

every book,
its reader

CONNECTING COLLECTIONS
WITH READERS

Electronic Content

Benefits and Challenges

By **Marcia** Salmon

Recently, libraries have been increasing their acquisition of electronic resources, such as electronic books, electronic audio collections, and electronic videos. Consortia have provided libraries the opportunity to create agreements with vendors for the purchase of large collections of electronic resources. The volume and diversity of electronic content create both challenges and benefits for the technical services departments in libraries in providing access through the catalogue.

VENDOR-SUPPLIED CATALOGUE RECORDS

One of the methods libraries have employed to deal with providing access to electronic resources is by purchasing catalogue records in MARC format for the electronic collections from the vendor. These catalogue records can be loaded into the library's individual catalogues. Some vendors offer their catalogue records for free. It allows shrinking technical services departments in libraries to deal with the volume and diversity of resources being acquired by releasing cataloguing staff time, and allowing staff to participate in providing access to specialized collections.

CHALLENGES

Vendor-created catalogue records are created for a general audience, and so libraries need to customize them for their local systems, policies, and procedures. Some of the factors that library technical services departments need to take into consideration before loading the vendor-supplied catalogue records are: single- or

multiple-record approach, quality of record, and subject headings.

The single-record approach means that information about the electronic version is added to the catalogue record of the print, or in the case of audio recordings and videos the information about the electronic version is added to the record for the CD and DVD respectively. In the multiple-record approach, separate records are created for the electronic content and for the physical manifestation of the item.

The quality of the catalogue record is another matter that needs to be considered when dealing with vendor-supplied records, relating to such matters as the MARC coding of the catalogue record, using internationally recognized cataloguing standards, the encoding level of the record, and library integrated system requirements. Vendor-supplied catalogue records need to have structurally correct MARC coding or they cannot be read by the system. The international cataloguing community has created a set of standards for describing resources. Records that do not adhere to these standards may be challenging because they cannot be shared with other libraries and they may present information in a format that is different from what library users are accustomed to seeing in the catalogue.

The catalogue record can have various encoding levels or levels of completeness. Full records are complete and have both required and enhanced information. Brief records are minimal in content and completeness, and usually just contain the basic required information.

MODIFYING VENDOR-SUPPLIED MARC RECORDS FOR ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Some modifications to the vendor-supplied MARC records may be required before they can be loaded into the integrated library system. These modifications may include repairing corrupt records, and adding subject headings and local notes. (For useful tools for manipulating vendor-supplied MARC records, see sidebar.)

HOW VENDORS CAN WORK WITH LIBRARIES

Vendors can work with technical services departments to improve access to electronic resources by creating advisory groups and implementing automatic notification. Some vendors have created advisory groups, made up of technical services librarians, which are used to provide recommendations for the creation of catalogue records. Advisory groups can be successful if the vendors implement the suggestions of the group, and thus avoid some of the challenges of working with vendor-supplied catalogue record.

It is important that vendors provide a mechanism for notification of new electronic content that has been added to or removed from their collections. This allows libraries to provide

timely access to electronic resources to their clients. Automatic notification via electronic mail appears to be the preferred method. These are just some of the ways that vendors and libraries can work together to connect electronic collections with readers.

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USEFUL TOOLS FOR CATALOGUING VENDOR-SUPPLIED MARC RECORDS FOR ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

MARC Report
marcofquality.com

MARC Edit
oregonstate.edu/~reaset/marcedit/html/index.php

MARC Global
marcofquality.com/soft/mgpricing.html

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