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Introduction to the *UNIMARC Manual - Authorities Format, 2nd Edition*

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Abstract:

In March 2001, the UNIMARC Manual - Authorities Format, 2nd Edition was published by K.G. Saur on behalf of the IFLA UBCIM Programme. This edition replaced UNIMARC/Authorities: Universal Format for Authorities, published in 1991. The Permanent UNIMARC Committee initiated the production of a new edition to align UNIMARC with the recommendations of the IFLA Report, Mandatory Data Elements of Internationally Shared Resource Authority Records; in addition, it was recognised that after 10 years of practical use there were many other useful enhancements. This paper will describe these changes.

Introduction

In 1991 the *UNIMARC/Authorities: Universal Format for Authorities* was issued by IFLA UBCIM (a fact of which I was blissfully ignorant). Such was the demand for the title, that six years later stocks were starting to run low and the Permanent UNIMARC Committee decided it would be prudent to start work on a new edition. This was finally published earlier this year and the purpose of this presentation is to try and convey a flavour of the changes from the first edition and the reasoning behind them.

Why revise?

It is now ten years since UNIMARC Authorities was first published and it is perhaps not surprising that there should be a backlog of corrections, clarifications and desiderata. However, the second edition is much more than a mere updating. It has been expanded to accommodate two areas of environmental

change. Firstly, the Internet, which was virtually unknown in 1991, has become central to many library operations; secondly exchange of authority data requires closer alignment between formats and more standardisation of data content. In this context the recommendations made by the IFLA Working Group on Minimal Level Authority Records and International MARCⁱ were central. A third area in which the format has changed is in presentation; regrettably UNIMARC /A cannot be published as an "integrating resource", but the appearance of the manual has been brought into line with the bibliographic format. Whereas the first edition was a specification rather than a user's manual; the new edition is more cataloguer-friendly; e.g., each field is described on a separate page and more detailed usage notes are provided; definitions have been provided for all subfields and valid subfields are listed under each field, replacing the cross references in the previous edition. Unfortunately for reasons of economy, the full range of appendices containing code tables etc. could not be replicated in the authorities format, but Appendix L (Examples of complete records) has been expanded and Appendix O has been added, listing all the changes from the first edition.

Changes

I want to focus first of all on an area of profound change: the explicit identification of script and language at heading level. Authority records traditionally contain data elements that identify the language and script of cataloguing and these are coded, at the record level, in the 100 field. However, MLAR, drawing on experience from Project AUTHORⁱⁱ, identified the absence of any equivalent metadata for the heading as a barrier to exchange of authority data. MLAR recommended that it should be mandatory to identify language and script at this level. PUC has redefined the scope of control subfields \$7 and \$8, to facilitate this. This was achieved by increasing the number of character positions allotted to each subfield. The definitions of pre-existing character positions have not been changed. The new character positions define the script, character set and language of the heading and are valid in the 2--, 4--, 5-- and 7-- blocks. Under certain cataloguing rules ambiguity may remain, because elements of the heading are permitted to use the language of cataloguing not the language of the entity. In these cases "mul" is the appropriate value.

Other MLAR inspired changes are a range of new data elements and coded positions in the record leader and in the 1—to aid identification of the kind of record. It is possible to code the nationality and language of the entity described by the 2—heading. As I said earlier, another major influence has been the Internet; to enable remote resources to be accessed directly from the record, the 856 field has been adopted from MARC 21. This will enable cataloguers to point directly to reference material or other supporting documentation. In addition a new X16 field has been added to accommodate trademarks. New coding has been implemented to facilitate the distinction of form, genre and physical characteristics from topical subject terms. Although the format has changed significantly, the changes are additions or extensions, rather than amendments.

Conclusion

Whether this edition will have such a long shelf life as its predecessor is open to question. The pace of change is increasing and new challenges are constantly emerging. UNIMARC will continue to adapt to meet these challenges.

ⁱ *Mandatory data elements for internationally shared resource authority records: report of the IFLA UBCIM Working Group on Minimal Level Authority Records and ISADN. IFLA UBCIM, 1998.*

<http://www.ifla.org/VI/3/p1996-2/mlar.htm>

ⁱⁱ *AUTHOR: transnational application of national name authority files: final report, June 1998.*

<http://www.bl.uk/information/author.pdf>