

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ACCESS SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2001/2002

STRUGGLING TO FIND A FOOTHOLD

FY 2001/2002 can best be described in two words: Aleph and metadata. While the majority of BAS staff were attempting to find terra firma within the Aleph landscape, others of us found ourselves ankle deep in the shifting sands of metadata, crosswalks, and interoperability. Whether clicking through Aleph with the aid of the 'Nav. Map', or navigating without a sextant through the tsunami of metadata standards, one fact is certain: information technology and the web have brought about a seismic shift in the way we operate, altering our priorities and the way we meet them. The only safe prediction is that change is inevitable, learning is constant, and the information highway is rapidly facing gridlock.

THE SAGA CONTINUES: IMPLEMENTING THIRD BARTON

At last year's close, the Geac Advance System had been frozen and catalogers and DMS staff were anxiously awaiting going 'live' in Aleph by early July. Regrettably, ExLibris' failure to understand our record loader requirements disrupted the implementation of the cataloging module and left catalogers working in downtime procedures through Thanksgiving while the rest of the library system went live in Aleph in July. This 5 month delay coupled with the addition of \$100,000 to the FY2001/02 annual monographs' budget created a domino affect so that by December 2001 the total of all materials awaiting cataloging was 140% higher than December the prior year. The visual impact of 8,131 titles awaiting cataloging cannot be overstated.

Once the bibliographic records were finally loaded and the cataloging module was operational, catalogers fully expected that the LTI authority record loading would not be far behind. Alas, that was not to be the case until a test server was purchased, installed, and configured by ExLibris personnel and staff in IS. Through a series of mis haps and misunderstandings, what should have taken 6 -8 weeks from purchase to installation took well over twice that amount of time further exacerbating an already untenable situation.

In addition to authorities updates, Barton database enrichment projects, such as Table of Contents, and Books 24 x 7 vendor records which had been successfully implemented in Geac, also went into hiatus and are only now starting to be implemented in Aleph a year later. The quarterly LTI authorities updates are further delayed by the Patch 4 installation which is expect4ed to occur in early to mid-summer.

Taming the Wall

Resourcefulness and heroic efforts were very much in evidence this year as staff confronted learning to work in a new gui-based cataloging interface and struggled, concurrently, to manage and reduce the volume of our backlog. The Rare Books Cataloger (formerly the MARC Database Manager) led a review of the monograph workflows that resulted in procedural changes to accommodate the new system environment. A more substantial period of investigation, experimentation, and reconfiguring of workflows awaits the fall.

Aleph's system architecture and its inability to interoperate with OCLC brought the end to many of our more sophisticated and time-saving macros. While cataloging support staff and our LTE learned to use SnagIt and write new macros using MacroExpress, the Aleph client/server environment meant that the LTE had to adjust the macros individually for each installation and, for the foreseeable future, will have to modify them with every patch and system upgrade.

In addition to looking for technology short-cuts, BAS staff mobilized to increase output by working additional hours and training temporary staff on voucher payroll to do FastCat. At the suggestion of a CBC Cataloger, two volunteer copy catalogers from Serials Cataloging and the MARC Database Quality Technician were trained to help catalog P class exceptions that were identified by FastCat.

The care and feeding of the 'Aleph-ant'

Nowhere was the presence of the 'Aleph-ant' more obvious than in the increasing database management support responsibilities demanded of our MARC Database Manager. Aleph's greater flexibility and customization come at a significant cost in both the magnitude and complexity of system support. As one comparison, Geac Advance had 11 configuration tables related to our bibliographic and authorities records. In Aleph, the MARC Database Manager is responsible for setting up and managing 47 configuration tables for the bibliographic record file PLUS 38 corresponding tables each for the holdings file, the authorities file and, a subset for the reserves file, not to mention the Unicode and GUI display tables that are further additions to this position's workload. The technical knowledge required to provide system support in this more complex computing environment deserves greater recognition.

THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

While much of our attention was focused on reducing the arrearage and system management, significant strides were made in improving the overall accuracy, integrity and reach of the Barton database. The following are highlights from the individual Section reports:

MIT Publications Unit

- The MIT Publications Cataloger worked with Document Services and the Systems Office on a project to insert abstracts into thesis records. Because our thesis catalog records are minimal, the addition of author-generated abstracts creates vastly improved keyword access to these crucially important documents. The abstracts are culled from our print-only theses via OCR. The Cataloger took part in testing to determine the best format for the abstracts (".txt" was selected), and the project is now in full production mode, though additional work remains to solve problems created by OCR's limitations in interpreting mathematical symbols, diacritics, super- and subscripts, and so on. The Cataloger continues to pursue efficient approaches to correcting problems introduced by OCR misreads.
- The MIT Publications Cataloger worked with staff from the Archives and the Registrar's Office to create a historic and comprehensive listing of all MIT departments and degrees. This list serves two important functions. First, Document Services and Preservation Services consult it to create definitive "call numbers" for MIT theses (eliminating formerly unavoidable, repeated, and time-consuming problems with mismarked bindings and fiche headers). Second, and more important, the list has become an official resource that is accessible within Web Barton itself, ensuring comprehensive search results in the important new Thesis Logical Base.
- Working with a casual employee, with students, and with DMS staff, the MIT Publications Cataloger oversaw a project to regularize more than 20,000 MIT thesis call numbers. This brought long-desired, but now absolutely crucial, uniformity to thesis browsing capabilities throughout our online system.
- As the number of electronic theses has increased, the MIT Publications Cataloger has created macros that facilitate the transfer of data from the thesis itself into the MARC workform on OCLC, as well as macros that automatically supply tags and data that occur universally in catalog records for electronic MIT theses.

Database Maintenance Section

- Revision of the FastCat workflow to accommodate limitations of the new system.
- Cataloged 6,412 monographs from October through May using the new FastCat workflow.
- In coordination with Serials Acquisitions, a new workflow for SERMs has been agreed upon and instituted.
- DMS staff have participated in the creation of documentation for the new procedures in Aleph, and created the shared directory where the new documentation lives.
- PJ Buehler has been instrumental in the creation and distribution of macros to streamline the routine procedures during the cataloging process. Macros in the Aleph environment are problematic, need to be adjusted for each individual installation, and often need to be modified over time as well.

Database Maintenance Section (continued)

New Workflows (con't.):

- Installation of MacroExpress and SnagIt software, and training demos conducted for their use.
- Work has commenced on the backlog of problem materials sent to us from the DDC recon project.
- Preparation of Precats, including creating brief bibliographic records, updating items, and the addition of contents notes for sound recordings.

Projects:

- Decisions made for the Kluwer package on how to combine the records from OCLC and data resident in VERA. Download of OCLC records, export of VERA data and initial manipulation complete. Some testing of the loading process has occurred, but the number of matches on records already in Barton has merited further review.
- Utilizing the language skills of our Quality Technician, the set of foreign language materials prepared for a Tech Pro project were compared with the records OCLC sent back to identify missing records and other errors.
- MARC Database Manager was a member of the Enhanced Navigation Task Force, and helped to implement the pilot project. Main areas of support included the loading of VERA data into SFX using the DataLoader, testing of Source configurations, and generating lists of targets for comparison testing.
- During migration we left behind many item records with missing statuses with extremely old dates. This year we have received numerous items which correspond to those left behind, which we have created again in Aleph.
- A report, which is run periodically, listing barcodes which are incomplete. For two of these reports the Quality Technician has been working with the processing units to track down the full barcodes, and correct the item records.
- Global change was completed to suppress from public view 27,940 bib records which had no holdings or items attached, a situation primarily caused by the long term missing items left behind during migration.
- Thanks entirely to the help of the Monograph Acquisitions staff, Garry Ziegler, Debbie Fazio, Whit Hill, and Bruce Goodchild, and their three students, 7,764 of the 10,149 items reported that failed to link to their holdings records during migration have been linked to their holdings records. There were 1,935 item records, about 20%, found to reflect record changes since the report was issued, these items were annotated for later investigation.
- 1.5 of the 5 drawers of shelflist cards of materials cataloged during downtime, were checked by the Monograph Acquisitions students against Aleph to ensure loading of all materials.
- A Global change was run to correct all brief records which were mistakenly assigned the format 'Mixed Media' during conversion and during the loading of YBP records.
- A project to resolve the tagging and data to remove initial English language articles from title browse indexes is nearly complete, of the 906 originally identified, 788 have been resolved.
- A project has commenced to remove 1,445 extraneous holdings created during the loading of records cataloged during downtime.
- Under the supervision of the MIT Publications Cataloger, Jane Marcus completed 4661 corrections to thesis call numbers over a three month period.

