

## **Economics and Organization of Bibliographic Data**

### **Background Paper for the Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control**

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The topics of the public meetings of the Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control (“WG”) are intended to inform incrementally an image of the world of bibliographic control from the more fundamental aspects to the complex, each building on what was learned previously. Beginning with a meeting about who uses bibliographic data and how, the WG found that it could group users and uses of bibliographic data into a consumer environment and a management environment (for a brief summary of the first public meeting see [http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/meetings/2007\\_mar08.html](http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/meetings/2007_mar08.html)). While within these groups different data needs and goals were expressed, there was overall consensus that effective retrieval, through whatever means, requires more data, not less, and that the more authoritative the data, the better.

Remarks at the WG’s second public meeting emphasized the value of the standards and structures through which bibliographic data used by the consumer and management environments are created and communicated (for a brief summary of the second public meeting see <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/meetings/meetingsummary-may9.html>). It was often noted that in order to fully realize the value of the library community’s structures and standards, they need to be made more accessible, specifically as Web resources. In addition, speakers recommended thoughtful collaboration or consultation, both within the library community and with related communities, in the continuing creation, revision, and upgrading of the library community’s structures and standards.

The purpose of the third public meeting is to better understand the economic and organizational needs and challenges facing stakeholders currently, in the near future, and in the more distant future in regard to creating, maintaining, sharing, and supporting the metadata, structures, and standards of bibliographic control. In this context, the term “economic” refers to the human, technological, and monetary costs of bibliographic control, from both the narrow micro- and broad macro-economic perspectives. The term “organization” refers to entities that are stakeholders in bibliographic control, in addition to the organizational frameworks, individual and collective, within which these stakeholders work and interact. “Stakeholders” may include libraries (of all kinds), service providers that support bibliographic control (e.g., OCLC, book vendors, et al.), and entities that create and maintain the structures and standards that underlay bibliographic control (e.g., Library of Congress, Program for Cooperative Cataloging, the Joint Steering Committee for the Development of RDA, et al.)

Keeping the terminology above in mind, the WG seeks public comment and testimony from a variety of stakeholder perspectives regarding any or all of the following sets of questions:

- 1) In the second public meeting of the WG, cataloging was characterized as a “public good,” implying that it should be supported as a public service regardless of cost. However, libraries and other stakeholders do operate within budgets which constrain the services that they can offer and maintain. Considering this reality, just what are the economic challenges facing different stakeholders in regard to the creation, maintenance, and/or sharing of bibliographic data and related

structures and standards? What trade-offs are being made between quality and economic constraints? How can the allocation of human, technological, and monetary resources, at both the collective and individual levels, be optimized to meet consumer and management needs, as described in the WG's first public meeting?

2) The WG would like to clarify the commonalities, as well as differences, in cataloging practices among the various types of stakeholders involved in bibliographic control. How do different stakeholders function within the larger cataloging community? What challenges face the varied stakeholders in terms of cataloging practice? What relationships and/or collaborations currently exist or need to exist to help meet those challenges? What additional challenges do stakeholders foresee in the coming years?

3) Various national and international organizations are responsible for developing, maintaining, and supporting structures and standards for bibliographic control. Do these organizational arrangements support current needs? How could they be improved?

4) A recurrent theme of the previous meetings was more fully integrating bibliographic data (such as MARC records, terminologies, authority files, et al.), which currently exist as "data silos," into the fabric of the World Wide Web. In particular, terminologies and authorities were seen as important resources that could be used in a variety of ways. From a design perspective, how do we move from "data silos" to "data services," that increase the potential value of bibliographic data by treating them as interconnected resource collections, addressable via URIs and accessible over Web protocols? Organizationally, how might this goal be accomplished, supported, and maintained? Economically, what factors need to be considered?

5) Library of Congress cataloging and its support for terminologies and authorities are central to the apparatus of bibliographic control in the U.S. and beyond. What should the role of the Library of Congress be in this developing environment?