

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA UNION CATALOGUE

PROJECT (OR NETWORK?): ACHIEVEMENTS,

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a revised version of a paper delivered to the B.C. Library Association Meeting on October 27, 1978, at the Devonshire Hotel, Vancouver, B.C. It describes the accomplishments of the B.C. Union Catalogue Project from its beginning in September 1977 to March 1979. It summarizes some of the organizational issues which currently confront the library members of the B.C. consortium and outlines those areas where planning for the Project must be accomplished.

LE CATALOGUE COLLECTIF DE LA COLOMBIE-BRITANNIQUE  
PROJET (OU RESEAU): REALISATIONS,  
PROBLEMES ET PERSPECTIVES

RESUME

Cette étude est une récente version d'une étude présentée à l'Assemblée de l'Association des Bibliothèques de la C.B. du 27 octobre, 1978 à l'Hôtel Devonshire, Vancouver, C.B. C'est en réalité une description des accomplissements du projet du catalogue collectif de la C.B. à partir de son début en septembre 1977 jusqu'en mars 1979. Ceci est un sommaire des problèmes d'organisation que confrontent présentement les bibliothèques membre du consortium de la C.B. et analyse les endroits où plus de planification est nécessaire pour élaborer les avantages du projet.

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### DEFINITION OF B.C. UNION CATALOGUE

I would first like to offer a definition of what the B.C. Union Catalogue is. I would define it as a province-wide bibliographic data base of B.C. library collections resources. The definition thus consists of three elements: (1) a machine-readable data base; (2) bibliographic records; and (3) holdings of B.C. Member libraries. At present, there are twenty-four member B.C. libraries who are actively contributing bibliographic records to the BCUC data base.

The B.C. Union Catalogue data base is jointly owned and maintained by its member libraries. Most of the cost of building and maintaining the BCUC data base is supported out of the ordinary operating costs of its member libraries. But additional start-up funding from the Ministry of Education has been an extremely important "priming of the pump" to get the Project moving.

At present time, the only way in which BCUC member libraries can report their "holdings" to the data base is to enter bibliographic records on-line or in batch-mode through use of the cataloguing support system (or CATSS) of the University of Toronto Library Automation System. Thus a condition for becoming a BCUC member library is to implement the UTLAS CATSS System. Within the next few years alternative methods of participation may be available.

All BCUC Members, at present, must implement CATSS - they pay their own bills to UTLAS for use of the system as well as paying for their terminal equipment and data communication lines.

The BCUC data base is thus the product of the co-ordinated cataloguing activities of a consortium of B.C. libraries. It resembles in many ways an earlier established consortium of Ontario and Quebec libraries which is called UNICAT/TELECAT. Many of BCUC's coding and bibliographic standards for data entry have been taken over from the UNICAT/TELECAT consortium and union catalogue. Unlike the UNICAT/TELECAT union catalogue, BCUC's data base is actually a composite of separate, but computer-linked library bibliographic data files. UNICAT/TELECAT maintains a true union file where a separate record is shared between different libraries. UNICAT/TELECAT records are also bilingual. BCUC records are unilingual. BCUC's aggregate-linked data files gives member libraries added flexibility in the generation of local library product and services; but permits the creation of union products and services. BCUC is beginning to explore a file structure alternative to both the UNICAT/TELECAT and BCUC file structures. The BCUC system results in data redundancy, duplicate editing of shared records, and presents more difficulty with respect to enforcing consistent bibliographic standards.

The B.C. Union Catalogue data base is growing quickly. During

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1977/78 only about 30,000 records from six members were added during the first seven month (Sept. 1977 - March 1978). As of September 29, 1978, 22 member libraries had added an additional 160,000 records. By March 31, 1979 (end of the fiscal year for educational libraries) the data base comprised approximately 655,000 records. Thanks to RECON funding from the Ministry of Education, the data base will double in size by March 31, 1980 (or 1,285,000 records). By the end of the three universities RECON Projects, the present 24 member libraries will have entered over 3,000,000 records of highest quality. This will be one of the largest library data files in Canada and the U.S. The BCUC data base will contain all types of bibliographic records for monographs, serials/periodicals, and non-book/audio-visual materials. If we succeed in adding a number of B.C. public libraries over the next few years as members, then the file size will be much larger than the above estimates.

