Incorporating catalogue records for machine-readable data files into the University of Alberta library's DOBIS public catalogue

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Background

The Data Library at the University of Alberta belongs, organizationally, under the Department of Computing Services. The Data Library was started in 1977 as a registry of machine-readable data held on the University of Alberta campus. To maintain this registry, an on-line data base was established containing entries describing registered machine-readable data holdings. This on-line catalogue was created using SPIRES - the Stanford Public Information Retrieval System.

In 1981, the Data Library acquired a valuable collection of data files of public opinion survey data, donated by the Department of Political Science.

In 1982, arrangements were made to transfer responsibility for the University's membership in the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) from the Department of Political Science to the Data Library. Through this membership, the Data Library has acquired many research studies relating to a wide range of subjects. In addition, the Data Library's collection has been enriched from local deposits by the Population Research Laboratory (the Edmonton Area Surveys), the Department of Geography (Alberta weather data), and the inclusion of the World Data Bank II geographic coordinate files. Currently the Data Library collection contains close to 1800 machine-readable files from 400 research studies.

[1]Presented at the International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) Conference held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada on May 19-22, 1987

The Proposal and Acceptance Stages of the Project

One of the concerns of the Data Library has been to promote the use of the Data Library's collection of data files and other services such as reference and acquisition, help with the analysis of data files, construction of instructional data sets, as well as archiving and dissemination of data files deposited by researchers. Since 1981, Data Library staff have struggled to provide information about the Data Library, and have been quite sure that there are many users who are not aware of the Data Library's resources and services. One of the reasons for this was that access to information on the Data Library's holdings was available only through an on-line catalogue using the SPIRES system on MTS (Michigan Terminal System) at the University of Alberta Computing Services. Access to this catalogue is only available to those with a Computing Services Signon ID, and for this one must pay monthly charges for usage of computing time, storage, etc.

It was therefore necessary to offer an alternative way of accessing the information on the Data Library's holdings. The best way to achieve this was to make the contents of the data file collection accessible through the University Library's on-line public catalogue, which is available to all library users free of charge. The public catalogue is available on the OAS (Office of Administrative Systems) computer through an IBM-generated library integrated system called DOBIS. The Data Librarian and the Data Library Analyst wrote a proposal to incorporate Data Library catalogue records into the DOBIS public catalogue. This proposal was submitted for approval to the management of Computing Services. With the approval of the proposal at that level, a letter was written to the Chief Librarian outlineing the request for incorporation of Data Library holdings records in the on-line public catalogue and stressing the value of such a service to the university community as follows:

> The Data Library's holdings provide a valuable research resource; and as the demand increases for a general level of computer literacy among the students, the Data Library holdings offer a valuable teaching resource. By providing references for Data Library holdings within the University's central catalogue, there will be an increased likelihood that instructors and students will discover and make use of these materials.[2]

The University Library was also invited to nominate a representative to the Data Library Advisory Committee. Through communications with this representative, Data Library staff learned that the request to merge the cataloguing records into the main catalogue had been referred to the Library Steering Committee on Automation and that a recommendation had to be made on general policy on the inclusion of holdings of collections outside the Library system, as this was the first time that the Library had received such a request.

In the meantime, the Data Librarian had met with the Head of Library Systems and the Head of Cataloguing Division and explained the proposal to them. A few months passed before the Data Library was asked to provide a sample catalogue record for a data set to the Cataloguing Division for examination.

About a month after submitting the sample, the Data Librarian was invited to attend a meeting of the Library's Cataloguing Division to discuss the implications of the proposal and to answer

[2]Jana Lamont and Charles Humphrey, "A Request to Incorporate Catalogue Records of the Computing Services Data Library into DOBIS Public Catalogue," Letter to the Chief Librarian, p. 1.

questions about the Data Library and its operations. These questions concerned the following: the Data Library acquisitions per year, funding, type of data collected, cataloguing standards, authority files, call-numbers used by the Data Library, and staff training in the Cataloguing Division. It was agreed that Data Library staff would undergo a short training course in the Library's cataloguing procedures, and would conform to the Author and Subject authority files of the University of Alberta Library. After this meeting, recommendations were made to the Chief Librarian to accept the proposal for incorporating the Data Library's catalogue records into the Library's public catalogue.

The Training and Production Stages of the Project

A month later, Data Library staff began a brief training course in the Cataloguing Division. This training course consisted of three or four sessions on cataloguing according to the "UTLAS MARC Coding Manual for Monographs"; University of Alberta Library receives the bulk of its cataloguing from University of Toronto Library Automation Systems. The Data Library acquired the above noted UTLAS manual, other required cataloguing tools such as the "University of Alberta Library Cataloguing Procedures Manual", and UTLAS manuals such as "Format for Standardized MARC Bibliographic Records". After four sessions in the Cataloguing Division, the Data Librarian was able to start the preparation of Data Library catalogue records for incorporation into the public on-line catalogue.

Since the Computing Services Data Library follows the rules and standards set forth in Chapter 9 of "The Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition" and "An Interpretative Manual for Cataloguing Machine-Readable Data Files" by Sue Dodd, there were no problems either with main entry or with the physical description of machine-readable data files. The Computing Services Data Library does not use the MARC format in its SPIRES on-line catalogue, but the cataloguing fields in the SPIRES data base correspond to MARC fields and therefore there was no difficulty in creating a MARC format for the Data Library's catalogue records on the Library's cataloguing data entry form. MARC format records are generated by a SPIRES output format which prints on Library forms the information for MARC fields from 100 to 830. The information in fixed fields and a few other fields not used by the Data Library but required by the Main Library, such as fixed fields 1000 to 1058 and variable fields 043 (geographical code), 045 (chronological code), and field 090 (the local call-number), are entered manually on the same computer printed form. A second format, also generated by SPIRES, produces a temporary shelf list card. These two forms are then passed on to the Cataloguing Division. Here, authors' names and the Library of Congress subject headings are checked against the Library's author and subject authority files, following which the cataloguing data are passed to UTLAS via telecommunications. The Data Library receives UTLAS generated products, including spine labels and pockets for the printed documentation, and shelf list cards.

In the six months following staff training, approximately 90% of the Data Library's catalogue records were submitted to the Library for incorporation into the public catalogue. These were subsequently passed to the UTLAS data base and then transferred to the DOBIS system at the University of Alberta.

Currently Data Library staff are adding cataloguing data for new acquisitions only; the retroactive conversion of Data Library records from SPIRES to DOBIS has been completed.

It should be noted that, while the training and production stages of this cooperative project took approximately seven months, the approval stage took close to a year. In any case – the results were well worth the effort: a number of recent enquiries to the Data Library have resulted from searches of the DOBIS public catalogue.¤

Bibliography

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IASSIST 1989 conference in Jerusalem.

A reminder that IASSIST89 will be held in Jerusalem. The information to date with regard to the conference is as follows:

Place : Jerusalem, The Hebrew University Campus, Faculty House
Time : May 15-18, 1989

Program Committee (not final) :
- Yoel Haitovsky, Hebrew University
- Craig McKie, Statistics Canada
- Judith Rowe, Princeton University
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Further details on the conference will be published in the Quarertly when they become available.