Fixed Fields

Our next topic of discussion is the 008, or the fixed-length data elements, or fixed fields. We touched on this briefly in session 1. The purpose of the 008 is to provide coded information about particular aspects of the item you're cataloging. We saw before how these codes can be used in the display of your local catalog.

An important thing to remember is that you can always look up these codes at the MARC website or in the OCLC bibliographic formats and standards; you don't have to memorize them.

If you use OCLC Connexion, the data elements in the 008 are broken down into separate fields, so you can read them easily. Your local catalog system translates them into a long string of characters.

Of the data elements in the 008, 00-17 and 35-39 are used for the same data in all types of items. Elements 18-34 can vary depending on what type of item you are cataloging. This is why it is important to specify the right type of material when you are creating a new record – you need to get the right fixed fields.

These are the fixed field data elements for books. You can see that elements 18-34 contain things like illustrations and whether or not there is an index.

Here are the data elements for visual materials. You will see that, unlike in the book data elements, elements 18-34 include things like running time and type of visual material.

Here are the data elements for sound recordings. Elements 18-34 include things like form of composition and format of music.

We'll look a little bit more in depth at some of the data elements, starting with date. The 06 element is for type of date. For books that are not reprints, this will usually be s, to signify a single publication date.

The code for place of publication is another fixed field data element. The list of codes for this field can be found from a link on the LOC MARC site. These codes reflect the country of publication, or if it is within the United States, the state and country of publication.

For example, if you had an item published in Chicago, you would look up the code for Illinois.

For books, elements 18-21 refer to illustrations. You can include up to 4 different types of illustrations.

Element 22 describes the target audience of a publication. For example, j is the code for a juvenile audience.

You can see how these codes are used when you look at a system like WorldCat. For example, here, the audience code allows searchers to limit by audience.

There are also a few fields that describe what is contained in the item, or what the item is.

The nature of contents elements are where you should indicate bibliography information. The code to indicate that a book has a bibliography is b.

Element 31 is where you include information about whether or not the book has an index. If the book has an index, the value of this element should be 1; if not, it should be 0.

Element 33 is for literary form. This is where you indicate if an item is fiction or non-fiction. (0 means non-fiction; 1 means fiction.)

As you can see in WorldCat, this element is useful for narrowing searches.

Elements 35 through 37 are where you indicate the language of an item. You should use a 3-letter code from the MARC Code List for Languages (http://www.loc.gov/marc/languages).

If there is more than one language, the language information is taken from the first language listed in the 041 field.

Element 39 is used to indicate the source of the catalog record. A blank in the cataloging source field indicates that the record was created by the Library of Congress.

Those are the basics of fixed fields. An important thing to remember about fixed fields is how they are translated to the display in your local system and on WorldCat. You should also remember that you don't have to remember all the codes; you can look them up, either on the LC MARC website or the OCLC Bibliographic Formats and Standards.