In order to provide for better bibliographic control and maintenance over the file access points (i.e., names, series, and subjects) the BCUC Data Base will consist of a commonly developed on-line authority file. Last summer, a B.C. Youth Employment Grant enabled the Project to convert about 50,000 name authority records from the U.B.C. official catalogue. Work is now underway to convert name authority records from the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University library files. This authority file data base will be an integral part of the union catalogue data base. In fact, names, series, and subjects will be stored in the authority file only; the headings will be eliminated from the bibliographic records altogether in the machine file. This will eliminate some data redundancy, create consistency in heading usage between libraries, provide for computer validation of headings, create cross-references in the on-line system as well as COM products, and provide the ability to make global changes in all bibliographic records with the single update of an authority record. This file will also be linked to National Library and LC records so that those two libraries will be able to automatically change every BCUC record with a particular heading occurrence.

### DEFINITION OF THE B.C. UNION CATALOGUE NETWORK

Up to now, we have been calling ourselves a "Project". This word implies that BCUC is a relatively short term enterprise. The Ministry of Education has been talking in terms of five years of support which coincides with the completion of the three university libraries' retrospective conversion projects. The Management Committee recently approved a definition of BCUC which introduces the concept of an ongoing Network Organization. Self-definition and agreement on goals and objectives is currently a hotly debated issue among various BCUC members. The BCUC Network definition vests the management of the BCUC data base in the BCUC Network Organization. This Network Organization is defined

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### DEFINITION OF THE B.C. UNION CATALOGUE NETWORK

as being composed of three major groups or elements.

1. Participating and autonomous member libraries - whose jurisdictions presently cross three B.C. Ministries.
2. A Central Network Office - formerly the Project Office which reports to the Ministry of Education's recently established Management Advisory Council.

and

3. A contractor (or contractors) who supply services to the Network (at present this is only UTLAS; but in future could include such agencies as the B.C. Systems Corporation, commercial vendors, etc.)

This BCUC Network Organization is a complex one involving many different funding arrangements. It is our hope that other Ministries besides Education will put up money to prime the BCUC "pump". We are especially interested in the Greater Vancouver Federation of Libraries recent attempt to get start-up money out of the Ministry of Recreation and Conservation. I believe that this is an extremely important requirement to help public libraries enter BCUC on the same basis as have the education libraries with Ministry of Education start-up support.

Up to now, most of the understandings and agreements concerning organizational structure and funding have been quite informal. But this informal - and hence uncertain setting - has not prevented BCUC from accomplishing a great deal over these past two years. Work has been done - bills have been paid - and most important of all: results have been produced. The first COM BCUC list was produced mid-March 1978 only seven months after the first BCUC record was entered by Simon Fraser University Library. Many libraries were cognizant of the historical moment when they entered their first record into the BCUC data base. BCIT, for instance, chose the book titled: Sensible Sludge as its first data entry attempt.

Having defined for you what is meant by the B.C. Union Catalogue Data Base and our intentions with respect to a B.C. Union Catalogue NETWORK consortium of libraries; it seems logical to present for your consideration a statement of BCUC's Goals and Objectives. From this three-legged stool, I will then proceed to review our achievements to date, to catalogue some of our current problems, and then to try to augur our prospects.

I believe that BCUC's goals and objectives must centre around the establishment and use of the new, major provincial resource: "The B.C. Union Catalogue Data Base."

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This data base can be expected to provide a wide range of information products and services through the thoughtful and co-ordinated applications of computer and telecommunications technology. I also think that it is important to point out that most of us (and I include myself) have only a rather vague and dim understanding of what these future applications will be. But we do know, that we have only begun to tap the benefits and services which the BCUC data base will bring to the users of B.C. libraries over the next decade.

I think that I can identify at least three broad goals for the BCUC NETWORK; these goals would be as follows;

1. To provide improved information services to users of B.C. libraries through the co-ordinated activities and developments of the Network.

Library Users must remain the centre of our concerns. All too often the glitter and glory of new computer toys and systems lead us to forget on whose behalf all this activity is done.

2. Second, To provide through the B.C. Union Catalogue NETWORK the means of sharing library information resources more extensively and more equitably than hitherto possible.