Copy-based Cataloging Section (CBC)

- During downtime, the CBC took part in a cooperative cataloging venture with UCSD to catalog conferences in the IEEEExplore database for an OCLC collection set. The project also gave us the opportunity to try "team" cataloging. A conference requiring original cataloging was given initial description and URL checking by a CBC member. Then the title was handed off to the original cataloger for subject analysis. The project made use of technology such as macros and constant data to speed the process. A smaller scale team cataloging project was centered on the Barker engineering seminar videos. One CBC member and the Special Formats Cataloger cataloged one year's worth of seminar videos using this method.

CBC Section (continued)

- Two senior members of the CBC received “train the trainer” sessions from Ex Libris earlier in 2001. They used this knowledge to give one-on-one initial sessions to other members of CBC and members of the department. These sessions covered the basics of Aleph – logging in to various modules, moving between modules, searching, and simple editing.
- Friday afternoon Aleph workshops were held in the training room with other members of the department. These meetings were very productive for Aleph problem solving and training. When an individual discovered a better way to do something in the system, they had the opportunity to share and demonstrate for the group. Documentation for Aleph procedures was created and reviewed during these sessions. We continued to hold these sessions until May. Although the official end of the sessions was due to the training room’s closing, the need for the sessions gradually tapered off and we did not need to meet as often in March and April.
- CBC members participated in a study with Acquisitions personnel to recommend future workflows in Aleph.
- The CBC also worked more closely with the other catalogers of the department. In January, we began to meet as the Monocat group every other week rather than only every month. In this time, we have made progress in reviewing Authorities documentation. We have also conducted problem solving. For example, we worked out a method for handling non-Roman language script Precats in a Monocat meeting.
- This spring CBC began a team problem solving approach to problematic items that are routed to us via DMS. A team of two catalogers, usually an experienced cataloger and a newer cataloger, tackle the problem pile each month. So far this has created about one hour of work per team per month.
- Backlog resulting from downtime. The section has rallied to find solutions to increase output such as training casual employees to do FastCat and training extra-departmental personnel to catalog P Class exceptions. Individuals have created macros that can be shared that have helped increase productivity.
- Each CBC member has been given a look at their productivity statistics in Aleph compared to a similar period in Advance and set improved productivity goals.

Original Cataloging

- Precat recalls were temporarily suspended while staff concentrated on processing the surge of incoming materials. Recalls were resumed in late spring and will continue on an accelerated basis until we reach our 1 year hold period. Precat recalls for original cataloging are now current to June 2000.
- Concentration on cataloging gifts during downtime resulted in the elimination of the gifts backlog as of August 2001.
- Assisted with Aleph training and documented Aleph cataloging and authorities procedures.
- Trained the MARC Database Quality Technician in the processing of foreign language books prior to and subsequent to their cataloging by OCLC TechPro.

