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Bit By Bit

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BIT BY BIT

by *Roy Heinz* (Washington Research Library Network)
and *Joyce Ogburn* (Penn State University, then Yale University)

Communicating voucher information to the accounting department from automated library systems.

This is the first of a two-part article. Part I presents general considerations involved in the automation process while Part II will discuss technical issues with examples from the NOTIS and INNOVACQ systems.

A topic of interest to many acquisitions librarians and business managers is the transfer of financial information about book orders to the accounts payable office. Many libraries that are "fully automated" must still type book order information into their local system, then retype this information onto their institution's voucher form. After approval by a library business administrator these vouchers are typically sent to accounts payable where they are again coded into the system which will ultimately produce checks for book vendors. Everyone agrees that this process is cumbersome and should be streamlined, but for a number of reasons these duplicated tasks continue to be performed in the library and the bursar's office.

The best way to convince administrators in the library and comptroller's office that automated transfer of financial data is important is to demonstrate the savings in time and money that such a system provides. It is relatively easy to quantify the amount of staff time spent typing and retyping forms in the library and at accounts payable.

As an example, if a staff member in the library creates a voucher in five minutes, and creates fifty vouchers in a day the time saved would be more than twenty hours per week. If this work is then duplicated by accounts payable staff, the savings would be more than forty hours per week. These estimates do not take into consideration the time necessary to

move invoices and/or vouchers from desk to desk within the library as documents travel from receivers to approvers in the acquisitions department then on to business office data entry and to business administrators for signature.

Ideally, the new system would only require that library staff match a machine produced voucher with a copy of the appropriate invoice. These documents would then be forwarded to the comptroller for verification of the check and be filed there for future audits.

Other advantages to automated transfer are the elimination of errors due to re-keying information and speedier production of checks. In short, the automated procedure is faster, cheaper and more accurate. The following are some issues which need to be addressed when the library decides to automate its voucher production process:

Is the comptroller's office amenable to change? Aside from a sort of "institutional inertia" that often makes changes to long-used and proven procedures hard to revise, the office may have some very reasonable reservations about modifications to the way they collect and input financial data. They will insist on preserving the integrity of the data processed. They may still want to keep invoices and vouchers as a paper trail for reference by auditors. They may wish to continue for a period to perform the transfer manually as well during a test of the new process. The librarians will need to convince them that its system software and staff are reliable.

The accounts payable office may be more willing to discuss automated datafile transfer if other campus entities (eg. bookstore, food service) are already loading financial tapes. If such transfers are already in process, the library may need to conform to specifications and schedules but find negotiations much easier to initiate.

Can the library staff and software provide the necessary information?

The library administration must be committed to the changes necessary and provide its staff with the support necessary to bring about automated transfer. Current ordering, receiving and accounting procedures within the library should be analyzed to see how the new system will affect workflow and staff duties. Where are the bottlenecks and duplicated efforts? How much verification needs to be done before data is sent to Accounts Payable. How will errors be caught and corrected? Is there less accounting security with the new system?

The library's software must be able to provide the information necessary for the transfer. The module which does the fund accounting and voucher production must be accurate and dependable. Systems staff need to be knowledgeable about the strengths and limitations of the software and dedicated to the successful implementation of new procedures.

Who should be at the planning meetings? When members of the library and comptroller's office staff meet to discuss automation it is important that several departments be present. Staff from the library should include representatives from acquisitions/collection management, the business office and the systems department. The comptroller's office should have representatives from accounts payable, data entry, and data processing.

