

## Chapter 2

# Library Catalogs

What is a library catalog? A library catalog is a record or a list of the collection of a particular library, or of the collection of many libraries that are connected electronically. When it is a combined list of the holdings of many libraries, it is called a union catalog or a shared catalog. We can also say that a library catalog is an organized list of information resources arranged in logical, prescribed order. Why is it necessary for every library to have a catalog? Catalogs serve many different functions that will be explained in this chapter. Basically, catalogs are established so that library users are able to retrieve the needed information. A good catalog is a good information delivery tool. To produce a good catalog, all materials must be cataloged so that they can be found. Catalogs come in a variety of sizes and formats. When studying about library catalogs, it is necessary to understand what are known as individual entries that identify each item in the collection. As a library technician, you will be required to interpret the entries to the users, if you work in the public services area, or, if you are a cataloger, to actually work on determining how to properly enter information.

A library catalog is never complete because the library collection is a living institution. Materials are added on a daily basis as well as removed at regular intervals. To accurately reflect the collection of the library, it is necessary to update the catalog constantly.

Materials listed in the catalog represent everything the library owns, plus collections from other libraries in the case of a shared catalog. Included in the catalogs are books (also referred to as monographs), periodicals (also referred to as serials, which include both professional journals and popular magazines, newspapers, and other

types of publications that are published continuously), pamphlets, audiovisual materials, computer files, and digital information.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

**bibliographic record:** A term used to describe the cataloging information for an item. Included are author, title, publisher, date, physical description of the item, and any other pertinent information needed to identify the material as a unique item.

**book catalog:** A listing of the library's holdings in book form. A computer printout is the latest form of a book catalog.

**card catalog:** A form of catalog that is made up of 3 × 5-inch cards. On each card, information about an item is written, typed, or printed. Cards are arranged in alphabetical order and filed in drawers especially designed for this purpose. The interfiling by author, title, and subject cards is called a dictionary catalog. When cards are filed separately so that all subject cards are filed in one section, and all author and title cards are filed in another, this is called a divided catalog.

**CD-ROM catalog:** The compact disc read-only memory is an optical disk played on a special disk player linked to a computer terminal. The library's collection is engraved on the disk, and when the disk is played on a CD-ROM drive connected to a computer, information can be retrieved.

**COM catalog:** Computer Output Microform catalog is a listing of the library's collection that is either on microfilm or in a microfiche format. A microfilm/fiche reader machine is used to read the information.

**library catalog:** A list or a record of all the materials in a library. May also include materials from other cooperating libraries that belong to the same network or consortium.

**OPAC:** The Online Public Access Catalog is a listing of the library materials that can be retrieved on a computer terminal.

**union catalog:** A combined catalog that includes the collection of groups of libraries. There are local union catalogs, nationwide union catalogs, and international union catalogs. A union catalog is also called a shared catalog.

### ***FUNCTIONS OF THE CATALOGS***

Why is it so important to have an accurate and up-to-date catalog? Here are the functions of a catalog:

1. To indicate to the users what is housed in the library. Catalogs list every single item acquired by the library. In the case of a union, or shared catalog, besides displaying what the library has, the catalog also shows what the library can obtain for the users.
2. To help users make the proper selection. With all the information in the catalog, users are able to get pertinent facts such as author, title, publisher, publication date, relevant subject, and the format of the material, such as book, videorecording, or computer file.
3. To provide access to the materials, whether through the author, title, or subject. Location is indicated by a letter and number symbol referred to as a call number. This letter and number combination indicates exactly where the wanted materials are shelved or stored. In a union or shared catalog, the location column also identifies the name of the library that owns the materials.
4. To function as an indispensable tool for library staff in the areas of acquisition, cataloging, inventory control, and reference works.

### ***TYPES OF CATALOGS***

#### ***The Book Catalog***

The book catalog is the earliest form of catalog. Ancient libraries listed the titles in the collection on papers that were bound in book form. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the card catalog became widely accepted and almost completely replaced the book catalog. In the 1960s and early 1970s, computerized libraries started to print book catalogs again.

Because supplements have to be produced frequently and attached to the existing catalog, the book catalog is inflexible and cumbersome for the users. The advantage of using a book catalog in the form of a computer printout is that new entries are automatically filed, reducing the labor cost for library personnel. Also, many copies can be made available for different locations, such as for branch libraries, for students' dormitories, faculty offices, etc.

