Adventures in Librarianship -- Recent Developments

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the match there could be issues depending on how the matching is done. Input and edit as well as searching of ISBNs in this module should be checked.

Public Catalog. The ability to search by either form of ISBN must be retained. Many older bibliographies will use the ISBN-10 in the citation. A user should be able to input the search in any form and let the system normalize it as needed for the best results. Display of the ISBN should also be checked. If the system was automatically supplying hyphens, this feature could require changes.

InterLibrary Loan. A number of ILL systems allow search of a union catalog and then behind the scenes the system may automatically check your catalog to verify you don’t already own the title, or it may automatically go around to a list of library catalogs to find a copy for the user. If the ISBN is being used for this search it will need to be tested to see that the multiple ISBNs currently in records and the ISBN-13 post-2006 do not prevent the system from working as efficiently as possible.

External Linking. A new feature of many catalogs is the ability to do an Open URL or other link to external sources to display book jackets and reviews or to use an institutional link resolver. Often for monographic titles the ISBN has been the best identifier to use for this type of search. Now, however, the MARC records used to provide the ISBN may contain multiple fields and in the future an older record may contain the 10-digit ISBN while the file of reviews may have the newer number. Keeping these links working will be another challenge.

Actions

Since we are already receiving and loading records with ISBN-10 and -13 into our systems now, it is time for us to draw up a list of library processes that use the ISBN and a set of test cases of typical examples from our collections and then to identify where there are going to be problems. We need to start asking the system vendors for their plans and implementation schedules. There are two avenues to do this if the current system cannot accommodate the changes. One is posing the question at the level of the system’s user group, or to your vendor representative. The second is a specific problem report for an example that does not work. When the system vendor presents their proposed change, it is the responsibility of the customer to verify that the approach will work with real examples.

Adventures in Librarianship — Recent Developments

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In a recent issue of Science, Jeb Cartledge and Surri Ray finally confirm through carbon dating and other techniques what many of us have long suspected: that the Nippur Codex is the oldest library catalog known to man. Discovered in 1998 by German tourists looking for a shortcut to the Simumuh Valley, the Codex has been under scientific, linguistic, and bibliographic scrutiny ever since. The Science article, "Nippur: Yes or No, Library or Laundry List?" (v.68, #4, pp 97-115) puts all doubts to rest.

Now called the "Nippur Catalog," the document lists 64 manuscripts. If there is an order to the list, it has yet to be deciphered. Manny Several, who consulted with Cartledge and Ray on semantic issues, suggested in a recent interview that the catalog may be in "spontographical" order. But when asked to explain, Several began coughing and would not respond to the question.

The style of script and the quality of the papyrus lead earlier scholars to believe that the Nippur Catalog is actually the result of a well-known rivalry between the Mo family on one side of the Nippur River and the Ma family on the other. Ray and Cartledge don't dispute that possibility. In fact, their article states that "Cosimo Ma and Maximus Mo were known to publicly draw daggers over the issue of the size of their respective libraries..." And the document's introductory matter contains the phrase "contus quentes in pardo Mo," which translates roughly as 'in your face, Mo.'

Ray and Cartledge will present their paper and entertain questions at the British Library's Heretofore Auditorium, part of the Bombasticum Lecture Series, on August 2nd. Although Ms. Ray, who will lead the discussion, expects to be "heralded by enthusiastic bibliophiles and a few hangers on," Mr. Cartledge is not as optimistic. "They don't allow spoiled fruit in the Heretofore, do they? I'll be all dressed up, you see. And with my fellowship running low, the last thing I need is a pelting."