MARC 21 : The Standard Exchange Format for the 21st Century

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Abstract

Standardisation in the exchange formats and structure of a database is essential to facilitate exchange of data in efficient and effective way between the libraries. The adoption of different standard creates incompatibility in exchanging data which act as a major barrier in the use of bibliographic and related information. Format compatibilities are necessary for computerized cataloguing data and these are being standardized by the ISO. The MARC 21 format is one of the popular standard exchange format which adhere to ISO 2709 standard and are using majority of the countries in the world. For exchanging data in machine readable form. This paper discusses the history and development of MARC formats, its structure & salient features which made MARC format a set of standard for identifying, storing and communicating cataloguing information.

Keywords : MARC 21, Information Exchange, Bibliographic Standard

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2.   Evolution of the MARC Programme

The Library of Congress was the first to experiment on the possibility of producing catalogue data in machine-readable form as early as in 1950s. The King Report of 1963 on "Automation and the Library of Congress" suggested the possibility of automation of the major operations within the LC. The recommendations made in the King's Report was the main impetus for the development of MARC project. The first conference on MARC Project was held at LC on January 11, 1965 attended by representatives of the library community at large. The outcome of the conference was optimistic and work went ahead on the development of a machine-readable format for cataloguing library materials. A team

- **?** Hospitable to all kinds of library materials.
- **?** Sufficiently flexible for a variety of application in addition to catalogue publication.
- **?** Usable in a range of automated system.

heading etc. used preparing for main entry in a MARC record. Indicator is a code supplying additional information about the field and it is located at the beginning of the field.

The MARC II is the archetype of all subsequent MARC formats. The record structure of MARC II was later adopted by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI), the British Standards Institute (BSI) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). MARC format adhere to the ISO 2709 record structure.

2.5   National MARC formats based on UNIMARC

The data content of MARC 21 record is divided in to two types of variable fields :- Variable Control Fields and Variable Data Fields. The variable control & data fields are distinguished only by structure.

3.4   Content Designators

Content designators is an inclusive term used to refer to tags, indicators & sub-field codes. The three types of content designators- tags, indicators and sub-field codes are the keys to the MARC 21 notational system.

a   Tags

The tags are followed by the names of the fields they represent. In MARC 21 formats for bibliographic data , if a tag appear more than once in a bibliographic record, it is labeled as repeatable (R) field and if it appears once it is labeled as Non-Repeatable (NR).

In MARC 21 tags, the notation XX is often used to refer to a group of related tags. For example : 1XX refers

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