THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY:
THE NEED FOR STANDARDS IN A BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASE

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ABSTRACT

WAVES is a bibliographic database which began as a partial union catalogue of the technical report holdings of the 13 Canadian federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans libraries. In 1987, the libraries decided to expand the database to become a union catalogue of their entire holdings.

Over the past three years, the cataloguing standards for the bibliographic fields in the database have been extensively revised by a committee of departmental librarians. Two of the goals of these new bibliographic standards are a reduction in the number of unwanted duplicated records and the creation of higher quality records for the planned CD-ROM version of the database.

The new three-volume (1000 p.) WAVES Standards Manual consists of 5 policies, 43 field descriptions, and 5 procedural appendices. Some of the problems encountered during the drafting stage included the need for corporate name and corporate series authorities, the special requirements associated with cataloguing bilingual (English/French) publications in a Canadian federal government library, and the means of dealing with non-Roman script materials in small libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Like it or not, with the advent of compact discs indexing errors are beautifully displayed in multicolour browsable indexes. In the past librarians coped
with inconsistent indexing. Now that searching is in the hands of end-users librarians should concentrate on the development of comprehensive bibliographic standards as an integral step towards the release of a CD product.

This paper will highlight problems encountered during the revision of bibliographic standards for the WAVES database.

WAVES DATABASE

WAVES is a database jointly produced by the librarians of the Canadian Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It contains references to published and unpublished report literature on fisheries and aquatic sciences. Emphasis is on Canadian works but reports received through international exchanges for our Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences or our Departmental report series are also included. WAVES contains approximately 75,000 records. Cooperative indexing by Departmental libraries across Canada contribute annually 4,500 records to the database. Approximately 40% of the records cover literature from 1970 onwards; the other 60% covers historical literature.

The WAVES database has been recently released on compact disc.

WAVES BIBLIOGRAPHIC STANDARDS

Bibliographic standards were originally prepared in 1981 when the database moved from a KWOC microfiche to the online environment. These WAVES1 standards were augmented as problems developed through the years. In 1987 when the decision was made to expand the WAVES database into a union catalogue a committee of Departmental librarians was assembled to revise the standards.

GOALS - WAVES2 STANDARDS

One of the goals of the revised standards was to retain the unit record concept with local fields appended for each holding library.

The National Library of Canada was eager for us to report holdings to their Canadian Union Catalogue. Reporting to National dictated that we base our standards on the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition, 1988 Revision (AACR2R). We also added fixed fields to our non-MARC records so the required codes would be available when National converted the WAVES records to their CAN/MARC format.
FORMAT - WAVES2 STANDARDS

Since indexing was decentralized and some of it was done on contract we decided that both our policies and our procedures must be included in the same manual as the field descriptions. As another means of helping indexers understand the standards we chose 223 examples from our library collections and included title pages opposite completed code sheets. Relevant fields from each of these examples were inserted in the text to illustrate a specific standard.

The three resulting volumes of the WAVES2 Standards are:

v.1 Policies and Field Descriptions
v.2 Appendices (of Procedures)
v.3 Compendium of Examples

A fourth volume is planned to cover subject indexing standards. The subject indexing policy and fields have been drafted and will be revised by Eric Marshall and others on the Committee.

PROBLEMS (AGONY) AND SOLUTIONS (ECSTASY)

Most of our agony was self-induced as it revolved around our decision to have a unit record that served our goals of in-depth retrieval, union record of Departmental library holdings, and reporting to the Canadian Union Catalogue.

SMALL LIBRARIES - INDEXING LEVEL

Each of our thirteen Departmental libraries have unique material. Some of these libraries do not have the resources to fully code up to 43 WAVES2 fields. So that these libraries could participate a minimum level record was established which consists of system fields plus personal author, conference name, title, imprint, date, series, ISSN, and language. This minimum level record is not reported to the National Library but can be enhanced to a bibliographic or complete level record that is reported.

SCOPE OF WAVES

Bibliographic Type/Specific Collection

Since the primary journal literature is already indexed by databases such as Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts we decided to concentrate on monographic literature in Departmental library collections. However there is a reoccurring problem for Canadian government libraries and that is the background papers presented to Royal Commissions and Task Forces which often include
journal articles, book chapters or published conference papers. Our solution to this problem is summarized in two policies:

Policy 1 - WAVES2 Policy for Scope of Materials in the WAVES Database

Policy 2 - WAVES2 Policy on Specific Collections

The Scope Policy restricts the inclusion of component parts of serials or monographs to only those contained in an authorized specific collection. Policy 2 defines a specific collection as a body of documents collected or indexed together for a specific purpose and of interest to two or more DFO libraries. Specific collections include material for Royal Commissions, Task Forces and other determinate studies. Through these two policies we restricted the number of analytics input into WAVES.

