Copy Cataloging

We have spent the last several weeks discussing the various components of a MARC record. We have approached this content from the standpoint of creating an original MARC record for every item that you catalog. In actuality, much of your cataloging will be copy cataloging.

What is copy cataloging? On OCLC's Online Cataloging web page (http://www.oclc.org/bibformats/en/onlinecataloging.html), copy cataloging is described this way: "A machine-readable record exists. You modify the record for local use and create a copy of the record with your modifications." Basically, copy cataloging involves selecting a record that someone else has created for the item you are cataloging, correcting any errors, adding any necessary fields for your local practices, and importing this record into your catalog.

There are many sources of MARC records. Sometimes, the items that you order from vendors will come with MARC records. You can also download them from a bibliographic utility, such as OCLC Connexion. These options do involve a cost.

Free records can be obtained from the Library of Congress catalog (http://catalog.loc.gov) or Amicus, the online catalog of Library and Archives Canada (http://amicus.collectionscanada.ca/aaweb/aalogine.htm).

Other sources of free MARC records (though these records often require a good deal of editing) are the Amazon to MARC Converter, the IMDB to MARC Converter, and the Web2MARC Generator. We will talk about these a little bit more near the end of this section.

When you are looking for a record to download, it is important to find one that matches the item that you have in hand.

You can search for an item by title. Sometimes, you will be lucky, and there will only be one record.

However, other times, there will be more than one item with the same title.

In this case, you can tell them apart by looking at the subtitle.

Another way to find the item you are looking for is searching for the ISBN. ISBNs are intended to be unique to the items they identify, though that is not always the case, so be careful.

Searching for the previous book by ISBN number returns only one result.

So far, we've done our searches in the Library of Congress catalog, which can be more straightforward than searching in a bibliographic utility, like OCLC Connexion. Connexion includes records created by libraries in other countries, so you want to make sure that the record you select is in English.

You also want to make sure the record you select is the format that you are actually cataloging. If you are working with the print version of this item,

make sure that you do not select a record for the electronic version.

Another thing that you will want to pay attention to is the encoding level. In OCLC Connexion, this is shown in the fixed field with ELvl next to it. Some records are created at a less-than-full level, which means they may not have all the information you need. For example, a record that has an encoding level of 8 is a prepublication record, which means it originally contained CIP (cataloging-in-publication) information. In the record below, notice that the number of pages, whether or not this item has illustrations, and the dimensions are not included.

Another dead giveaway for prepublication records is the 263 field. This is the expected publication date, with the first 2 digits for the year and the last 2 digits for the month. If you actually have the item in hand, then it has already been published, and you can delete this field.

Once you have supplied any missing information and corrected any errors, you can add any fields that you need for local use. For example, here at the Nebraska Library Commission, we add the 599 field for location information and the 852 field, which generates a holding record for each item.

If you only have a few records, you can add these fields to each record individually. If you are working with a lot of records, it might be useful to batch edit the records using a MARC editor program, such as MarcEdit.

MarcEdit is free to download from http://marcedit.reeset.net/. Among its many functions, it is capable of adding fields to all the records in a large batch of records, saving you time.

Other sources of free MARC records are various generators that are available on the internet. These include:

- Amazon to MARC Converter: http://chopac.org/cgi-bin/tools/az2marc.pl
- IMDB to MARC Converter: http://amazon.libcat.org/cgi-bin/imdb2marc.pl
- Web2MARC Generator: http://dl2sl.org/records

With any of these generators, you search to find item information from the original source (Amazon, Internet Movie Database, or the Web in general) and generate a MARC record from this information. These records are generally incomplete according to library standards (for example, they usually do not have subject headings), but they are a good place to start for items that you can't get records for otherwise.