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Chaos

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BACK TO THE FUTURE — AND BACK TO BASICS

By *Sandra K. Paul*, President, SKP Associates

In the September, 1990 issue of *Against the Grain*, Glenda Thornton of the University of North Texas library asked, "Shouldn't we [acquisitions librarians] find ways to incorporate this efficient technology [electronic order transmission] into our acquisitions processes as well as educate our integrated system vendors to our needs?" During and after the 1990 Charleston Conference I was asked "where can I buy the X12 standards for electronic data interchange?" Since both questions are part of a larger picture, I thought I'd use this issue's column as an update on some of the basics of computer-to-computer interchange of business information and the movement from MARC-like to the new X12 formats for this purpose.

Back To The Beginning

In 1975 the first electronic order for books was prepared. It was sent, on computer tape, via Parcel Post, from the buyer (B. Dalton in Minneapolis, MN) to the vendor (Random House in Westminster, MD). The only part of this scenario which will remain the same in the industry's use of electronic ordering in the future is Random House's computer location in Westminster, MD — even B. Dalton has moved its computer to Long Island, NY! In the future orders will not be sent from buyer to seller in the vendor-specific formats Glenda Thornton described in her article, nor in the

industry-specific formats used from 1975 through 1990. Instead, we will all be sending electronic transmissions in formats based on the standards developed by ANSI-Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) X12.

Those standards are very generic. There are almost 30 standards, one for each of a growing list of transactions — from obtaining a quotation through paying a bill. They include over 300 "segments" which identify and provide for the transmission of over 1,000 data elements. No one in his or her right mind wants to "buy" these standards. What we, as library, retailing, publishing, book wholesaling, and serial subscription professionals do want to do, is agree upon the transaction sets, segments and data elements which should be required — and those which should be allowed as an option — in the purchasing, acknowledging, claiming, delivery, cancelling, invoicing, and payment for our book and serial purchases.

Current Status

Where do we stand in that effort today? At its January 18, 1991 meeting, the Book Industry Systems Advisory Committee (BISAC) hopes to approve the ASC X12 formats for book orders, order acknowledgements, invoices and payments. The NISO office has been made aware that these formats are in draft form:

no input has yet been received from NISO members. Readers of this column were warned that these formats were being developed by BISAC, which welcomes more library input than is currently represented on its list of active participants. Late in 1991 BISAC should approve the X12 formats for sending information about new titles and changes in existing ones — such as new prices and books declared out of print — and the format for advising an organization of an upcoming shipment, including relating the contents of each carton to a bar coded identifier on the outside of the carton.

Once these formats are approved, they will be published by BISAC's parent company, the Book Industry Study Group — and implemented quickly as part of the Association of American Publishers' electronic ordering service, PUBNET, which will be converted to "PUBNET II." Ongoing experiments between Walden and Dalton and their customers will become realities and they will start asking more publishers to send them ASC X12 instead of BISAC formats. That B. Dalton to Random House order I described earlier will travel via the General Electric or IBM network, rather than on a reel of computer tape. I hope that *Against the Grain* readers will tell me where the library book and system vendors, and their library customers, will fit into this scenario.

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Connections

An informal listing of jobs out there. For free inclusion in Against the Grain, please send information to Katina Strauch at the College of Charleston Library, Charleston, SC 29424. Remember vendors and publishers can use this space too!

Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas is looking for an acquisitions librarian. It is a nine-month, tenure-track position with full faculty status and rank. Salary is a minimum of \$21,000 for nine months. The job will be open until a suitable candidate is found. For further information, contact Janice Lange, Head of Technical Services, Gresham Library, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX 77341.

And The Pennsylvania State University is advertising for Head, Acquisitions Ordering Section, with a minimum salary of \$30,000. For further information, contact Nancy Slaybaugh, Manager, Libraries Human Resources, Box HAO-AL, Penn State University, E1 Pattee Library, University Park, PA 16802.

Serials Pricing Update

And the story on Serials Pricing is that the current peg is 16.2%.

F41

Zelma Palestrant (The Citadel) is conducting research to identify sources of core collection lists applicable for liberal arts colleges on undergraduate and graduate levels. She is compiling data to facilitate collection development and analysis and seeks information on all formats, especially monographic publications. Please submit sources of data to Zelma at the

**Daniel Library,
The Citadel,
Charleston, SC
29407 (803)792-
7691, FAX
(803)792-5190.**

THANKS!

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AND the same type of format development, review, approval and publication will take place approximately one year later, for serial orders, order acknowledgements, claims, cancellations and invoices. In the Serials Industry Systems Advisory Committee (SISAC) we have more library participation (and hope for a more rigorous review by NISO members), but the basics and the end result should be the same — a series of ASC X12 subsets to be used for serial business transactions, published by the Book Industry Study Group, and used by many organizations in the serials community.

Getting Involved

You can participate in the development or review of these standards by joining BISAC and/or SISAC. If you're not ready for that level of involvement, you might just want to learn more about this area. In my last column I noted that a SISAC overhead projector "slide show" is available from the Book Industry Study Group (212/929-1393) on request. BISAC is now creating a library of videos showing systems and services relating to book industry business functions. A listing of the videos should be available in January, 1991 from the same organization. That telephone rings in my office — call me and let me know how we can get YOU more involved in this evolution. ☛