Serials

In the May 1990 edition of the WAVES2 Standards the Committee decided to exclude most serials as in Canada we are fortunate to have centrally produced union lists of journals and other serials held by major Canadian libraries. This left us with the problem of definition of a serial and a monograph. Armed with the AACR2R glossary and the interpretation for the scope of serials (rule 12.0A) our intrepid detective, Betty Sutherland, found a marvelous definition lurking in Introduction to Cataloguing and Classification by B.S. Wynar for a pseudoserial which is:

"A frequently reissued and revised publication that is generally treated as a monographic work at first publication but that is often treated as a serial after numerous successive editions have appeared."

This led the Committee to the decision to issue a temporary WAVES2 Standard that indexed in the WAVES database only those serials and pseudoseerials treated as monographs in our own collections.

INDEPTH RETRIEVAL

English and French Access

In addition to serving as a union catalogue the WAVES database must provide indepth access to our collections in both of Canada's official languages. For this reason the WAVES2 records for bilingual publications have parallel English and French data in indexed descriptive fields. If we had followed
AACR2R, which prefers English description when English appears first on the title page, we would have lost access to French words in key fields such as corporate author, title, publisher and series. We did not follow AACR2R or the National Library’s Policy for creating two records, one in English and one in French for what is in effect one publication with the same document printed in English and repeated in French in a tête-à-tête format. Again we opted to use parallel data in one record to be consistent for both our indexers and our users. These decisions are discussed in detail in the WAVES2 Policy for English and French Description and Indexing.

Non-Roman Script

We agonized over the need to provide access to items written in non-Roman script until Betty Sutherland, this time with accomplice Gord Miller (Librarian, Pacific Biological Station, Nanaimo, B.C.) drafted the WAVES2 Procedure for Indexing Material Published in Cyrillic and other Non-Roman Scripts. In summary this procedure allows indexers, when romanized information is not available, to substitute bibliographic information that appears on the item in a Roman script or as a last resort use translated information found in other sources. I should add that one of the bibliographic sources we use is the University of California’s MELVYL database which is accessible through Sciencenet.

Multipart Items

In some CD’s, such as the WAVES CD, the notes field is indexed but most searches are done in the basic (subject) index which indexes title words.

To ensure that distinctive words were included in the WAVES title fields the WAVES2 Standards specify that separate records be made for the separate volumes of a multipart item. A sample WAVES2 record for one volume of a multipart item would have in the title statement field: The mollusca. Volume 1, Metabolic biochemistry and molecular biomechanics.

In this case the Committee found they needed to augment the definition of a multipart item as found in the Library of Congress rule interpretation for AACR2R rule 1.6. This interpretation used the subject matter of the item as the indicator that the monograph was intended to be complete in a finite number of separate parts. The WAVES2 guidelines, which distinguish a multipart item from a monographic series, rely on the presentation of the collective title and the title of the part on the title page in addition to the subject matter.

CONSISTENT INDEXING

Our agonies peaked when we drafted two of our most complex procedures, WAVES2 Procedures for the Verification of Corporate Names and Corporate Series (Appendix A, WAVES2 Standards) and the Addition, Modification
and Deletion of WAVES Records (Appendix E, WAVES2 Standards). These procedures are very detailed to ensure high quality indexing.

Corporate Series

In our WAVES1 Standards we had bent, folded and mutilated cataloguing rules by using a combination of the publisher and series fields to provide access to corporate series. After much, sometimes heated, discussions via electronic mail and in Committee we decided to follow the Library of Congress rule interpretation for the creation of uniform titles for series (AACR2R rule 25.5B) which prefers the addition of place over corporate name as the choice of qualifying term.

Following the reluctant acceptance of this rule interpretation we were faced with creating new authority records for each corporate series with linking references from the old WAVES1 form. We do not have online authority control yet, so the WAVES2 Authority List that covers both corporate names and corporate series is manually produced and consumes 70% of the compiler's time.

Modification Procedures

The Committee strived to make the WAVES2 Standards sufficiently detailed with relevant examples so that inconsistencies in indexing would be negligible. However, unlike some commercial databases that only have mechanisms to correct errors when the database is reloaded, modification or upgrade of WAVES records is an ongoing process.

To keep track of modification of records we use two fields, the Update field which includes the date the record was last modified and the Record Log field which includes the library code, date, indexing level and fields modified. These two fields flag and summarize the modification so other holding libraries can in turn modify a downloaded record that they have used in their local system.

SUMMARY

In summary we prepared comprehensive bibliographic standards before we released our WAVES compact disc.

We found that the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules and their interpretations published by the Library of Congress were more relevant to the indexing of grey literature than we first thought. We made exceptions to AACR2R only when necessary to provide indepth retrieval for the users of the WAVES CD.

Drafting standards via a Committee is actually possible as long as you have access to electronic mail and sufficient travel funds to meet regularly to experience first hand the agony and the ecstasy of countless reviews of draft standards. We also found the coding of the 223 examples by Departmental
indexers was an excellent test of the clarity and comprehensiveness of the field descriptions.

REFERENCE