

Recent Publications

Smalley, Donald A., et al. <i>Technical Report on Linking the Bibliographic Utilities: Benefits and Costs</i> , reviewed by Jay K. Lucker	85
Jones, C. Lee. <i>Linking Bibliographic Data Bases: A Discussion of the Battelle Technical Report</i> , reviewed by Jay K. Lucker	85
<i>Academic American Encyclopedia</i> , reviewed by Wendy Pradt Lougee	87
Higham, Norman. <i>The Library in the University: Observations on a Service</i> , reviewed by Russell Shank	90
Queen, Daniel. "Headphones for Library and Educational Use," reviewed by David B. Walch	91
Abstracts	92
Other Publications of Interest to Academic Librarians	93

BOOK REVIEWS

Smalley, Donald A. et al. *Technical Report on Linking the Bibliographic Utilities: Benefits and Costs*. Submitted to the Council on Library Resources September 15, 1980. Columbus, Ohio: Battelle, 1980. 169p. plus appendixes.

Jones, C. Lee. *Linking Bibliographic Data Bases: A Discussion of the Battelle Technical Report*. Washington, D.C.: Council on Library Resources, Inc., 1981. 28p.

It may be difficult to realize, especially for libraries and librarians for whom shared cataloging and interlibrary loan through bibliographic utilities have become a way of life, that these operations are barely a decade old. OCLC, the first national utility, began its online service outside of Ohio in 1971; the Research Libraries Group was formed in 1974 and established the RLIN system four years later; WLN, the Washington Library Network, was founded in 1976 and became self-supporting in 1979. Given this relatively short history, why, one wonders, does it seem that we have been talking about linking the bibliographic utilities for what seems like an eternity? One answer may be that this issue is of such momentous importance and has such potential benefit both to libraries and to patrons, that frustration over the lack of movement has produced a weariness that defies time. In the report of Battelle on the technical and economic feasibility of linking the biblio-

graphic utilities, the library world has a wealth of information to motivate it toward this essential goal; it remains to be seen whether there is sufficient energy and imagination to overcome the intellectual and political inertia that, up to now, has characterized many attitudes about linkage.

The Battelle study, commissioned by the Council on Library Resources, addresses two sets of questions. The first deals with the effects of linking on libraries and their users, and examines issues such as whether there is sufficient reason to link bibliographic utilities and, if so, the possible benefits in three areas of service: shared cataloging, interlibrary loan, and reference searching. While not technically a utility, the Library of Congress, because it is the single largest producer of original cataloging records in machine-readable form and because online access to its files is possible although not now available, has been included as a fourth element in the study. Since the CLR contract specified that the report was to deal only with U.S. bibliographic utilities, the University of Toronto Library Automation Systems (UTLAS) is not included.

The second part of the report covers questions about the technical feasibility of establishing a link and the several alternatives for accomplishing this. Battelle focuses its technological analysis on three alternatives deemed most promising: tape exchange of requested records, online access using the "na-

tive mode" of the linked utility, and online access with automatic translation of searches and responses.

The methodology used in the first part of the report, that dealing with the benefits of linkage, was essentially statistical sampling designed to see what the effect on the "hit rate" would be if a library or individual user had access to all four utilities instead of one. The results in each of the three areas studied indicate that there would be substantial advantages for libraries if they had access to multiple utilities. The combined hit rate in cataloging, for example, was 96 percent as compared to individual rates of 93 percent on OCLC, 87 percent on WLN and RLIN, and 86 percent on LC. Clearly, as Battelle points out, "cataloguers using RLIN, WLN, or LC could have added about 10 percentage points to their current title hit rates if the four data bases had been linked at the time of the study . . . cataloguers in OCLC libraries could have gained about 3 percentage points." Data for interlibrary loan produces similar results with the major benefits accruing to the younger utilities (RLG and WLN). The linkage of utilities for reference searching would also increase the likelihood of success with, as Battelle points out, greatest benefit for research libraries. Cost avoidance is particularly significant in cataloging record linkage, somewhat less so in interlibrary loan. Cost savings for individual libraries are probably offset by increased costs to the utilities (inevitably passed along to member libraries), but the net effect of linkage clearly produces a bottom-line benefit.

