

In this newsletter we would like to discuss about MARC21. This is a very important standard in the field of library science. MARC means Machine Readable Catalog. Before we go further we will see why MARC has taken birth.

Genesis of MARC

To understand how MARC has taken birth, we need to shift our storyline to USA. I usually take this example.

If a cataloger is paid 60,000 USD per year (of course it is much more than that), this means that the cataloger is paid 5,000 USD per month. Taking 22 working days on an average, cataloger is paid 227 USD per day. **Means 28 USD an hour.** Average time taken to do a descriptive cataloging of a book is approximately 1 hour. This means that the **cost of cataloging a book is 28 USD.**

Hence the only way to bring down the cost of cataloging a book was to share the catalog records. If one librarian has cataloged a book in a library, then other libraries must simply re-use the catalog record. This raised a requirement for a standard so that all libraries in the USA can take the best advantage of it. This gave birth to USMARC. USMARC later became MARC21 accepted globally by all countries.

How is MARC21 important for developing countries

The scenario holds good for both government and private bodies in developing countries like India. In government bodies like Universities where there are dedicated catalogers, the above example can be applied. However in privately owned colleges the librarian wears many hats. He/She has so many tasks to perform and hence finds it difficult to spend time on descriptive cataloging. Doing a descriptive cataloging is a luxury and many a times is avoided. Hence the quality of the catalog severely suffers. Hence for librarians in developing world MARC21 is very relevant.

MARC21 saves your time and money.

Is descriptive cataloging important?

Obviously yes. Why do we catalog? It for the users to easily search for information and get the maximum understanding about the book even before reading it. Hence descriptive cataloging is

a must.

Where to get MARC records?

There are many sources for MARC records. For example Library of Congress. For many foreign publications (Indian reprints included) the chances of finding your record are high. For Indian publication you can visit the OPAC of Osmania University, Bangalore University, English and Foreign Languages University and so on. Till now only libraries that are using NewGenLib are able to share their catalog records using MARC21.

We have put videos on our site which will guide you to import catalog records. Visit NewGenLib videos link in www.newgenlib.com

Is this all I need to know about MARC?

The answer is Yes and No. This issue is intended to bring awareness about MARC21. In the next issue we will get into details. For now if you are able to download MARC records and save them into your catalog database, the purpose is served. Before you get the next newsletter I suggest that you take a small tutorial available on-line at http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/techserv/marc21_tutorial_ie/

The online documentation of MARC21 is available at

<http://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/ecbdhome.html>

If you are unable to understand the tutorial do not give up, we will continue in our next newsletter.

Our contact details

Just in case you forgot our details

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