### *The Card Catalog*

Since the Library of Congress launched the printing and selling of catalog cards in 1901, the card catalog, up to the late 1980s, has been the most widely used type of catalog. The card catalog uses 3 × 5-inch cards filed in alphabetical order in drawers that fit in a specially designed cabinet. Libraries either type or print their own cards, have an outside printer print the cards, or, more often, buy the already printed cards from the Library of Congress, a commercial book dealer, or one of the many library supply companies.

The card catalog system offers flexibility. New cards are interfiled in their correct order constantly. Cards may be removed easily from the catalog to reflect changing status, such as withdrawal or loss of the item. Cards are relatively inexpensive and easily accessible.

The main disadvantage is filing. It is labor intensive. The library filer has to be very familiar with all the filing rules and work very carefully and competently. A misfiled card represents an item with no reference in the catalog and may be permanently lost. As mentioned earlier, cards need to be filed and removed constantly, and, therefore, maintenance of the card catalog is a burdensome and time-consuming task. With automation, filing is done by the computer, and the mechanical problems of maintaining the card catalog have been solved, rendering the card catalog system obsolete. In the 1980s, many libraries installed computerized catalogs, ceased to file new cards in the card catalog, and often stopped maintaining the card catalog. These frozen catalogs remained temporarily for reference purposes and to hold information on older materials not entered into the database. Finally, when the total collection had been entered into the computer database, the card catalog was given a death sentence and taken away to make room for computer terminals.

### ***COM (Computer Output Microform) Catalog***

In this format, bibliographic records are photographed and produced on microfilm or microfiche, which is relatively inexpensive. Space is saved compared to the card catalog and the book catalog formats.

The disadvantages are somewhat similar to those of the book catalog, in the sense that it is difficult and expensive to update. It is inconvenient for users to employ the many supplements and troublesome, initially, to learn to use the necessary equipment, the microfilm/fiche reader/printer. It also means extra expenses because the library has to acquire several of these machines. This form of catalog was adopted by some libraries for a short while in the 1970s but never became very popular.

### ***OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog)***

OPACs began to appear in libraries in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. They quickly gained wide acceptance and became the most popular catalog form. With either the touch screen or the keyboard, users can access the most up-to-date information on the library's collection and can get a printout of that information. OPAC offers fast retrieval and an immediate display. In a shared online catalog, users can retrieve information from other participating libraries. These systems not only indicate the holdings of different libraries but also tell the circulation status of an item, whether it is on the shelf and, if not, when the item is due back. Some systems allow users to place a hold on the desired item or to directly request an item from other libraries through interlibrary loan agreements among the libraries in the system.

Due to advances in computer technology and the implementation of standards in the technology world, library users now can search hundreds of online catalogs through remote log-in facilities on the Internet. The new generation of OPACs is easier to use and offers more options.

The online catalog has changed traditional cataloging in several ways:

1. The dependence on shared bibliographic databases for cataloging has increased copy cataloging and decreased original cataloging activities.

2. The trend is toward linking the holdings of one library to other local libraries, to other libraries in the country, or to the international database.
3. The original catalog search methods based on the simple author, title, subject arrangement have become a multitude of approaches, such as subject key word search, title key word search, Boolean search, and search by call number.
4. The library catalog has expanded to include commercially produced reference data, such as index and abstract services, and full-text articles.
5. Electronic, or digital data, including Internet resources, are included in the catalog.
6. The online catalog does not stand alone, and in most libraries, it is an integrated system used for acquisition, circulation, reserve, and record-keeping functions.
7. Users can have remote access to the database through their own personal computers, from homes, offices, dormitories, schools—from anywhere in the world where portable computers have remote access capability.

### ***CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read-Only Memory) Catalog***

CD-ROM technology makes it possible to have a library's holdings engraved on computer disks. The cost for an individual library to have its collection put on compact disk used to be restrictive, and as a result, libraries did it collectively with other libraries in the same networking environment. It has become a popular format for library consortia. One CD-ROM disk has a storage capacity that is equivalent to 300,000 printed pages.

The CD-ROM player is now an integral part of computer equipment. Information can be shown on the computer terminal, and for most users, it is indistinguishable from the online catalog.

New disks can be produced easily and quickly to update listings. Because it does not need to connect to external databases, there is no computer downtime problem. Thus, this has become the most popular backup system for the online catalogs. The CD-ROM market has grown rapidly in the 1990s as an inexpensive substitute for the online library system.

The disadvantage of the CD-ROM catalog is that it is not as up-to-date as the online catalog. Because it is not interactive in nature, it does not offer such convenient features as item status, reserve, and interlibrary request, which the online catalog can offer.

