \$25.70) for photocopying the chronological cards, for a total of \$154.20. The project's actual cost was substantially reduced because we used volunteer help. Unskilled volunteer labor (spouses and children) worked out well in the Wangenstein Library ESTC project also. We can recommend the submitting

methods we used as a volunteer project, or perhaps a friends-group or library-school-student project, because professional help is required only for step one, the identification of titles for submission. The methods used were fast and inexpensive. It would cost a small library submitting 100 titles only 5 hours staff time and a mere \$12.00 in photocopy costs.

According to an informal report,¹⁵ another contributor, John C. Attig at Pennsylvania State University, recorded the amount of time it took student and professional staff to use ESTC options one and two. Those times required are shown in table 2. At 3.6 minutes per title for option one, and 5.1 minutes per title for option two, both of these methods took longer to perform than the 2.5 minutes per title that the Wangenstein Library took. In addition, both options one and two require more professional time than the method we used. However, neither option took a prohibitive amount of time.

It should be noted, of course, that there are other variables to consider that could either increase or decrease costs. For example, one variable that would increase costs (because it would increase professional staff time used), would be the identification of titles to submit from a shelflist instead of from the relatively smaller chronological-by-date-of-publication file. On the other hand, using option three, and submitting only a photocopy of the complete cataloging on the card in our chronological file, would have decreased both our staff time and our photocopying costs considerably.

CONCLUSION

We began our paper by describing the Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue project and underlining the importance of participation by as many libraries as possi-

TABLE 1
WANGENSTEEN ESTC PROJECT—ACTUAL TIME SPENT

Step	Time
Planning, reading directions	50 minutes
Identify & pull cards from chronological file	4 hours, 45 minutes
Photocopy cards	3 hours
Jacket & refile cards	4 hours, 25 minutes
Cut apart photocopy & put in Dewey order	10 hours, 5 minutes
Pull books from stacks	9 hours
Photocopy & staple	15 hours, 45 minutes
Reshelve books	5 hours

TABLE 2
PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY TEST TIMES

	Time Required
1. Pulling books from shelves (student worker)	1.2 minutes per volume (ca. 2 titles per vol.)
2. Photocopying title page (student worker)	1 minute per title
3. Adding collation & notes to title (professional cataloger)	2 minutes per title
4. Completing a BIBSLIP (professional cataloger)	4.5 minutes per title
ESTC method 1: requires steps 1-3	3.6 minutes per title
ESTC method 2: requires steps 1 and 4	5.1 minutes per title

Source: ESTC/NA's newsletter, *ESTC Facsimile 2*, no. 3:1-8 (Oct. 1980).

ble. We believe we have also demonstrated that the expense of a specialized rare-book collection's participation in the ESTC is far less than anticipated and should be no bar to participation for any library. As for those critical contributions by the small libraries—contributions that are truly needed—the costs are insignificant, while the additions to the bibliographic base are not.

We hope that removing these apprehensions will encourage more specialized collections to participate. The value of the ESTC to future scholars is, of course, unable to be measured in any quantitative, objective way. Yet we are certain that its value subjectively and qualitatively will be immeasurable.

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