

Library of Congress Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control

November 30, 2007

Colleagues:

The Library of Congress Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control is pleased to share with you for comment a draft of the Working Group's report with its findings and recommendations. The timeframe for comment is November 30 through December 15, 2007.

The Working Group considers the public commentary we hope and expect to receive as pivotal in finalizing our *Report on the Future of Bibliographic Control*, which we intend to submit to The Library of Congress (LC) on January 9, 2008.

Background

The Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control was appointed by Dr. Deanna Marcum, LC's Associate Librarian for Library Services, to address changes in how libraries must do their work in the digital information era.

The Working Group is co-chaired by Dr. José-Marie Griffiths, Dean of the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Olivia M. A. Madison, Dean of the Library, Iowa State University. Members of the Working Group are information professionals representing key professional organizations and information technology companies.

Dr. Marcum's charge to the Working Group directed us to:

- Present findings on how bibliographic control and other descriptive practices can effectively support management of and access to library materials in the evolving information and technology environment;
- Recommend ways in which the library community can collectively move toward achieving this vision;
- Advise the Library of Congress on its role and priorities.

Report on the Future of Bibliographic Control

The Working Group envisions the future of bibliographic control as collaborative, decentralized, international in scope, and Web-based. The realization of this future will occur in cooperation with the private sector, and with the active collaboration of library users. Data will be gathered from multiple sources; change will happen quickly; and bibliographic control will be dynamic, not static. The underlying technology that makes this future possible and necessary – the World Wide Web – is now almost two decades old. Libraries must continue the transition to this future without delay in order to retain their relevance as information providers.

Furthermore, the Working Group believes that significant changes in bibliographic control will require leadership that is neither unitary nor centralized. While we recognize that LC plays a unique role in the library community of the United States, and that the direction that LC takes has a great effect on all libraries in our community, we also recognize that there are many other institutions and organizations that have the expertise and the capacity to play significant roles in the bibliographic future. Wherever possible, those institutions must step forward and take responsibility for assisting with navigating the transition and for playing appropriate ongoing roles after that transition is complete.

In reading the report, you will note that its findings and recommendations are structured around five central themes:

1. Increase the efficiency of bibliographic production for all libraries through increased cooperation and increased sharing of bibliographic records, and by maximizing the use of data produced throughout the entire “supply chain” for information resources.
2. Transfer effort into higher-value activity. In particular, expand the possibilities for knowledge creation by “exposing” rare and unique materials held by libraries that are currently hidden from view and, thus, underused.
3. Position our technology for the future by recognizing that the World Wide Web is both our technology platform and the appropriate platform for the delivery of our standards. Recognize that people are not the only users of the data we produce in the name of bibliographic control, but so too are machine applications that interact with those data over the network in a variety of ways.
4. Position our community for the future by facilitating the incorporation of evaluative and other user-supplied information into our resource descriptions. Work to realize the potential of the FRBR framework for revealing and capitalizing on the various relationships that exist among information resources.
5. Strengthen the library profession through education and the development of metrics that will inform decision-making now and in the future.

To achieve the goals set out in this report, the Working Group believes that we must look beyond individual libraries to a systemwide deployment of resources. We must realize efficiencies in order to be able to reallocate resources from certain lower-value components of the bibliographic control ecosystem into other higher-value components of that same ecosystem. As a result, you will find that the many recommendations are directed at a number of parties, including the Library of Congress, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, OCLC, publishers, national libraries, and the broad library and information science communities.

Process

Instrumental to our deliberations, the Working Group provided the library and information science communities with several opportunities to offer input to our deliberative process, including three public meetings that featured presentations by invited speakers and testimony from members of the community. Two of these three meetings were available as Webcasts both during and after the meetings. In addition, the community was invited to submit written testimony. The Working Group received seventy-four written submissions, of which more than fifteen were submitted on behalf of organizations or institutions. The public meetings were structured around three specific areas:

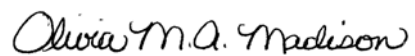
1. Users and uses of bibliographic data;
2. Structures and standards for bibliographic data; and
3. Economics and organization of bibliographic data.

To ensure broad awareness of the Working Group’s work, LC mounted a public Web site for the Working Group, where it posted the Group’s membership, charge, and schedule; links to background documents; summaries of the public meetings; and other information.

On November 13, 2007, the Working Group presented the LC staff with a preliminary overview of the reports’ key recommendations, which was also available as a live Webcast. In fact, this last Webcast drew a record attendance for any LC Webcast – an attendance so large that, unfortunately, many were unable to view it live. However, all three Webcasts remain available through the LC Web site.

In conclusion, we strongly encourage you to take the opportunity to thoughtfully review this report and to share with us your reactions to its many and varied recommendations.

Sincerely,



Olivia Marie A. Madison
Co-Chair, Working Group



José-Marie Griffiths
Co-Chair, Working Group