Society of Archivists Data Standards Group

A Guide to Archival and Related Standards
Standards applicable to archives; for the digital delivery of repository guides, finding-aids, and images of material from collections.

Title: MARC 21 Format for Bibliographical Data

Name of Standards Developing Organisation
Maintained by The Network Development and MARC Standards Office at the Library of Congress and the Standards and the Support Office at the Library and Archives Canada.

Current versions
MARC 21, 1999 edition (with 12 updates from October 2001-October 2010)

Replaces
UKMARC, USMARC and CAN/MARC (Canadian MARC)

Abstract
MARC is an acronym that stands for MAchine Readable Cataloguing. MARC 21 provides a structure for bibliographic catalogue records and a protocol by which computers exchange, use and interpret bibliographical information.

Description
The MARC standard was developed in the 1960s by the Library of Congress to automate library systems and to share its catalogue records with other institutions. It has enabled the standardisation of catalogues of library materials and is used worldwide.

MARC records are composed of three elements:
- The record structure, which implements the US national standard for information exchange Z39.2, and its international counterpart, ISO 2709;
- The content designation, which identifies and characterises the data elements within the record to support data manipulation;
- The data content of the record, which is defined by external content standards such as Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Library of Congress Authorities etc.

Consistent with the time of its creation MARC 21 fields are not represented by field names, but by 3-digit tags. Other indicators and tags which further define the fields are also represented by digits or symbols. A complete list of fields can be found at <http://www.loc.gov/marc/>.

MARC21 comprises five formats or types of data: bibliographic, holdings, authority, classification, and community information.
1. **Format for Bibliographic Data** deals with data elements needed to describe, retrieve, and control various forms of bibliographic material.
2. **Format for Holdings Data** deals with data elements relating to holdings and location data for all forms of material.
3. **Format for Authority Data** deals with data elements that identify or control the content and content designation of those portions of a bibliographic record that may be subject to authority control.
4. **Format for Classification Data** deals with data elements related to classification numbers and the captions associated with them.
5. **Format for Community Information** provides format specifications for records containing information about events, programs, services, etc. so that this information can be integrated into the same public access catalogues as data in other record types.

Each of these formats has associated fields represented by tags. The tags are divided by hundreds or field types. Here is the block of tags for the bibliographic data format:

- **0XX** Control information, numbers, codes
- **1XX** Main entry **
- **2XX** Titles, edition, imprint (usually the title, statement of responsibility, edition, and publication information)
- **3XX** Physical description, etc.
- **4XX** Series statements (as shown in the book) **
- **5XX** Notes
- **6XX** Subject added entries **
- **7XX** Added entries other than subject or series **
- **8XX** Series added entries (other authoritative forms) **
- **9XX** Locally-defined uses, such as local barcode numbers

The field types marked ** are those which are authority controlled and use “parallel tag construction”.

- **X00** Personal names
- **X10** Corporate names
- **X11** Meeting names
- **X30** Uniform titles
- **X40** Bibliographic titles
- **X50** Topical terms
- **X51** Geographic names

These two lists are used together so that when the catalogue record is being created the correct tag is used. For example, when adding subject information (6XX) if the subject of a book is a person the tag will be 600; if the subject of the book is a corporation the tag will be 610; if the subject of the book is a topic (e.g. Railroads) the tag will be 650, etc.

There are blocks of tags for each of the five formats.

The most frequently used tags are:
010  The Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN)  
    (this is not used much in the UK)
020  The International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
100  A personal name main entry (author)
245  The title information (which includes the title, other title information, and the  
    statement of responsibility)
250  The edition
260  The publication information
300  The physical description (often referred to as the "collation") when describing  
    early printed books)
490  The series statement
520  The annotation or summary note
650  A topical subject heading
700  A personal name added entry (joint author, editor, or illustrator)

The MARC 21 XML Schema has been developed by the Library of Congress to  
enable MARC records to be used flexibly and extensibly within an XML  
environment.

Further reading

Library of Congress MARC homepage <http://www.loc.gov/marc/> which includes  
tutorials.

Next month

Next month we will look at Text Encoding Initiative, a standard used for representing  
texts in digital form.

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