
BIBLIOGRAPHIC ACCESS SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT FY 1999/2000

INTRODUCTION

“Excel at providing rapid, easy, and precise access to high quality information for education and research at MIT.”

This first Strategic Direction from the MIT Libraries’ Strategic Plan and its articulated strategies provided the framework for Bibliographic Access Services’ (BAS) many contributions this year. BAS staff individually and in collaboration both locally and in system-wide efforts helped further the MIT Libraries’ vision of excellence. As in past years, extending our reach to new initiatives while supporting our core responsibilities offered many challenges. This year the velocity of change seemed particularly acute with changes in technology, publishing, and the rapid growth in electronic information resources reshaping the nature of our work and how we do it.

The Machine Readable Cataloging Standard (MARC), long the bibliographic backbone of the shared cataloging infrastructure, began to “crosswalk” with OCLC’s Dublin Core standard and now both coexist in a world of emerging metadata standards and an idealized vision of interoperability. Although print materials still dominated the cataloging work supply, electronic monographs and aggregator databases increasingly competed for our limited cataloging resources. As electronic resources grew in number and complexity, the question of Vera versus Barton access took on greater urgency and motivated us to examine our practices and explore new approaches to web resource management.

Despite this changing environment, access still lies at the heart of everything we do in monograph cataloging. From Catalogers ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of the bibliographic record to Database Maintenance Staff maintaining the accuracy of our holdings and overseeing the quality assurance of vendor-supplied records, BAS staff, in collaboration with the Systems Office and our colleagues in SAS, are the guardians of one of MIT Libraries’ most valuable assets: the online catalog.

Here, then, are some of the specific contributions BAS staff made to the Libraries’ strategies for achieving rapid, easy, and precise access to MIT’s collections and beyond:

IMPROVE ACCESS TO MATERIALS, TRADITIONAL...

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Bibliographic access to US government documents took a quantum leap forward as the final stages of a multi-year investigative and preparatory effort to automate the loading of vendor-based government documents into Barton came to fruition. The MARC Database Manager in concert with the Collections Services Information Technology Librarian, the Library Systems Manager, and Documents staff in SAS worked collaboratively on specifications for the creation of brief records and the load of MARCIVE records into the Barton database. The MARC Database Quality Technician played an active role preparing loader documentation and working on Geac Advance loader parameters and procedures. At the close of the fiscal year, the brief record-loading software had completed testing and became operational. Testing for full MARC record loading is currently underway.

RETROSPECTIVE CATALOGING OF THE DEWEY DECIMAL COLLECTION

Begun in June 1998 as a pilot cataloging project utilizing title page scanned images, RSC and OCLC TechPro staff successfully completed a second full year of operation. Missing record and barcoding errors which had occurred too frequently in 1999 were brought under steady control by Winter 2000 largely as a result of the RSC staff’s continued vigilance and our regular communication with OCLC TechPro. In October, following the completion of an authorities processing agreement with LTI, 16,216 TechPro records underwent LTI authorities processing and were successfully loaded into the Barton catalog. Records for DDC materials are now integrated into MIT’s ftp files of current cataloging and undergo authorities processing and loading into Barton on a daily basis. As of June 30, bibliographic records providing access to 23,572 monograph titles in the DDC collection had been integrated into the Barton catalog.

MAPS AND OTHER SPECIAL FORMATS

The arrival of the Special Formats Cataloger in July 1999 enabled us to increase our efforts towards providing bibliographic access to Rotch and Lindgren Libraries' rich collections of cartographic materials. At year's end, 190 maps and city plans had received full cataloging and the cataloging for a Rotch collection of Russian-language maps was underway. Options for systematically cataloging Rotch's retrospective collection of 9,000 maps are currently under consideration. A special allocation for the purchase of new maps has brought an additional 400 new maps into our cataloging work supply and has made good use of our newly configured maps cataloging work space. Given the extent of our new and retrospective map collections that require cataloging, it is increasingly clear that we will need to reallocate additional staff resources in order to bring these substantial collections under bibliographic control.

The Special Formats Cataloger has also undertaken the cataloging of several of our previously uncataloged audiovisual collections. For the first time, the Rotch Visual Collections' architecture lectures and Barker's VLSI and EECS lecture series are accessible through the online catalog. As of June, the engineering lecture videos had been cataloged through the 1995 calendar year and one year's worth of architecture lecture videos had also been previewed and cataloged.