### ***ELEMENTS OF A BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

No matter what format the catalog takes, the information displayed is the same. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show how the same information is displayed both on a catalog card and on the computer screen. Information that a book catalog reveals is also the same since a book catalog is either a computer printout or photographs of catalog cards.

Information in a bibliographic record includes the call number (CB161.A35 1987), the author (the example in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 does not show an author), the title proper, with statement of responsibility (An Agenda for the 21st century/ [ compiled by ] Rushworth M. Kidder), the edition statement (no edition statement is shown for this book, indicating it is the first edition), the place of publication (Cambridge, Massachusetts), the publisher (MIT Press), the date of publication (1987), the extent of the item, other physical description (xxii, 216 p. : ports. ; 21 cm.), the series title, notes (“The interviews in this book were

FIGURE 2.1. Information on a Catalog Card

|   |   |
|---|---|
| CB<br>161<br>.A35<br>1987                         | An Agenda for the 21st century /<br>[ compiled by ] Rushworth M. Kidder.—<br>Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, c1987.<br>xxii, 216 p. : ports. ; 21 cm.<br>Bibliography: p. xxii.<br>Includes index.<br>“The interviews in this book were originally published<br>as a series in the Christian Science Monitor”—<br>T.p. verso.<br>ISBN 0-262-11128-4<br><br>1. Twenty-first century—Forecasts.<br>I. Kidder, Rushworth M. II. Title:<br>Agenda for the twenty-first century. |
| 21 DEC 90      16578832      MHGAdc      87-22597 |   |

FIGURE 2.2. Catalog Information on a Computer Screen

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| FORMAT:      | book   |
| LOCATION:    | BrdgprtPop 303.49 A265f<br>CCSU UCStamford CB161 A35 1987<br>AsnuntckCC CCSU ThamesVlyC UBridgport<br>UCStorrs UCTrecker CB161 .A35 1987<br>HartfordPL CB161.A35<br>MoheganCC LCC CB161 .A35 1987<br>MeridenPL ANF 303.49 AG<br>NorwalkPL NorwalkSth SheltonPL<br>303.49 AGE<br>StratfrdPL 303.49 K46A<br>TunxisCC WCSU CB161 .A35 1987<br>WrthrsfldPL 303.49 KIDDER |
| CONTROL NBR: | 16578832   |
| LC CARD NBR: | 87022597   |
| ISBN:        | 0262111284   |
| TITLE:       | An Agenda for the 21st century / [compiled by]<br>Rushworth M. Kidder.   |
| PUBLISHER:   | MIT Press,   |
| DATE:        | c1987.   |
| DESCRIPTION: | xxii, 216 p. : ports. ; 21 cm.   |
| NOTES:       | Includes index.  |
| NOTES:       | “The interviews in this book were originally<br>published as a series in the Christian Science<br>Monitor”—T.p. verso.   |
| NOTES:       | Bibliography: p. xxii.   |
| SUBJECT:     | Twenty-first century—Forecasts.  |
| CO-AUTHOR:   | Kidder, Rushworth M.   |
| OTHER TITLE: | Agenda for the twenty-first century.   |

originally published as a series in the Christian Science Monitor”—T.p.verso), the ISBN number (0-262-11128-4), subject headings (Twenty-first century—Forecasts), and other added entries (Kidder, Rushworth M.; Agenda for the twenty-first century). The information on the bottom of the card in Figure 2.1 may be of no concern to the users, but it is a record for the cataloger. Included are the date this book was cataloged online (21 DEC 90), the computer control number of the

system (16578832), the holding library symbol (MHG Adc), and the Library of Congress Control Number (87-22597). On the online catalog, the format is indicated (book), and the location is listed, not only with the names of the libraries, but also with the individual call numbers as well, to facilitate interlibrary loan procedures. Note that not every bibliographic record lists all the aforementioned features. However, the relevant information is there to assist users in retrieving the desired material.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 dramatically demonstrate how much information is included in a catalog and how each entry describes a very important feature of the item. It is necessary for the library technician to know how to read the information, how to extrapolate the relevant parts, and how to organize the entries so that gathered information follows a prescribed formula. These procedures, which are explained at length in Chapter 4 of this book, are prescribed in detail in *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, Second Edition, 1998 Revision.

### ***REVIEW QUESTIONS***

1. Explain the functions of the catalogs.
2. Explain the different types of library catalogs.
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of catalog?
4. What information is included on a bibliographic record?