The Linked Systems Project provides current access to authority information

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by Nita Dean and Karen Calhoun

In 1985, the first computer-to-computer distribution of name authority records for cataloging was made through the Linked Systems Project (LSP), a networking tool that links the computer systems of the Library of Congress, the Research Libraries Group (RLG), and OCLC. Since then, two other LSP capabilities—record contribution and intersystem searching—have been implemented, providing the means for national sharing of name authority data among diverse systems.

Planning for the Linked Systems Project began back in the mid-1970s following a National Commission on Libraries and Information Science report published in 1975 which called for development of a nationwide network to tie information systems together. That same year, the Library of Congress (LC) produced a report on LC’s role in the evolving national network, and subsequently created a Network Advisory Committee. In 1978, a task force sponsored by the Council on Library Resources published a document that spelled out technical requirements of the network architecture.

By 1980 the Linked Systems Project had evolved. LSP has two basic elements: communications and applications. Although partially based on the Standard Network Interconnection, communications are evolving to full compliance with the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) Reference Model developed under the guidance of the International Organization for Standardization. OSI protocols have been developed to enable systems that have different hardware, software, and data formats to exchange messages.

The first LSP implementation involves the exchange of authority data. The rapid availability of authority information is one of the major advantages of maintaining a synchronized, shared copy of the LC Name Authority File through the Linked Systems Project Authorities Implementation.

Records in the LC Name Authority File are contributed by LC catalogers and by libraries participating in the National Coordinated Cataloging Operations program (NACO), formerly called the Name Authority Cooperative. A total of 40 libraries, including both RLG and OCLC members, currently participate in NACO and contribute new and changed authority records using either OCLC’s or RLG’s LSP system.

According to Liz Bishoff, Director, Online Union Catalog Product Management, the 175 catalogers at OCLC’s 28 LSP locations have been trained by Library of Congress staff in online record creation and by OCLC staff in use of OCLC’s LSP system. “We have worked very closely with LC in bringing new libraries onboard in a phased approach,” she said, “allowing for the necessary support and training time.”

In the three years since the implementation of LSP contribution, OCLC and RLG’s LSP libraries have contributed more than 93,000 transactions over the LSP link. Ms. Bishoff said work is scheduled to get under way this fall to re-implement the Linked Systems Authorities Implementation in the PRISM service. Through the PRISM service, libraries will have access to name authority records as they are created.—Nita Dean is Assistant Editor of the OCLC Newsletter, and Karen Calhoun is OCLC Product Manager for the LSP Authorities Implementation.

OCLC/LSP Locations
Center for Research Libraries
Government Printing Office
Indiana University
Library of Congress Serial Record Division
Louisiana State University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Minnesota Historical Society
Montana State Library
NACO Music Project
Eastman School of Music
Indiana University Music Library
Northwestern University Music Library
University of California, San Diego, Music Section
New York State Library
North Carolina State Library
Northwestern University
OCLC Online Data Quality Control Section
The Ohio State University
St. Louis University Law Library
State Library of Ohio
Texas State University
University Microfilms International
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, San Diego
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Illinois
University of Maryland
University of Pittsburgh
University of Washington
U.S. Department of Interior
Washington State Library

"The collections are often hidden because title-by-title cataloging of major microforms is too expensive and time-consuming for many libraries," she said. "When added to the price of the microform set, the cost of cataloging may even deter libraries from acquiring major microform sets."

However OCLC can help libraries make microform sets accessible to patrons for far less than the cost of traditional cataloging. Through the shared resource power of OCLC members, the Major Microforms Service provides cost-effective cataloging services and products that publicize a library's hidden assets.

The OCLC Major Microforms Project was started in 1984 in response to a need to share cataloging information of significant microform sets. The Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) Major Microform Survey paved the way for the OCLC project by identifying major microform sets of greatest interest to research libraries. Although cataloging these sets greatly increases their usefulness to patrons, ARL discovered that many libraries found it difficult to commit resources to on-site cataloging of their microform collections.

OCLC's project objectives were: to encourage institutions, through cost-saving offers such as free online cataloging, to catalog the individual titles of a major microform set (with a special OCLC-designated holding symbol); to provide the means by which libraries authorized to catalog their major microform sets can make it possible for other libraries to acquire cataloging products and services for those sets at a significant savings; and to enable institutions to order designated services and products for cataloged sets.

Nearly 100 microform sets are in the OCLC Online Union Catalog (OLUC). If a library owns a set that is already entered in the database, the library simply fills out a Major Microform order form, and OCLC produces customized OCLC-MARC tapes or catalog cards and sets their OCLC holding symbol to all records in that set for a fraction of the cost of standard online cataloging. If a library's microform set is not in the OCLC database, OCLC can help the libraries contain costs by allowing them to catalog the set online at no charge.

Today, nearly 400,000 records have been input onto the OLCU through the Major Microforms Project. During 1989-90 approximately 990,000 institution holding symbols were added to the OLCU through the Major Microforms Project. According to Ms. Henthorne, the latest developments in the project have been in a three areas: customized call numbers that give each title of a set a unique call number for use in local systems; the ability to tapeload into the OLCU cataloging of microform sets; and the continuation of cleanup of records.

The OCLC Major Microforms Project enables libraries to fulfill their commitment to making knowledge and information available economically.

Inquiries about the Major Microforms Project should be routed to the library's local network office. Independent libraries and non-OCLC members should direct questions to the OCLC Field Marketing Services Division.—Kriss Jenny is Public Relations Writer, OCLC.

United States Newspaper Program benefits historical research

by Kriss Jenny

Through the U.S. Newspaper Program (USNP), libraries are using the OCLC database to improve access for scholars and historians to more than 300 years of North American newspaper publishing.

The USNP, started in 1982, is co-managed by staff at the Library of Congress (LC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). NEH has responsibilities for program and policy articulation, grantmaking, and monitoring of grants. LC is responsible for technical coordination and management of both the bibliographic and preservation filming aspects of the projects, including training and quality control.

Since 1985, OCLC has played a vital role in the USNP by providing facilities for creating and maintaining a machine-readable