

The UKMARC Manual

The British Library adopted MARC 21 as its cataloguing format in June 2004 and the **UKMARC Manual** reflects the previous cataloguing practice of the British Library in its interpretation of AACR2 and other related standards.

Preface

The UKMARC format was developed primarily to facilitate the production of the printed British National Bibliography (BNB) and thus closely reflects the cataloguing practice of the British Library in its interpretation of AACR2 and other standards. A distinction can however be drawn between the UKMARC format as a national format and its use by the national library in preparing records for the national bibliography, and the UKMARC Manual seeks to make such a distinction.

This manual is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the cataloguing practices of the British Library, but each section contains 'BNB Practice' notes which describe the way in which particular fields and subfields are currently used in records created for the British National Bibliography, i.e. BNB MARC records.

This manual does not describe either the use of the format for the exchange of bibliographic records, though this may be touched upon as necessary to illustrate particular points. This information, together with specifications for the exchange of records in different media (such as disc, tape, CD-ROM etc), is covered on the UKMARC Exchange Record Format pages.

Introduction

MARC is an acronym for **M**Achine **R**eadable **C**ataloguing. The MARC format was primarily developed as a convenient way of storing and exchanging bibliographic records. It has since been extended to include non-bibliographic forms of library material, such as maps and music scores. There is also a MARC format for the storage and exchange of authority records, but this is not covered in these pages.

The original MARC format was developed by the Library of Congress in the mid-1960s. A pilot project, known as MARC I, was set up to investigate the feasibility of producing catalogue data in machine-readable form. Similar work was being done in the United Kingdom by the Council of the British National Bibliography Ltd. which had set up the BNB MARC Project to examine whether the production of the printed British National Bibliography (BNB) could be simplified by using machine-readable bibliographic records. These two initiatives came together in 1968 in the MARC II Project which was an Anglo-American effort to develop a standard communications format.

Development of the UKMARC format

In 1969 the *British National Bibliography* introduced a MARC tape service for current British books, in effect a machine-readable version of the weekly printed BNB. Subscribers to this service included libraries, booksellers and co-operative agencies such as the Birmingham Libraries Co-operative Mechanisation Project (BLCMP), which were developing systems for the distribution of MARC records to their members. At this time UKMARC primarily reflected the requirements of BNB but was gradually being developed to cater for use by the wider information community. By 1975 when the first edition of the UK MARC Manual was published, UKMARC had become a national communications format and its use in the production of records for BNB represented just one particular application of the format.

Since the early 1970s an extended family of more than twenty national MARC formats has grown up. Attempts were made to preserve compatibility between national formats, but

differing national requirements have made complete compatibility impossible and differences in data content mean that editing is required before records can be exchanged. The solution to the problem of incompatibility has been to create an international MARC format, UNIMARC, which facilitates the exchange of records created in any MARC format (UNIMARC manual: bibliographic format. 2nd ed. Munchen, London: K. G. Saur, 1994).

UKMARC and AACR2

As part of the progress which was being made towards the international standardisation of bibliographic information at this time, IFLA's programme of International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions (ISBDs) led to the publication in 1977 of *ISBD(G): General International Standard Bibliographic Description* (rev. ed. 1992). The importance of ISBD(G) is that it laid the basis for constructing an integrated cataloguing code, hospitable to books and other media, and as such was relevant to the revision of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*. The revision of AACR was undertaken by the British Library, the Library of Congress and other bodies in the UK and North America. The objectives were to reconcile the British and North American texts of 1967, to incorporate amendments, and to provide for wider international interest in AACR. The publication of the second edition in 1978 was a landmark in standardising procedures for the description of books and other items and for the construction of headings and references and in addressing the needs of machine processing.

The British Library decided to adopt AACR2 with effect from 1981 and the changes this made necessary to UKMARC were incorporated into the second edition of the UK MARC Manual in 1980. Throughout the 1980s there was a growing international commitment to networks and shared cataloguing based on AACR2 which by then had been adopted by a number of non-English speaking countries. Although the basic concepts of AACR2 did not change, three sets of rule revisions were required to take account of international usage, new library materials, and rapid technological change. This process was consolidated with the publication of the 1988 revision of AACR2. In 1994 a set of amendments, known as Amendments 1993, was published comprising clarifications and slight changes to existing rules which the British Library has since applied to BNB MARC records.

The UK MARC Manual was updated regularly during the 1980s as changes were made to AACR2. These piecemeal amendments led to a general revision of the format which was carried through with the publication of the third edition in 1990. There have since been two extensions, the first covering rare books fields (1992) and the second listing additional fields for the book industry (1993). These changes and other corrections were consolidated in the fourth and last printed edition (1996), which has been revised and updated on a regular basis.