3. Third, To provide via the NETWORK Organization, a co-ordinating mechanism to help rationalize the expenditures of B.C. tax dollars used in the processing of B.C. library materials, in the development of B.C. library collections, and in the provision of B.C. library information services.

I think that these three goal statements are general motherhood statements which most of us can subscribe to as long as they remain high-flown rhetoric. The more difficult problem facing BCUC is to translate such non-controversial motherhood statements into more specific and short-term objectives. This latter task is not nearly so easy - nor so obvious - it is a far more controversial and, frankly, political process; involving as it must, agreement on priorities and actual commitment of library funds and staff resources by the members.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE B.C. UNION CATALOGUE "NETWORK"

Having established that the BCUC data base is our basic and central resource which can serve many purposes, that the NETWORK is our organization which must utilize the resource and get things done, and that there are at least three broad goals which we might agree upon to provide up guidance; I would like to suggest to you a few objectives of BCUC for your consideration:

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### Objectives of the B.C. Union Catalogue "Network"

1. To establish and maintain a standard, integrated catalogue data base for use by the B.C. library community.
2. To provide for the implementation of automated, shared cataloguing support services to member libraries in order to build and maintain the B.C. bibliographic data base.

Almost all of BCUC's concerns, problems, and activities during the first two years of its existence have been related to these two objectives. This has involved preparing the 24 member libraries to implement CATSS, the establishment of RECON and Authorities Development Projects, and the continuing saga of adopting and implementing bibliographic and coding standards for records added to the BCUC data base.

BCUC has now reached a juncture in its history where it must begin to consider such additional issues as the patriation of its data base, replication of computer systems to house and provide services from the data base, and the establishment of additional functions and services which operate in relationship to the data base, such as: acquisitions and funds accounting systems, serials management systems, online circulation and online catalogue enquiry systems. These new concerns and issues may be summarized in the following two objectives statements:

3. TO conduct research studies and to provide for the development/replication of new or improved computer technology applications and information services based upon the utilization of the BCUC data base and the co-ordination of NETWORK member libraries' activities.
4. TO actually implement these new computer applications in a planned, co-ordinated, and integrated manner which will eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort and resources between various government and institutional jurisdictions which provide for library services to citizens of B.C.

These last two objectives are certainly controversial - they may even be too grandiose and impractical to realize in the real world. They would certainly require the infusion of money for research and pilot development projects which have yet to be discussed in any detail among BCUC member libraries and the Ministry of Education. However - the logic of our technology - and the needs of B.C. libraries would seem to dictate that BCUC move in this direction.

### REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF THE B.C. UNION CATALOGUE PROJECT/NETWORK

I would now like to review the status of the B.C. Union Catalogue

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### REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF THE B.C. UNION CATALOGUE PROJECT/NETWORK

Project - or if you will: "NETWORK," under a number of topics such as funding, planning, role of the network, and role of the network office. What I am attempting to provide is a framework for considering the activities and issues which confront BCUC. I would like to make several points before continuing:

First, BCUC still faces a number of problems and uncertainties. Whatever negative remarks I might make, one should not lose sight of the real and amazing achievements which have been accomplished to date. I believe that BCUC has laid a firm foundation upon which it will build continued success.

Second, I believe that one should keep in mind that the NETWORK Library organization - with its vast committee structure - is the responsible agent for overcoming and solving BCUC's problems. It is not a government agency - or a ministry - nor a central office which will solve these difficult problems and make the difficult decisions.

The third thing which I would hope that one gets from this presentation is an increased appreciation for how the developing computer and library systems technology will be a major element in shaping the future of BCUC.

One of BCUC's greatest problems will be to understand the significance of technological developments, and to apply them in a timely fashion. Timing is as crucial to this process as the actual technological choices themselves. Let me now address a number of related topics.

#### FUNDING:

The first topic which I will choose to deal with is the question of funding. Ultimately, all organizational problems begin with and are solved within the confines of funding. Funding is the alpha and omega of organizational life.