Is a partial solution better than nothing? It is not necessary for the library to move to the fully automated transfer of data in one giant leap. There are a number of smaller steps that can ease us into a more efficient method of communicating with the comptroller's office. One starting point would be for the library to negotiate with accounts payable for the acceptance of the library's machine produced voucher in lieu of the institution's "official" form. As long as the new voucher

The Meyers Connection

Lightning Rod or Peacemaker?

by **Barbara Meyers**, President, Meyers Consulting Services

The Library of Congress has initiated a major study of the Cataloging in Publication (CIP) program for the second time since its inception 20 years ago. John Celli, acting chief of the Cataloging in Publication Division, acknowledged that "faced with reductions in federal support, coupled with a growing number of publishers and publications seeking CIP data, we are investigating ways to improve the program and establish our future direction."

Funded by the Council on Library Resources, the project is being carried out by Sandra K. Paul (SKP Associates) and Barbara Meyers (Meyers Consulting Services). Sandy Paul was personally involved with CIP since its implementation at Random House in 1972. Together, Sandy and Barbara Meyers total over 40 years experience with the publishing and library communities, and Barbara brings market research talents honed by over 120 surveys to this new performance examination of the Cataloging in Publication (CIP) program.

The first study (conducted by Kathryn Mendenhall of Battelle and released in 1982) concentrated solely on the perspectives of the library community. The current study's design includes three surveys. Input

will be sought from all recipients of the Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) tapes which contain CIP data, all current CIP publishing participants, and a representative sample of the 112,000 U.S. libraries.

The library population will be segmented and representatively weighted into four groups: college/university, public, school, and special libraries.

The Council on Library Resources also assisted the Library in funding the previous survey of 2,366 libraries. The 1,657 libraries responding to the 1980 poll indicated widespread use of, and satisfaction with, the CIP program. The study currently underway will attempt to verify those earlier findings as well as reexamine the major assumptions upon which the CIP program is based.

Extensive and detailed information concerning the cost benefit implications of the CIP program will be solicited from all three survey populations—MARC tape subscribers, publishers, and librarians. In addition, the current survey will address such concerns as:

Is rapid production of data essential to meet publisher needs?

Are both CIP formats still required (i.e., CIP in the book and CIP on MARC tapes)?

Is the scope of the program adequate to meet the needs of the library community?

Should postpublication CIP verification be continued as a top priority?

At the present time, the questionnaires for the three survey populations are under development with the pre-test mailings to select MARC tape recipients and publishers scheduled for January and February 1991, respectively. Librarians who are part of the pretest can expect to receive a questionnaire in May.

The timeline developed for the three major surveys schedules the mailing to all MARC tape subscribers for late March and the mailing to all CIP publishers in late April. The samples of university, special, and public librarians will be canvassed in late July. Select school librarians should have their questionnaires waiting for them as they return for the 1991-92 academic year.

It is anticipated that a presentation of the findings resulting from all three surveys will be made at ALA Midwinter 1992 and that a final report will be ready for distribution in late February 1992. ☛

Bit by Bit *continued*

contains all the information present on the old form, a good case could be made for eliminating duplication of effort in the library.

It may not be efficient to transfer all data through magnetic tapes or electronic means. It may make sense to use one method to create checks for major book vendors who receive payments on a weekly or monthly basis and another method for one-time payments to vendors from whom the library orders items only irregularly.

In the next issue of *ATG*, Part II will investigate some of the technical details involved in linking the library and accounts payable systems. The editors invite readers interested in the topic to send in their questions, comments, and experiences. ☛

Rumors *continued from page 3*

has chosen to link 13 libraries and 11 campuses across Maryland using the CARL System. The Gelman Library at George Washington University is also the newest CARL Systems UnCover gateway user.

Applications are being accepted through April 15, 1991 for the 1991-92 Library/Book Fellows Program. For further information, contact the American Library Association, Public Information Office in Chicago at (312)280-5044.

And according to a news report as we go to press, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich has been sold

Late Breaking Rumors

We have just learned that Mike Markwith is back at Faxon!! More details later.

And Otto Rapp is ill in the hospital. Send him something to perk him up: Winthrop University Hospital, 259 Fir St., Minneola, NY 11501, Room WP-282. We love you, Otto! Get well NOW! ☛