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## Online Catalogs: Finding the Weakest Link

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## The Systems Librarian

by Terry Ballard

# Online Catalogs: Finding the Weakest Link

## Maintaining Web links in MARC records requires quality control decisions

There is a quiet revolution starting up in our online catalogs. Back in the prehistoric times of the 1980s when I took cataloging, the MARC record was an elegant way to electronically store the information that had traditionally been kept on catalog cards. In other words, it described the book as thoroughly as possible, placed it in a subject context using language controlled by an agency such as the Library of Congress, and told users where to find it in the library. Later on, a librarian might enhance the record in some way, such as putting in a death date for the author. For the most part, however, once the record was placed into the online catalog, that was all that needed to be done with it.

### New Possibilities

This all lasted until the addition of the 856 field. That is a line in the MARC record that calls for an active link to a World Wide Web site. This is displayed to the user of a Web-based online catalog as an active link. The potential that this creates for smoothly delivering information is staggering.

Online catalogs in the 21st century will do much more than passively deliver bibliographic information about the library's holdings. For instance, you could put an 856 field in your existing record describing the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. It would link to the electronic version of that document. It's pretty easy to imagine why you might want to add a link to Jim Zwick's Mark Twain Web site (<http://marktwin.miningco.com>) to the MARC records pertaining to Twain.

Another possibility is to create electronic maps of specific portions of the library and systematically add links to MARC records. In other words, create a map with the location of education books in the circulating stack area. Then you add

a link to this map to every record for a book in the "L" or "370" range.

No doubt there are still more creative things to do with 856 fields, but I'll leave that thought for others with more imagination. For the time being, 856 fields are mainly being used to link to external sources relating to the holdings in online catalogs.

### The Management Problem

That leads to the downside of going beyond bibliographic description. You can't just put a URL into an 856 field and forget

directly off the Web page, you may assume that there are addresses that will have to be changed every week. For that, you will be looking at some sort of automated solution.

### The Solutions

One of the leaders in this area, Ron Johnson at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, has described his procedures in a Web document at <http://152.20.25.1/Linkbot.html>, which is essential reading for anybody who is planning to set up a link validation program for his or her library. Johnson describes an effective

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it. As we all know, links have a way of changing addresses or disappearing altogether. Somebody needs to keep an eye on these links. Should it be the cataloger, the systems librarian, or somebody else? Furthermore, what is the easiest way to do it? Judging from discussions at conferences and on listservs, this is the blue-chip topic of the Web Age.

The goal here is to avoid setting links to defunct screens, and there are many ways to reach that goal. If you have just a few links, you can merely keep a list of them and check them every so often. For instance, I made a list of the records containing 856 fields in the library where I work—there were only three.

If your library is providing links to 100 or more URLs through MARC records or

method for getting the links organized into a single file for verification. This document also provides a link to the hundreds of sites maintained by that university, including a large number of online journals. Johnson uses Linkbot (<http://www.linkbot.com>), a commercial product that validates large lists of links.

Michael Ireland of the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information maintains links to more than 500 sites—mostly online journals. He reports that he is monitoring these links with Tierra Highlights, available at <http://www.tierra.com>. Like Linkbot, Tierra Highlights has a free trial that can be downloaded.

For those who have more modest numbers and are just starting out, there are a number of such tools on the Web to get you

started, and several of them have free versions. One that I have used successfully is the Web Site Garage, found at <http://www.websitegarage.com>. At that page, you may just type in the address of any of your pages with links that are published on the Web. Within a minute, it will give you a report. In my case (a page of quotes with links to home pages concerning the quoted person), it correctly identified the links that were invalid. The only problem is that the free version of this program only checks the first 25 links in your site.

Equally effective was the Doctor HTML site at <http://www2.imagiware.com/RxHTML>. For a free check, you may click the single-page analysis button. As with the Web Site Garage, this would check a range of problems with my page, but I chose to have it check only the hyperlinks. It, too, found the problem links in less than a minute. Both of these sites will run more comprehensive services if you pay a subscription fee.

### Coming Soon to a Screen Near You

I predict that these linking fields will be an important part of everybody's online catalogs soon. They may already be in your catalog—downloaded automatically from OCLC and RLIN. I spoke with Brenda Block in the quality control section of OCLC, who gave me a number for the records in OCLC that contain 856 fields: 25,491 records accounting for 30,677 856 fields. She told me that they do not retrospectively patrol these fields for inactive links, but they correct them when member libraries let them know that there is a problem.

Aggressive quality control programs at each library will be a necessity rather than a luxury.

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## Electronic Journals from NRC, Springer Verlag on SwetsNet

Swets & Zeitlinger, a Netherlands-based international subscription agent, has announced two agreements with international organizations regarding electronic journal distribution.

### NRC Electronic Journals

Swets & Zeitlinger and the National Research Council (NRC) of Canada have recently agreed to make the electronic journals of the NRC available via SwetsNet, the electronic journals gateway service from Swets. Beginning this year, 14 NRC titles are to be available for SwetsNet subscribers to search and browse the tables of contents and abstracts, using the SwetsNet technology and search engine, and then

view the full-text article on screen in Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format).