The Ministry of Education provided funding for seven months through March 1978 with an initial grant by Dr. Walter G. Hardwick, Deputy Minister of Education, of \$70,000. Without any assurance of substantial funding for 1978/79, six brave (or foolish) libraries stepped forward in September 1977, putting up their own operating funds to begin use of the CATSS System. A budget plan was drawn-up in October 1977 for the fiscal year 1978/79 and submitted to the Ministry of Education. This request was revised at the Ministry's request in May 1978. The result was that the Ministry of Education responded providing funding

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for the Project Office, the three university libraries, and twelve college and institute libraries as a special grant above their ordinary operating grants. The grant amounts proved to be beyond the wildest expectations of any of us who were envisioning the union catalogue in September 1977. We have been off to a running start and the pace seems to increase with each passing day. The total grants for 1978/79 can be detailed as follows:

- \$1,200,000    Granted to 12 college and institute libraries for current implementation of CATSS and the complete retrospective conversion of their library card catalogues of about 600,000 records.
- \$ 750,000    granted to the three university libraries to begin current CATSS implementation; to RECON 150,000 university library card catalogue records; and to begin the conversion of the three university card authority files.
- \$ 300,000    was also granted to the Project Office for its operations to help co-ordinate all of these activities.

For a grand total of \$2,200,000 during 1978/79. In addition, the Ministry of Education has given assurances that there will continue to be RECON funding for the three university libraries during the succeeding four fiscal years.

The importance of this funding fact of life cannot be stressed too much. This commitment to RECON funding by the Ministry of Education made a number of things happen which are directly related to the future utility and success of the B.C. Union Catalogue data base.

With the assurance of RECON funding, all initial twenty-four BCUC libraries (UVic is an exception) have been able to agree to close their card catalogues and to depend completely upon COM produced catalogues. This in turn had three important and related consequences:

1. First, it means that all of the initial B.C. Union Catalogue Member libraries were cut lose from their local files in such a way as to permit them to agree upon a common bibliographic and coding standard for their separate data files - thus ensuring a more consistent and high quality union catalogue product - - which after all, was the basis upon which the Ministry of Education granted this initial funding.



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2. Second, in the large and medium-sized post-secondary education libraries, the closure combined with RECON funding is permitting the freeing of extensive staff resources onto the RECON project. This particular combination is resulting in the minimizing of library costs part of the co-ordinated rationalization of public funds I alluded to earlier.
3. Third, the resultant commitment and total dependency of the initial member libraries on the union catalogue data base gives added impetus and urgency to the development of a common machine authority file. This in turn opens up a number of desired opportunities:
  - a. Our member libraries will be in the most favored position in North America with respect to the Library of Congress closing its own card files in 1981; and switching to the complete implementation of AACR II.
  - b. At the same time this closure and retrospective data base combined with the authority development will open up new online access services to a virtually complete data base of B.C. library resources. Within two years this development will have a dramatic and far reaching impact upon B.C.U.C. member library reference services.
  - c. Another result of this funded development, which may not be entirely beneficial from the total network point of view, will be the opening up to individual libraries the possibilities of installing mini-computer systems in-house. I see this as an opening of Pandora's box. Until these libraries had created a complete high quality data base, these new possibilities were largely closed to them.

From the network point of view this offers a new challenge; members will be in a position to ad hoc the implementation of these mini-computer systems to the detriment of the network function of integrating the improved access to information between library data files. Thus one result of this funding has been to open up a can of worms. Most of these mini-computer systems presently on the market - which are now within the reach of member libraries, thanks to MOE funding and the creation of the BCUC data base - are stand alone systems. They are not really designed to operate within the network context. I would identify this as the major technological and political problem facing BCUC with respect to future applications of its data base.

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Another related problem facing BCUC with respect to funding, is that the Network is about to take on member libraries who are not funded by the Ministry of Education; and who are not likely to be funded for RECON; and who may not be willing to consider closure of their card files. This funding fact of life may well bring them into direct conflict with the first tenant of the B.C. Union Catalogue Data Base: To wit, that it is a single, standard and integrated file. This is one of the first major tests facing the present organization. The outcome is not yet decided.

The question of future funding - and the securement of other sources of funding (whether they be other ministries or member libraries' allocations) will largely set the limits to the nature and scope of the Network's development. This funding issue is directly related to the question of data base patriation and the replication of a system to house and service it in B.C. BCUC is presently considering the purchase of the Washington Library Network System software for loading at the B.C. computer facility.

