

THE EFFECT OF THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD
BIBLIOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION (MONOGRAPHS) ON
CATALOG RECORDS (LES EFFETS DE LA DESCRIPTION
INTERNATIONALE NORMALISEE SUR LES FICHES)

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ABSTRACT

Catalog records produced according to the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, revised Chapter 6, were compared with records for the same works based on the earlier version to investigate the effect of ISBD(M) on catalog records. (Des notices préparées d'après le Chapitre 6 révisé des Règles de catalogage anglo-américaines ont été comparées avec les notices pour les mêmes ouvrages préparées selon la version originale.)

BACKGROUND

ISBD(M) International Standard Bibliographic Description for Monographs (International Federation of Library Associations 1974) is regarded as a major achievement in international cooperation, and also an important step toward the realization of the long-range goal of Universal Bibliographic Control. The decision to develop such a standard was reached at the International Meeting of Cataloguing Experts in Copenhagen in 1969 and the first version was published in 1971. The revised version published in 1974 clarified and amplified the wording but made no radical changes in the original text. The purpose of ISBD(M) is stated succinctly in the Foreword to this edition.

The purpose of the ISBD(M) is to provide an internationally accepted framework for the representation of descriptive information in bibliographic records of monographic -- i.e. non-serial -- publications. It is designed to meet three requirements for the efficient international use of such records: first, that records produced in one country or by the users of one language can be easily understood in other countries and by the users of other languages; secondly, that the records produced in each country can be integrated into files or lists of various kinds containing also records from other countries; and thirdly, that records in written or

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printed form can be converted into machine-readable form with the minimum of editing.

ISBD(M) is noteworthy not only for the speed with which it was developed but also for the reception it has received. According to the most recent information available ISBD(M) is now being used in twelve national bibliographies and is being considered for use in seven more. It has been translated into at least nine languages and either has already been included, or is being considered for inclusion, in a number of cataloging codes.

The Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, North American Text (American Library Association 1967), referred to hereafter as AACR, was one of the first cataloging codes to be revised to incorporate the provisions of ISBD(M). A revision of "Chapter 6: Separately Published Monographs" (American Library Association 1974) was issued in 1974. By 1975 Library of Congress catalog cards bearing ISBD(M) symbols started to appear, and libraries in Canada and the United States began to implement the new rules.

Not all the reaction to the incorporation of ISBD(M) in the rules for descriptive cataloging has been favorable, however. Anxiety concerning the implications of the new rules has been expressed by many librarians in Canada and the United States. The fact that events moved so quickly at the international level and that there was little opportunity for discussion among librarians at the grass roots before the adoption of ISBD(M) contributed to the resistance. The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of the changes in catalog records resulting from the application of the revised rules for descriptive cataloging, and by comparing products of the old and new rules, to discover whether or not there are any grounds for the objections that have been raised.

METHODOLOGY

The data necessary for a comparative study of two forms of cataloging is not easily available because no library affords the luxury of revising existing records to comply with new rules. A small collection of duplicate records produced by members of the Faculty of Library Science, University of Toronto, in the course of revising Sample Catalogue Cards (University of Toronto 1968) to bring it into line with revised Chapter 6 provided the necessary data. No claim for randomness can be made for this sample of course, but the records do exemplify a variety of cataloging problems, having been chosen with this purpose in mind. Furthermore, as the records were intended to be used as examples, much effort was devoted to the correct interpretation and application of AACR for the 1968 edition of Sample Catalogue Cards, and equal care was taken with the new rules for the 1975 Supplement (University of Toronto 1975).

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Since the corpus was small (thirty pairs of records) manual methods were used for data collection. A character count was made for each pair of records and for each element on a catalog card (title proper, statement of authorship, edition statement, etc.). The count was confined to the descriptive portion of the card. Main entries, unless the title itself was the main entry, were excluded from the count, as were the headings on continuation cards and all tracings. It was necessary to make certain arbitrary decisions regarding the way in which to count the various symbols. Because square brackets and question marks were used with dates and other data to convey information about the source of the data they were treated as data characters (alphanumerics). Similarly, a period that formed part of an abbreviation was counted as a data character, but other periods as punctuation. Parentheses were counted as punctuation, as were commas, colons, slashes and dashes. Each paragraph was treated as a continuous stream of characters, and one or two spaces were counted at the end of a line according to the number of spaces that would have been required had the line continued. Although the punctuation between elements in records constructed according to the revised Chapter 6 is determined by the element that follows, it was counted with the element that preceded. Figure 1 is a specimen Data Collection Form.