NRC Research Press, a directorate of the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, currently publishes 14 journals, monographs, conference proceedings, and other occasional publications. In order to remain at the forefront of Canadian scientific publishing, a significant investment has been made in developing electronic publishing capabilities.

According to Kathryn Mikoski, acting director of NRC Research Press, its participation in SwetsNet is seen as an integral part of the long-term strategy to utilize the enhanced functionality of the electronic environment to provide greater

access to published scientific research. "We anticipate that our agreement with Swets & Zeitlinger will be a mutually beneficial partnership between content creator and access provider in which the sum will be greater than the two parts," Mikoski said.

### Springer's Electronic Information Service LINK

Swets & Zeitlinger and Springer Verlag of Berlin, Germany/Heidelberg, have concluded an agreement for Springer's electronic journal service, LINK, to be accessible by authorized users via SwetsNet.

Under the agreement, authorized users will be able to search and browse tables of contents and abstracts in the SwetsNet database and then connect seamlessly to Springer's LINK to view full-text articles and multimedia material. Users accessing LINK via SwetsNet will be able to use the

full functionality of the electronic journal service as well as its broad range of user services. Initially 225 titles will be available.

LINK is an innovative service combining printed and electronic editions of Springer journals, bringing a wide variety of information directly to the user's desktop. Hans Ulrich Daniel, managing director of Springer Verlag, said, "The demand for access to LINK has been enormous since its very inception. LINK and SwetsNet are an excellent fit and SwetsNet will quickly broaden the LINK user base even further."

SwetsNet was launched in May 1997, following an 18-month development program in response to increasing demands from librarians and researchers for a simplified approach to accessing electronic

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# OCLC Releases Updated Version of Dewey for Windows, Project REUSE Final Report

OCLC Online Computer Library Center has announced the release of two new library products. An updated Dewey for Windows is now available on compact disc from OCLC Forest Press and the final report of the REUSE project, which focused on harmonizing German and AACR2 cataloging rules, is now available on the OCLC Web site.

## Dewey for Windows Version 1.1

The updated Dewey for Windows, which was first released by OCLC Forest Press in 1996, provides an electronic version of the *Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)*, 21st edition, in a convenient Windows-based environment. It retains all of the functionality of the original version and enhances it with a routine to produce cutter numbers, an online guide, the option to purchase a subscription to the Library of Congress (LC) Subject Headings Authority File, and more.

"The improvements in version 1.1 make Dewey for Windows an essential tool for achieving economy and efficiency in the cataloging process," said Peter J. Paulson, executive director of OCLC Forest Press.

The cutting function, which provides a cutter number when a user inputs a main (or other) entry, includes the OCLC Four-Figure Cutter Tables and two options for constructing cutter numbers. This feature can be accessed through Dewey for Windows or used independently.

The online Dewey for Windows Guide, part of the improved help system in version 1.1, helps classifiers use Dewey for Windows effectively. Written by Julianne Beall, assistant editor of the *DDC*, the guide explains the contents, record types, and display options of the Dewey for Windows database. It also uses specific examples and more than 230 screen displays to illustrate searching and number building. The online guide may be previewed on the Dewey Home Page <http://www.oclc.org/fp>.

With version 1.1, users also have the option of purchasing a subscription to the LC

Subject Headings Authority File. The Authority File contains all subject headings and cross-references established by the LC and is included on the Dewey for Windows compact disc. Users who purchase the subscription automatically receive a copy of the OCLC CatCD for Windows software, which is needed to access the Authority File. Subscribers also receive automatic quarterly updates to the Authority File. With the Authority File and Dewey for Windows on the same disc, users can cut and paste search terms between the two databases, using each to supplement and enhance the other.

Other enhancements to Dewey for Windows include the integration of all corrections and changes made to the *DDC* since 1996 and the addition of new index terms representing the 900 most frequently used built numbers. In addition, new statistical mappings in the LC Subject Headings Index from WorldCat (the OCLC Online Union Catalog), plus selected LC Subject Headings/DDC mappings from the Dewey home page, have been added as intellectually mapped subject headings.

"The latest version of Dewey for Windows includes several features to enhance classifier productivity," said Joan Mitchell, editor of the *DDC* at the LC in Washington, DC. "For example, the addition of the most frequently built numbers helps verification of copy cataloging and removes the need for classifiers to build these frequently used numbers."

Dewey for Windows requires a microcomputer with Windows software (version 3.1 or higher), and OCLC recommends the use of a 486 or higher computer for satisfactory performance. A color monitor, CD-ROM drive, and a minimum of 8 MB of memory are also required.

Dewey for Windows can be purchased for use on a single workstation or on a network via a site license. The optional subscription to the LC Subject Headings Authority File may be purchased with either

the single workstation or network configuration.