Following a detailed discussion and analysis of the several means of actually linking the utilities, Battelle concludes that the preferred form is online access with automatic translation of messages. This conclusion is based primarily on the fact that it provides the highest level of convenience and immediacy of access for the user.

The Battelle report concludes with a set of three recommendations. The first is that there be a continued analysis of the economic and technical implications of linkage using a computer model, BIBLINK, developed during the course of the study. The second is that work should be undertaken immediately to connect the OCLC, RLG, WLN, and LC host computers in order to establish an on-

line, translation mode linkage by 1984. The third recommendation calls for the establishment of committees with representatives from all four organizations to (1) determine requirements for the user interface and (2) develop standards and protocols.

A second document that must be considered required reading for those involved with or interested in the question of utility linkage is C. Lee Jones's discussion of the Battelle report. Jones, program officer at the Council on Library Resources with particular responsibility for the Bibliographic Services Development Program (BSDP) and, consequently, for oversight of the Battelle study, provides useful, important background to the report and sets the national context in which it should be evaluated. The Jones report is also valuable for its careful analysis of the problems that will be encountered in proceeding along the lines suggested by Battelle. He rightly points out that the costs involved in establishing linkages must be borne cooperatively by utilities, participating libraries, and funding sources and that redeployment of existing resources may be one of the ways to accomplish this. Finally, Jones is correct in emphasizing the need for further analysis of areas covered in the Battelle report and of other topics such as a centralized pool of little-used bibliographic records. His recommendation of next steps has four elements: (1) convene a meeting of utility managers to discuss linking alternatives; (2) continue to work toward standardization of formats and protocols; (3) use BIBLINK to study other alternatives; (4) investigate other possibilities such as direct terminal access to any utility or establishment of a central pool of records.

The obvious question now is "what happens next?" The Battelle report together with the Council on Library Resources discussion paper provides justification for proceeding with all deliberate speed toward the establishment of linkages between the U.S. bibliographic utilities. Despite the limitations of the Battelle study with regard to options, size of sample, and number of libraries involved, and despite the need for further analysis of other means for accomplishing linkage, it still seems desirable and practicable to proceed. The potential benefit to libraries and their patrons is evident although one may argue about how development costs should be dis-

tributed. Libraries can increase access to bibliographic information through linkage even though the immediate benefits may vary from utility to utility. The Battelle report can either serve as a motivating force to move ahead or be relegated to the shelves as "one more study." One can only hope at through the informed leadership of those involved—the stakeholders as it were—that the necessary steps will be taken to move toward the goal of linkage of bibliographic utilities.—*Jay K. Lucker, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

Academic American Encyclopedia. Princeton, N.J.: Areté Publishing Co., 1980. 21V. \$400. LC 79-27430. ISBN 0-933880-00-6.

Academic American Encyclopedia (AAE), a recent contender in the adult general encyclopedia market, appears to have a competitive edge in terms of currency, contemporary biography, and graphics. It is well researched, well written, and a strikingly attractive set. In comparison to similar multi-volume encyclopedias, *AAE* is noticeably

more compact. Its twenty-one volumes contain 32,000 articles, 16,000 illustrations, and 250,000 index entries (compared, for example, to *Americana's* thirty volumes with approximately 54,000 articles, 22,000 illustrations, and 353,000 index entries). The reduction in bulk has been accomplished without a significant loss of detail. Rather, *AAE* has attempted to present essential information succinctly, without compromising depth of coverage. In addition, its short-entry format (half the articles are under 500 words) makes it particularly appropriate for library "ready reference" collections.

AAE's intended audience spans junior high through college age and the "inquisitive adult." The text has a reasonable level of technical and scholarly sophistication, but maintains accessibility as well. These parameters place it somewhere in the middle of a complexity/accessibility continuum between *World Book* and *Britannica*, comparable to *Encyclopedia Americana* or *Collier's*. In short, it is neither elementary nor overwhelming.

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