

1-1-1998

Deborah J. Byrne's MARC Manual: Understanding and Using MARC Records, 2d ed. (book review)

Ellen McGrath
emcgrath@buffalo.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/law_librarian_book_reviews



Part of the [Cataloging and Metadata Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ellen McGrath, *Deborah J. Byrne's MARC Manual: Understanding and Using MARC Records, 2d ed. (book review)*, 38 Reference & User Servs. Q 221 (1998).

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/law_librarian_book_reviews/5

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Librarian Scholarship at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Law Librarian Book Reviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.

MARC Manual: Understanding and Using MARC Records. 2d ed. By Deborah J. Byrne. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1998. 263p. \$34 (ISBN 1-56308-176-8).

A well-written work that does a good job of combining an explana-

tion of MARC (*MA*chine-*Rea*dable *Cat*aloging) with a description of its importance and application, this second edition brings the 1991 edition up to date. The major changes from the previous edition consist of additional chapters on format integration, and the format for community information. I wondered at the omission of the classification format which, though not in general use outside of the Library of Congress, was published in 1991 prior to either of the above format events. A lot of additional MARC ground is covered though, namely; theory and development, format structure and content designation, patterns in the format, major bibliographic codes, records in electronic form, database processing and products, online systems, the authority and holdings formats, and MARC use in different libraries; so it is probable that space limitations meant something had to be left out.

The preface to the first edition and the opening chapter should be required reading for anyone who deals with MARC records in any way, including the intended audience of this work—practicing librarians, library board members, vendor personnel, and students of library science. After all, in Byrne's own words "a library's MARC database is the most crucial factor in the success of the library's automation" (p.xx.). The description of variations on MARC (USMARC, UKMARC, OCLC-MARC) is helpful and is an essential piece of the puzzle, as is the emphasis upon MARC's role as a communications format that is completely separate from the cataloging rules which drive the creation of the content of a MARC record.

Chapter Five covers the major bibliographic codes. It is the longest chapter, which is appropriate since it deals with the specifics of MARC fields. This chapter contains only "the most-used MARC codes" which appear to be those encountered most frequently in monographic records. This is stated in the opening sentence of Chapter Five but the

amount of detail encountered makes it easy to forget this fact and the reader is not reminded often enough, that this is not the entire picture. Other formats are discussed briefly in a general manner in the final chapter.

The OCLC perspective can be a bit overwhelming, and RLIN and WLN are not even mentioned until Chapter Eight! The emphasis on OCLC might be misleading if the reader is not aware that the searching and indexing features Byrne describes are sometimes specific to OCLC and/or bibliographic utilities, not to many local systems. For example, it is stated that notes (5XX) fields are "not usually indexed," but I would venture to guess that keyword indexing of notes is now quite common in most local systems.

Database processing is handled very well in a chapter that contains excellent advice for those automating their library for the first time or migrating to a new local system. However, the detailed discussion of authorities processing here made me think that this chapter might have been better placed after a later chapter that describes the basic components of the authority format.

As with any technical manual of this sort that focuses on a constantly evolving target, a number of errors have crept in, some of which are crucial typographical errors in the major codes chapter—subfield "c" instead of "t" under 710, and subfield "v" instead of "s" under 730, and some minor punctuation errors. The inclusion of now invalid second indicator values in the 7XX (added entries) fields was surprising considering that these changes resulted from format integration, which is so heavily emphasized throughout this work. Some incorrect information regarding the inclusion of "preceding or succeeding editions" titles in the 246 (varying form of title) field is also given, and in the Patterns chapter, there is an odd reference to an order of series instruction that has not appeared in AACR2 since at least 1988.

Notes and related readings en-

hance each chapter, and some Website addresses are included. I found it rather strange that the 856 (electronic location and access) field was mentioned only briefly in the Community Information chapter. It seems it could have been discussed extensively elsewhere in terms of a fuller description and of the increasingly common drive to include bibliographic records for Internet resources in library catalogs.

The glossary is very basic and perhaps deserves expansion, but the book's indexing has been improved from the first edition's. This manual provides an excellent introduction to a very complex topic in clear, straightforward language.—*Ellen McGrath, Head of Cataloging, Charles B. Sears Law Library, State University of New York at Buffalo*