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Letters

Inventory "By Computer"

Editor's Note: We include below an exchange of letters between Gordon E. Randall, Research Division Librarian, Thomas J. Watson Research Center, International Business Machines Corporation, Yorktown Heights, New York; and Catherine V. von Schon, English Bibliographer, State University of New York at Stony Brook, and author of the article, "Inventory 'By Computer,'" which appeared in our March 1977 issue (p.147–52)

Dear Ms. von Schon:

I appreciated, as would any author, being cited in your article "Inventory by Computer'," but I am sorry I did not make it clear in my article that our triennial inventories since 1962 have been "punched card" inventories. Because I was writing a general article for industrial librarians on inventories rather than specifically describing how we conducted our inventory, you may not have realized that we, too, used the "punched card" approach.

In your article you doubted that our "laborious procedure" would work for a large university library. Our library is one-tenth the size of Stony Brook. We were able with the team method to inventory the books on the shelves in 4½ days. Using these procedures, we could have inventoried the books on your shelves in 45 working days using only three teams at a time. It might have taken a trifle longer because I would assume you have a smaller portion of your 300,000 volumes out on loan than we do. Our loans run about 20 percent of our collection at any one time.-Very truly yours, Gordon E. Randall.

COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Dear Mr. Randall:

Thank you for your letter. It is indeed gratifying to find my article being read with so much interest by knowledgeable colleagues.

I, too, am sorry that I failed to spot the hints in your article about computer-generated punchcards. I see that you started from the same point we did —generating new punchcards for each stack book and matching them to the books in the stacks.

My reference to "laborious procedure," however, was intended to apply to a step which you inserted and we skipped: placing the stack books on trucks and trucking them to the inventory team. You give a figure of 2,500 books processed per day per team, which means four team/days for 10,000 books or twelve team/days for 30,000 books; divided by three teams, four days for the project.

Stony Brook, which I would not call a large university library, has 850,000 books, according to the American Library Directory. At 2,500 books per day, it would take 340 team/days or 15½ team/months to complete the project; with three teams, a little over five months.

The University of Michigan, a fairly typical large library, has 3,900,000 books. There it would require 1,560 team/days, 71 team/months, or with three teams 23% months, or two years.

I still believe that the administrators of most large university libraries would hesitate to tie up nine staff members in an inventory project of such length. Operations permissible on the basis of an investment of days become prohibitive when an investment of years is involved.—Sincerely, Catherine V. von Schon.

Quasi-Departmental Libraries

To the Editor:

Genaway and Stanford in "Quasi-Departmental Libraries" (C&RL, May 1977) fail to mention, I think, the greatest attraction of the departmental reading room (as they are called on the University of British Columbia campus). That attraction is having one's own materials gathered and around one. The current materials used in many subjects if not scattered in the classification are scattered among less used and older materials in the stacks. This, after all, is what led to undergraduate collections. The departmental reading room is simply the same service for upperclassmen/ women and graduates.

At the University of British Columbia a new relationship has evolved between the departmental reading room and the library system. Materials acquired by the reading room (and the library's acquisitions system may be used)

are processed in the library's cataloguing divisions and, most importantly, listed in the library's central catalogue. Quarters, furniture, and staff on site remain the responsibility of the department. The basic collections were developed from nonlibrary sources. Current acquisitions are a mixture of gifts and materials purchased with nonlibrary and library funds. The experience of cataloguing the over thirty collections in reading rooms supports the finding of Genaway and Stanford that about a quarter of the material is unique to the system, and much of the rest duplicates heavily used material. Having these collections centrally listed has certainly been worth the cataloguing effort expended. To be acceptable to the reading room, however, centralized cataloguing must be prompt.-J. McRee Elrod, Head of the Catalogue Divisions, The Library, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

COMPUTER-BASED CIRCULATION SYSTEMS

Library Technology Reports has published an update of its July/September, 1975 report on automated circulation control systems. The new report by William Scholz describes and evaluates the following systems:

LIBS 100 (CL Systems Inc.) / SCION (Systems Control, Inc.) (ULISYS Universal Library Systems, Ltd.)
Gaylord's Circulation Control System
3M's Inventory Control System.

The 92 page report is contained in the May, 1977 issue of LTR now available to non-subscribers as a single issue for \$40.



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