We should keep one political reality firmly in mind: library co-operation over the last two years has been largely the result of Ministry Funding separate from the normal institutional operations. I believe that there is little genuine hope of continuing to elicit co-operation and co-ordination between a growing number of semi-autonomous member libraries without ministry level - and centralized funding - for Network developmental and implementation costs above normal institutional operating costs.

Without this kind of funding solution - the development of new systems and services within B.C. will certainly not be possible. And it will be nearly impossible to get the member libraries to move in-step to co-ordinate further network development.

### PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

Hand-in-hand with the crucial funding problem goes planning and setting priorities for the Network. It is in this area that BCUC needs to improve its performance. Our progress in formal planning and setting of priorities has been disappointing to me - but perhaps my expectations are unrealistic considering all of the other things we have had to do.

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### PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

Our major targets during the first two years were the immediate tasks of CATSS implementation, RECON, Authorities File Development, and card catalogue closures. These have been relatively easy targets to identify and define thanks to our current funding. Consensus of a few initial member libraries was relatively easy to achieve.

But as I just stated, we now face the possible entrance of non-M.O.E. funded libraries who may not be able to consider RECON, who may not be ready to close their card files, who do not see the need to set and observe the bibliographic standards adopted by the first few academic member libraries. These circumstances in part the result of different funding conditions will make it more difficult to reach unanimity on future network tasks and priorities.

My primary concern would be that BCUC retain a fairly narrow focus which sets forth plans and priorities that are both realistic and attainable.

One of the first priorities should be to establish policies and guidelines for members who will be buying and installing mini-computer systems. It is important that these separate systems with their separate data files which must be created and maintained - be kept in synchronization with the Network data base.

I would very much hope that some library systems development and implementation of other library functions could also be a part of the BCUC Network. There is obviously some advantage to being able to tie together separate library data files for circulation and acquisitions activities. No one has yet come up with a full serials management system within a Network context. I could go on detailing a longer list of needs that could be addressed. Our problem will be to limit what we choose to do - to choose wisely - and then to do those few things well. Easier said than done. Doug McInnes' Joint Committee on Planning and Evaluation has its work cut out for it during this next year.

### THE BCUC NETWORK ORGANIZATION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Assuming that we get a fairly good grasp on Network funding and planning, the next major factor in winning member library commitment will be the effective functioning of the Network organization and its committee structure.

I wish to spend a little time in this report commenting upon the nature of this new organizational environment which faces our member libraries.

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### THE BCUC NETWORK ORGANIZATION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

First of all, participants from member libraries find that they have taken on work in addition to their own previous jobs. There are only so many hours in a day. Hence members are suddenly confronted with a conflicting demand on their time and energies, and with no compensation with respect to their BCUC duties and commitments.

Second, at least for technical processing and systems people they suddenly discover that their own ability to get their own jobs done is hampered by a new dependence on things that are decided and done by the BCUC organization. In fact, joining BCUC and implementing CATSS suddenly presents a number of dependencies over which the member has very little direct control. Such dependency and lack of direct control can lead to frustration and resentment even with the most co-operative groups of people who are all well intentioned. Organizational communication and intelligence functions become more complicated and problematical. And this inevitably lends confusion and further frustration to the member's work life. I think that Basil Stuart-Stubbs once gave a talk on library co-operation showing that it epitomized the seven deadly sins. We should not glibly assume or pretend that the facts of our new network organizational life are only positive and rewarding experiences. The nature of our new beast is bound to increase the level of frustration and job pressure in all of our working lives. It takes time to learn to cope with these added frustrations and pressures. And the organization itself will require continued tinkering to keep it running; even if the basic design is a good one. I'm afraid I can offer you very little more than the usual cliches as to how we go about solving our organizational problems, such as: the key to effectively operating committees lies in the selection of a hard-working, committed chairperson. Or that a lot of talk at meetings like this is necessary to build a common ground of understanding and consensus on what it is we wish to do. Or that communication between libraries is truly possible only after a common level of technological knowledge has been reached through experience in using the computer technology itself.

Organizations like BCUC are proliferating in our society. They do manage to function and to justify their existence. People do learn to cope in new and changed circumstances - and even to thrive. I, for one, am relatively optimistic about our continued ability to operate effectively as a library network.

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