The Head of the Rotch Library sent special kudos this year for providing catalog records for the Anderson Award projects and giving national recognition to the award and its recipients. Each of these projects included a challenging mix of materials to be cataloged from maps and slides to project statements and plans.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO MATERIALS TRADITIONAL AND EMERGING... **ELECTRONIC MONOGRAPHS**

Several large database packages contributed to a dramatic increase in our electronic resources cataloging workload. Fortunately, many of the titles were electronic equivalents to print titles held at MIT and these were processed simply by piggy-backing the URL on the catalog record for the print resource. Unfortunately, just as we had made substantial progress on two of the more sizeable databases, both changed in content and design to such an extent that we had to reverify the URLs and recheck what we had cataloged. We look forward to the proposed revision of AACR2, Chapter 12, which addresses the serial-like characteristics of these products as 'continuing resources.'

As we discovered in a recent survey conducted by the Associate Head, Serials Cataloging and the Head of Bibliographic Services, most libraries have no formally articulated policy for providing cataloging and/or Web access to electronic resources, despite the fact that respondents all agreed that web access to e-resources does not scale well. MIT continues to struggle with this question and is currently investigating the feasibility of providing abbreviated records via OCLC's CORC product as one means of facilitating the cataloging of large database packages.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

"How should Information Systems structure and deploy spatial data services to the diverse customer community across the Institute?" Given that spatial data services will be used to generate maps and explore geospatial relationships in a variety of disciplines, the Special Formats Cataloger and the Head of the Engineering Library were invited to join and assist an IS Discovery Team in answering this question. One consideration is whether the Federal Geographic Data Committee Standard (FGDC) metadata that is usually imbedded in these datasets can be extracted to build a MARC record accessible through Barton. As a preliminary step, the Discovery Team has formulated and distributed a survey to potential users of GIS data, asking directly whether they would prefer to search in the Libraries catalog or in a separate database. The survey results will help decide where the metadata for the GIS sites will serve users best.

RAPID, EASY AND PRECISE ACCESS... **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Authorities: With the implementation of daily vendor-based authorities processing in early Fall, the Libraries reached a milestone in its provision of quality controlled bibliographic access to the MIT collections. For the first time in history, the Barton catalog is subject to comprehensive and ongoing authority control. This major achievement would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of the Library Systems Manager, our MARC Database Manager in the Database Maintenance Section (DMS), and monograph and serials cataloging staff. As a

result of careful testing of our Geac authorities loader, the Library Systems Manager and MARC Database Manager discovered several critical problems with record matching that could only be corrected by a software fix contracted through our library system vendor. Geac subsequently incorporated our software fix into a Patch upgrade that was generalized to its entire customer base.

We further strengthened our focus on the quality assurance of our MARC database by redefining a support staff position and creating the position of MARC Database Quality Technician. In January, a staff member from the Copy-based Cataloging Section transferred to this position assuming her new responsibilities on a part-time basis until the vacancy resulting from this transfer was filled in early May. In the short period of 6 months, the MARC Database Quality Technician has been instrumental in analyzing and resolving problems identified through our system-generated and vendor-supplied authority reports, taken over responsibility for loading our external source authority records, and assisted the Library System Manager and the MARC Database Manager in testing three Geac software patches that fixed or enhanced Geac authorities processing.

Other specific accomplishments by staff in Database Maintenance included:

External source records: We also learned some interesting lessons this year about what working in an environment of a shared national authority file. The MIT Publications Cataloger experienced a number of instances where we originally established an author's name for a MIT theses or technical report which later differed in form from the same name established by the Library of Congress.

The Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) records and the incorporation of OCLC TechPro records for our DDC materials have introduced additional complexity to our training of new copy catalogers. PCC records sometimes lack a full LC call number, or, conversely, may have multiple LC and contributed call numbers. Both copy and original catalogers need to be alert to the possibility of split files when an OCLC TechPro record cutters an author's name differently from our existing call number file for the same author.