FINDINGS

Effect of ISBD(M) on Record Size

The count was tabulated by the number of 1) data characters (alphanumerics), 2) punctuation symbols, 3) spaces, and 4) the total number of characters (all three types combined). Hereafter the term "characters" will be used to denote the three types combined. Totals and averages were computed separately for alphanumerics, punctuation symbols, spaces, and for all characters combined. The totals and averages themselves are of little significance, but the differences between the two sets of records are of considerable interest. An increase was found in the size of records produced according to the new rules. On the average records so produced contained 23 more alphanumerics, 7 more punctuation symbols and 4 more spaces for a total increase of 34 characters. The smallest record produced according to the old rules contained an overall total of 69 characters and the largest a total of 966 characters. The smallest record produced by the new rules was larger, with a total of 101 characters, but the largest record was smaller, with a total of 946 characters. Of the thirty pairs of records only two of those produced by the new rules incorporating ISBD(M) were smaller than their counterparts based on the 1968 edition of AACR. Both of these records had contents notes. The change in format of contents notes, the elimination of the word "by", and the reduction in the number of spaces required within the contents note, accounted for an appreciable decrease in the size of the record in spite of additional punctuation symbols being required.

SPECIMEN DATA COLLECTION FORM

~~Smith, George Milton.~~

A simplified guide to statistics for psychology and education [by] G. Milton Smith. 3d ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston [1965, c1962], xix, 164 p. illus. 21 cm.

~~Smith, George Milton.~~

A simplified guide to statistics for psychology and education / G. Milton Smith. 3d ed. -- New York ; Toronto : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, c1962, 1965 printing. xix, 164 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

Includes index.

~~1. Statistics I. Title.~~~~1. Statistics I. Title.~~

OLD

NEW

DIFFERENCE

	Chars.	Punc.	Spaces	Total	Chars.	Punc.	Spaces	Total	New - Old
Ti Prop	53	0	9	62	53	1	10	64	+ 2
Add. Ti									
Au. St.	17	1	5	23	13	3	4	20	- 3
Ed.	5	0	3	8	5	2	3	10	+ 2
Place	7	1	2	10	14	2	5	21	+ 11
Pub.	22	1	4	27	22	2	4	28	+ 1
Date	11	1	1	13	17	2	2	21	+ 8
Paging	8	1	4	13	8	2	4	14	+ 1
Ill.	6	0	2	8	4	1	2	7	- 1
Size	5	0	1	6	5	0	1	6	
Series									
Notes					13	1	1	15	+ 15
Cont.									
Totals	134	5	31	170	154	16	36	206	+ 36

Figure 1

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The new rules introduced several changes that automatically resulted in a slight reduction in the number of characters required to convey information. The practice of supplying [by] and [and] in author statements, required by the former rules, and optional in ISBD(M), is not permitted by revised Chapter 6. This affected only three records. The use of ill. instead of illus. affected a third of the records. Neither change in any way impairs the intelligibility of the record and therefore both can be counted as improvements.

Increase in Information Content

A comparison of the three counts for each element in a pair of records served to pinpoint variations which were then investigated to determine the nature of the variation and its cause or causes. Attention was focussed on the areas that showed significant increase or decrease in size. In some cases the explanation was the addition of information either required or permitted by the new rules. In three records a second place of publication was included. The average increase was 12 characters. In four records a second publisher was named; the average increase was 77 characters. In three records the date was made more explicit by the addition of the word "printing", thus adding 10 characters per record. In nine records a note about an index was added; the average increase resulting from this note was 16 characters. In all these instances the increase in size appears to be justified by an increase in information.

In three cases the collation had been expanded by explicit indication of the number of pages of plates. The average increase in the collation that resulted was 23 characters per record. While more information was included it is debatable whether the increase in length and complexity of the collation did not more than offset any slight gain in specificity in the description of the physical item.