Special Formats Cataloging

- The Special Formats Cataloger coordinated CBC’s involvement in the IEEEExplore project with UCSD.
- The Special Formats Cataloger also participated in the creation of a presentation to educate catalogers about the changes in Chapter 9, gaining advance knowledge of the chapter revisions as part of the process. The presentation was given live at ALA Midwinter at the Copy Catalogers’ Discussion Group and ALA Annual at the Electronic Resources Discussion Group.
- New ways of accomplishing special formats cataloging have also been explored using personnel outside of CBC and original cataloging. In cataloging Knovel titles, DMS personnel and a project consultant’s time were used. Also, a DMS member with language expertise aided in the cataloging of a number of Japanese and Chinese language maps.
- Videorecording and CD-ROM cataloging have held steady. The CD-ROM backlog is usually less than 30 titles and the video backlog rose to a high of 87 in February but was reduced to 38 by the end of May.

- Electronic databases became backlogged during downtime and when the loader was not working, but were caught up in April.
- The Special Formats Cataloger helped the Wall effort by cataloging all videos, regardless of copy, to enable Copy-based Catalogers to concentrate on the books arrearage.
- At the beginning of the year, the maps backlog was cleared out. CBC's focus on the wall in recent months has slowed maps cataloging, and a backlog of new materials received this fiscal year has grown.

Music Cataloging

- During downtime, Acquisitions staff helped music cataloging by searching a set of scores from the collection of the late MIT professor John Corley, given to the Music Library by current faculty member Fred Harris. Corley originally commissioned some of these for the MIT Concert Band. Original and copy cataloging of these scores is now underway.
- Over the course of the year, nine boxes of sound recordings recently acquired from the MIT Museum were inventoried. In-house original cataloging of these recordings is currently underway, starting with Tech Shows 1952-1963.
- The music collection is expanding both in format and subject matter. There has been an increase in acquisitions and cataloging of DVDs. DVD holding codes were created for Barton this year. The Music Library also began collecting hip-hop and rap music, an area that will continue to expand in the coming year in support of a course on this music to be given Fall 2002.
- The OCLC Techpro music project focused on Thai, Chinese, and Indian music. Precats that had been received as far back as Oct. 1997 were cataloged in this project, bringing the age of the current precat backlog to the standard one year.

Cataloging Standards and Practices Committee (CATSUP)

- The Committee consulted with the 3rd Barton group to recommend which MARC tags should be valid in Aleph, and which fields should be protected in the loading process.
- The Committee continued to make such recommendations after migration when issues like the new 956 field for local URLs came up.
- Several members of CATSUP participated in a CONSER-sponsored MARC holdings workshop. CATSUP made recommendations on which fixed fields should be default settings in Aleph for both serials and monographs.
- In December, an amendments package came out for AACRII that included major revisions to Chapter 9, which deals with electronic resource cataloging. CATSUP made recommendations for dealing with changes and fallout in the new LCRI's on abbreviations.

Local Technology Support

Hardware and memory upgrades across the department translated into greater capacity and stability with fewer hardware and software problems for the LTE. This was most fortuitous as fewer machine problems allowed our LTE to devote most of his time to dealing with the FastCat backlog.

Now that the FastCat backlog is reaching a level of normalcy, the LTE will be able to turn his attention to routine application and operating system updates and create a system that will guarantee that all BAS staff are current with the latest security patches and software upgrades.

FUTURE PLANS

The terrain of digital resources and bibliographic access is still in flux and we enter the new fiscal year still trying to get a foothold on our future. Metadata is undoubtedly going to be among our mix of responsibilities and our involvement in database management is likely to expand beyond the boundaries of Barton. Developments at the international level in the functional requirements for bibliographic records promise to add further interest to our lives and OCLC's quantum leap into 21st century technology in 2003 will dramatically alter our cataloging environment. However, we are confident that the intelligence and sheer determination of our staff will enable us to meet whatever demands the future has in store for us.

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