Impact of changes in national standards: Each year, the national standards community approves additions and deletions to the MARC formats that are made to accommodate new types of information resources or automated system needs. Not surprisingly, the need to provide access to electronic resources prompted many of the recent additions and redefinitions. However, an even greater force has been the ongoing international efforts to harmonize the UKMARC, CANMARC and USMARC standards into MARC21. Although these 'harmonization' changes may have seemed reasonably benign in the abstract, when incorporated into a database of both new and retrospective records, they resulted in tremendous discord in our Geac database that resulted in the perpetual generation of thousands of duplicate headings in our local authority file. Fortunately, DMS staff working with the Library System Manager have devised local approaches and worked with Geac on resolving the problem.

Furthermore, Library of Congress administrative decisions dictate when LC implements changes that have occurred in the MARC format standards. In at least one instance, LC's delay in adopting a MARC standards change resulted in split files as the rest of the national library community implemented the change ahead of LC and we received OCLC bibliographic and LTI authority records originating from cooperative cataloging and authorities agencies as well as LC.

Storage moves: For BAS staff, "location, location, location" no longer suggests a piece of prime real estate, but, has come to mean storage moves within and among the MIT Libraries on campus, the MIT Libraries' RetroSpective Collection (RSC), and the Harvard Depository (HD) storage facility located in Southboro. In addition to the MIT Libraries' ongoing storage moves, FY1999/00 marked the second year of a three year cycle in which the three most crowded facilities, the Science, Humanities, and Barker Engineering Libraries, undertook massive storage projects equivalent to the number of volumes these Libraries acquire each year. As a result, DMS staff deleted more than 9400 items and nearly 1700 titles from the Barton database. Not unlike the fallout from a major inventory project, these Libraries discovered and sent to DMS hundreds of previously cataloged, but, unbarcoded items that needed to be linked in the Barton database in addition to hundreds of barcoded items that had been declared lost that needed recataloging for HD. This latter category proved to be a sizeable additional workload for the Copy-based Cataloging Section.

The Aero Library's move to new, but, smaller quarters brought an unexpected flood of locally added materials that now required priority cataloging in order to move the materials to HD. These materials contributed to the CBC

work supply during a period when the Section traditionally has an opportunity to get ahead before the acquisitions receipts begin to pick up for the fall term.

URL changes: In the world of networked web resources, location has also come to mean URL maintenance. Reflecting the increasing trend towards acquiring electronic resources in lieu of, or as a supplement to print, the Barton database has grown from a few hundred monograph URLs last year to over 1900 monograph URLs in the most recent system report. Although the analysis is ongoing, our initial examination shows that many of the changes are due to information providers restructuring their large database packages. Once this most recent report has been completed, we expect to run the link checking program, Linklint, on a monthly schedule.

BE A LEADER AMONG ACADEMIC RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN THE USE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY...

CORC PROJECT

The Cooperative Online Resource Catalog began as an OCLC research project exploring the applied use and evaluation of an integrated platform of automated tools for cataloging Internet resources within a cooperative cataloging business model similar to the one used to build OCLC's WorldCat. In the initial stages of our participation, a task force chaired by the Head of Serials Cataloging concentrated on experimenting and giving feedback on the automated tools, the integrated platform and the user interface through formal meetings of the CORC participants and via the CORC listserv. Catalog record production began in earnest over the winter and spring 2000 with members of the public service staff participating in the initial metadata production and the Special Formats Cataloger joining the task force to assist with record review and MARC record production.

Now that CORC has been released as a production system integrated with OCLC Cataloging, the Special Formats Cataloger and the Head of Serials Cataloging are working on a pilot project investigating the feasibility of using CORC to create Barton brief records for the ACM database package which contains thousands of individual conference titles.

THIRD BARTON PROJECT

It must be a sign of a maturing technology and a technology savvy library staff that the investigation and RFP process for MIT's new library system has, thus far, occupied a lesser amount of total staff hours than our first and second library system migrations. Certainly, we have embarked on this project wiser as a result of our 15+ years of accrued experience in library automation.

Representatives from monograph and serials cataloging working together with the MARC Database Manager and the MARC Database Quality Technician met with staff to prepare and prioritize lists of system requirements, participate in vendor interviews, and define vendor scenarios for the final phase leading to vendor selection.

We close the year with our attention focused on the benefits of a new integrated library system and with heightened expectations for a system that can extend our users' reach to information resources in the MIT Libraries and beyond.

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