Effect of Inclusion of Statement of Authorship

In one third of the records the increase in size of the records produced according to ISBD(M) was attributable to the inclusion of a statement of authorship where none was required by the 1968 edition of AACR. Only one of these additions was not directly attributable to ISBD(M). The average increase for personal authors per record was 25 characters. For the four corporate authors the average increase was 100 characters. In each case the data duplicated data in the main entry and there was, therefore, no increase in information. The inclusion of the statement of authorship in the bibliographic description when it appears in the work is a reasonable requirement for ISBD(M) because the aim is to produce an entry complete within itself. It is pointed out in the Introductory Notes (International Federation of Library Associations 1974) that the organizational factors (headings, etc.) used in arranging entries in catalogs do not form any part of ISBD(M). They do form a part of a catalog entry,

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however, and duplication of information is the result.

There is an alternative to rule 134D1 which permits the omission of the statement of authorship on much the same basis as in the 1968 edition of AACR. It is current Library of Congress practice to apply rule 134D1 and not its alternative, but the Library of Congress catalog fulfils the function of a national bibliography for the United States. It is a requirement of ISBD(M) that one agency in every country be responsible for providing a complete ISBD(M) description of each publication produced by that country. The increase in the size of records, especially where corporate authors are concerned, strongly suggests that libraries not under the necessity of providing full information would be advised to omit the author statement whenever the alternative rule is applicable.

Effect of Changes in Sources of Descriptive Data

In the course of revising Sample Catalogue Cards (University of Toronto 1968) the importance of the ISBD(M) rules for the sources of information to be used in describing a publication became very apparent. Previous cataloging codes made a sharp distinction between information on the title page and information from any other source, data from the latter being enclosed in square brackets. In revised Chapter 6 primary sources of information are designated for each area in accordance with ISBD(M). Only for the title and statement of authorship area is the primary source restricted to the title page. For edition and imprint primary sources include the preliminaries (verso of the title page, half-title, etc.) and the colophon. Only information from other than the primary sources need be enclosed in square brackets. Specific restrictions are also imposed. Information regarding authorship, if taken from outside the publication, is not to be included in the title and statement of authorship area, but is to be added in a note.

The effect of these changes is to preclude any possibility of converting records produced under the old rules by merely rearranging the data and introducing appropriate punctuation symbols. It is necessary to re-examine the original publication in order to apply the new rules. Any attempts to insert ISBD(M) punctuation into older records will destroy the bibliographic integrity of the original record and will produce erroneous data that will lead to bibliographic confusion.

For records produced under the new rules there is a reduction in the use of square brackets. For the thirty records in this study the reduction was from 22 pairs of square brackets to 10 pairs. The fact that title page information is no longer clearly identified results in a slight loss of information, but the distinction is of little importance for current publications, and it is current material to which ISBD(M) is intended to be applied.

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ISBD(M) Punctuation/Delimiters

The aspect of ISBD(M) that has attracted the most criticism is not connected with those features which have been found to be responsible for an increase in the size of the record; rather it is the use of punctuation symbols as delimiters to identify the elements in a record. It is true that the ISBD(M) punctuation does increase the size of records slightly. Five pairs of records were identical with respect to their alphanumeric count. On an average the records with the ISBD(M) punctuation contained 1.5 more spaces and 5.5 more punctuation symbols. Such a slight increase is of no significance for a manual card catalog. If space were at a premium in an automated system there are a number of alternative ways in which the punctuation could be dealt with. It is worth noting that, whereas LC MARC and CAN/MARC records contain the ISBD(M) punctuation it is omitted from BNB MARC records.

The delimiters are intended to serve two purposes. First they function as codes and thus simplify the process of converting the record to a machine-readable form in which the fields and subfields are explicitly identified by tags and subfield codes. In printed catalogs they assist the user who is searching for a bibliographic item in a language with which he is unfamiliar to identify the various parts of the record. This may prove to be an extremely useful feature for bibliographers, librarians and library assistants. The fundamental criticism that can be levelled at the intrusion of these characters into bibliographies and catalogs is not that they interfere with the intelligibility of the entries — it is doubtful, indeed, whether catalog users who are not trained personnel will notice them — but rather that their presence adds weight to the accusation that catalogs are designed for the use of catalogers and other librarians, and not for the reader.

CONCLUSION

Because the study was not based on a random sample the findings could not be generalized to any population. At the outset of the investigation this was thought to be a serious weakness, but in retrospect the need to generalize the findings seems less important. It is useful to know the changes that the implementation of ISBD(M) has produced in catalog records, but it is less important to know the proportion of catalog records affected. It would be interesting to carry out a similar, large-scale study on a random sample of records from LC and CAN/MARC tapes, but it is debatable whether the information to be gained would justify the costs involved in such a study.

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