## Harmonization of German and AACR2 Cataloging Rules

In October 1995, OCLC, the LC, and the State and University Library of Göttingen, seat of the Regional Library Network for Central and Northern Germany, agreed to join in Project REUSE with the goal of enhancing international bibliographic compatibility. The final report of the project is now available on OCLC's Web site ([http://www.oclc.org/oclc/cataloging/reuse\\_project/index.htm](http://www.oclc.org/oclc/cataloging/reuse_project/index.htm)).

"The cooperation of the American and German catalogers in the REUSE project brought two library cultures into closer contact," said Elmar Mittler, director, Niedersächsische Staats und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen. "The insights and proposals generated by this project may be helpful for future library practice in accessing printed and digital material via common metadata."

The REUSE report includes information on how the project was executed. For instance, during the course of the project, participants were able to compare corporate name headings created according to the Regeln für die Alphabetische Katalogisierung (RAK—Rules for Alphabetical Cataloging) and headings for the same records created according to the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd Edition, and found in the LC Name Authority File.

The report also lists the goals and assumptions agreed upon by the participants in September 1995, lists the participants and describes the organizational structure of the project, gives a short account of the methodological approach adopted, reviews the results achieved, briefly discusses possible relations with ongoing activities in the field, and concludes with a series of observations.

"The project was launched in a time when the German library public demanded harmonization with AACR as well as on-

line adoption," said Monika Muennich, head of the cataloging department at the University of Heidelberg Library. "So REUSE and Expert Group RAK cooperated in the analysis and on the conclusions of how to proceed in exchanging data in the future. A considerable number of changes in cataloging rules are being discussed in order to harmonize with AACR. The cooperation of OCLC and LC colleagues with the German experts prepared a platform of ideal international communication."

"OCLC was pleased to provide assistance and facilities to bring together experts from both the Anglo-American and German cataloging traditions to examine the two codes," said Janet Mitchell Lees, managing director of OCLC Europe. "As with many international projects, fully understanding each community's practices is an important first step in being able to make progress toward the shared goal of greater exchange of bibliographic data worldwide."

In addition to the project documentation, the Web site includes related information, such as OCLC Newsletter articles on REUSE and on the similar Russian project, and links to the University of Göttingen, OCLC, and OCLC Europe.

Niedersächsische Staats und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen—the State and University Library of Göttingen—traces its history to 1734, preceding the University of Göttingen by 3 years. The university was founded by King George II, who was also the founder of Columbia University in New York. By 1812, the central library already contained 250,000 volumes and now has more than 4 million, including over 12,000 manuscripts, 3,000 incunabula, and 15,000 periodicals. The university serves some 31,000 students. Despite being heavily damaged during World War II, the University of Göttingen was the first German library to reopen following the war, doing so in September 1945. The Göttingen University Library is reported to have the strongest collection of Anglo-American culture and history in Germany.

Source: OCLC, Dublin, OH, 614/764-6000; Fax: 614/764-6096; <http://www.oclc.org>.

## Electronic Journals

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journals from a range of publishers. Agreements for 20 publishers to participate have already been secured, giving access to more than 850 titles. SwetsNet offers a single, user-friendly interface with the advantages of enhanced search functions and browsing capabilities across all titles in the service. Full-text articles are displayed in PDF (or CatchWord's RealPage format where appropriate).

Full details of the complete SwetsNet service, including functions, access information, participating publishers, and titles offered can be obtained from the SwetsNet Web page. A range of library management and administration functions are also offered.

"Products like Springer's LINK are very important to our range of services

since they underline the key one-stop-shop concept that we offer," said Steven Hartman, business development director at Swets. "Customers can now choose what interface they want to use, LINK or SwetsNet."

Swets & Zeitlinger is a leading international subscription agent and library supplier with offices in 18 countries. It provides information and serials management services to academic, medical, government, and corporate libraries. Associated divisions are involved in scholarly publishing, optical disc and data conversion services, and the supply of journal backsets and reprints.

Source: Swets & Zeitlinger, Lisse, Netherlands, 011-31-252-435-388; Fax: 011-31-252-415-888; <http://www.swetsnet.com>.

## Medical Library Consortium in Italy Launches Ovid Network

Ovid Technologies, Inc. has announced that Italy's Lombardy Biomedical Library System (SBBL), a consortium of biomedical libraries based in that country's Lombardy region, has implemented an Ovid wide area network that is now accessible.

Running the Ovid Web Gateway on a Sun Solaris server, SBBL's user population of 20,000 students, staff, and faculty can access the MEDLINE database via a Web browser or telnet. The consortium purchased a 10-concurrent-user license to the Ovid network and is considering adding other biomedical databases.

SBBL, created in 1994 with the goal of providing fast and complete information

access to local students, researchers, and health workers, consists of 11 elite biomedical libraries with 30 medical schools connected by an Internet-based wide area network. SBBL collaborated with the Lombardy Universities Consortium for Information Technology, or CILEA, to develop a Sun Microsystems' Solaris-based information system. All member libraries now have online public access catalogues (OPACs) and offer document delivery services. More information may be found on the Web at <http://sbbl.cilea.it>.

Source: Ovid Technologies, Inc., New York, 212/563-3006; Fax: 212/563-3784; <http://www.ovid.com>.