

## Cataloging with MARC: *Or, How Would You Describe It?*

Cataloging is the process used to describe items and add them to the catalog.

### Why catalog?

- So we can find what is in the library,
- So our users can find what is in the library,
- So we have an inventory of what is owned by the library,
- So we can track who has used the items from the library.

Each item in the library's collection should be described and inventoried.

Where this was once done using 3-by-5-inch cards, most libraries now use computer software. The catalog, then, is really a database. The public view of the catalog, available to library patrons, is known as the online public access catalog or OPAC [*pronounced OH-pack*].

A database is made up of records. Each record has fields and, possibly, sub-fields. Each field represents a characteristic of the item being described.

Libraries use MARC as the accepted format for the records in library catalogs. MARC stands for Machine Readable Cataloging. Developed in the 1960s, it is a standard—a set of rules that defines the structure of a bibliographic catalog.

The rules create a template so when machines go through the record, the machine always knows that the title is going to be in a consistent location. In this way, whether the record is in a catalog designed by Apollo, Koha, Sirsi, or another automation vendor, we can rely on the fact that the title is going to be in the 245 field.

## Basic MARC Tags

In MARC, the high-level fields are known as “tags”. Tags are three-digit numbers broken down into the following blocks:

0xx	Control Information Number Codes	Fields that contain standardized numbers that uniquely identify an item. Can also include fields for other coded information.
1xx	Main Entry	The primary access point in a record. There can be only one in each record.
2xx	Titles Edition Imprint	Includes the title (245 field), the bibliographic record, translated titles and abbreviated titles. 2xx fields also describe publishing information and edition.
3xx	Physical Description	May include a description of the physical item including number of pages, physical size, publication, and frequency.
4xx	Series Statement	If the item is a part of a series, it is recorded here. This does not, however, guarantee that it can be found by the series name in all catalogs. For that, catalogers will want to include the series information in the 8xx fields, too.
5xx	Notes	Used for notes about the item including summary, chapter listings, and target audience.
6xx	Subject Headings	Lists the subjects covered by the item. Most subject headings come from a common subject thesaurus of subject heading systems like Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH).
7xx	Added Entries	Additional access points describing an item such as additional author names.
8xx	Series Added Entries	If an item is part of a series, include the series name here. This can also be used to identify access for electronic records.
9xx	Local Fields	If a library needs to add more descriptors for an item, and a field for that descriptor does not already exist, that can be added here. This is where a library may want to include local processing information or notes.

## Some common tags you will encounter are:

- 010: LCCN [Library of Congress number (example: 2010007504)]
- 020: ISBN [10-digit and/or 13-digit number for books]
- 022: ISSN [for periodicals]
- 100: Author info
- 245: Title info
- 250: Edition info
- 260: Publishing info
- 300: Physical description [length; contents; height of material]
- 490: Series statement [Series name & Volume number]
- 500: Notes [General]
- 505: Content notes [multiple chapters; anthology; etc.]
- 520: Summary of the book
- 600: Subject Added Entry [Personal Name]
- 700: Personal Name

## Options for Cataloging

- Purchase the MARC records from the suppliers when purchasing books or other materials for the library.
- Original cataloging using the record template in the ILS (catalog) to create a record from scratch for items being added to the library's collection.
- Copy cataloging by acquiring the MARC records from other sources, such as OCLC, available through subscription membership for a fee, or through [WorldCat](#) free of charge. You can contact Allison Floyd, the ICfL's LiLI Librarian for more information on OCLC and ShareIdaho at [Allison.Floyd@libraries.idaho.gov](mailto:Allison.Floyd@libraries.idaho.gov) or at 208-334-2150.

## **Additional Resources:**

The ABLE Technical Services Sequence is a self-directed, online learning course comprising:

- Introduction to Technical Services and Catalog Records (1.5 contact hours),
- Subject Headings (3 contact hours),
- Dewey Classification (2 contact hours), and
- MARC Cataloging (1 contact hour)

ABLE courses are offered free of charge and a certificate of achievement is awarded upon completion of each sequence.