

## The Union Catalog in the Art Field

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THESE REMARKS<sup>1</sup> are limited to a brief description, a partial comparison, of three union catalogs of art.

As might be expected in projects of essentially the same nature, they present points of similarity: in coverage, the inclusion of a selected group of libraries in a given city; in regard to method, the transcribing of cards by W.P.A. workers under the supervision of trained and experienced librarians; and particularly in respect to fundamental aim—the making of art books in the particular locale more easily available. There are also, however, certain points of divergence, especially in location, type, and use.

In Baltimore a dictionary union catalog of art is flourishing at the Enoch Pratt Free Library. This catalog is designed for the field of fine arts and does not include related subjects. W.P.A. workers copied entries from the art sections of the shelflists of nine other libraries.<sup>2</sup> The slips were coordinated (that is, entries from all libraries filed in one alphabet) and checked against the catalog of the Pratt Library; if any edition of a particular title was in that library, the slip was discarded. (This method of handling

editions seems strange; if an individual wishes the 1935 edition of a work, he will not necessarily be content to use the 1940 edition just because it is in the public library.) For the remainder, L.C. cards were ordered. When these were not available, the main entry card with all tracing was copied from the catalog of the contributing library, entries were checked to conform to the Enoch Pratt catalog, which follows L.C. practices, and cards were typed. For each item, main entry, subject, and title cards were filed in the public and art room catalogs of the Pratt Library. To the end of 1940 about forty thousand cards (twenty thousand in each catalog) for 5300 titles were filed. All copies of a title located were indicated on each card of the set. Full provision was made for the maintenance of the catalog: the cooperating libraries send to Enoch Pratt each month copies of the main card, with tracing, for each art title newly received or recataloged. Each year about 300 titles are added by the method utilized for the first slips prepared by the W.P.A. workers—L.C. cards are ordered or catalog copy prepared for typing, entries checked, and the two sets of cards symbolized and filed. For the current additions no W.P.A. help is used except for the typing of cards. The other work, checking for duplicates, establishing entries, etc., is done by the cataloger who handles the art material for the Pratt Library.

There are two points which might be

<sup>1</sup> Read before a meeting of the College Art Association in Chicago, January 29, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Johns Hopkins University Library, Goucher College Library, Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland Institute Library, Walters Art Gallery, Peabody Institute Library, Friends of Art, Maryland Institute Atelier, and the Lucas Collection.

raised in respect to this type of catalog: the expansion necessary in the catalog to accommodate twenty thousand additional cards, and the expense of purchasing two sets of L.C. cards for each title to be added, necessary authority work, typing headings, and filing. This catalog is largely used by librarians for reference, interlibrary loan, and ordering purposes, and by the general public which, as word from Baltimore indicates, makes extensive use of the subject cards. The expansion and expense would thus seem to be fully justified.

### *Philadelphia Catalog*

There was established at the Philadelphia Museum of Art between 1934 and 1937 a subject union catalog of art and such diverse but related fields as topography and folklore. Cards in shelflists and under a selected group of subject headings in dictionary catalogs of nineteen libraries<sup>3</sup> were transcribed by W.P.A. workers. About sixty thousand slips were written, of which two thirds were discarded as duplicates as only one location of each title, that in the library nearest the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was noted on the permanent card. (Why the slips were not coordinated and all copies of an entry noted on the one card it is difficult to say, unless the catalog was planned for use only by the museum staff and not outsiders.) The entries were assigned subject headings to conform to the practice of the museum library and added to that library's separate alphabetical sub-

<sup>3</sup> Wilstach Collection, John G. Johnson Collection, Rodin Museum, Free Library of Philadelphia, Yarnall Library of St. Clement's Church, Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Dronsie College, Franklin Institute, Bryn Mawr College, German Society, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania libraries, Library Company of Philadelphia, Mercantile Library, Drexel Institute of Technology, and Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art.

ject catalog. No provision was made to maintain the catalog, and in effect it was abandoned in 1939. At that time the museum library was moved, its catalog reorganized, an author and title catalog established, and the subject catalog eliminated entirely. This experience would seem to indicate that a subject union catalog without a main entry file is not practicable. The thought occurs that with the establishment of the Philadelphia Regional Catalog in 1938 the subject catalog of art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art Library might have come into full usefulness.

To be successful a union catalog must be used, and one may query whether this success is entirely a matter of chance. Just as with an art object the form must be suitable to the medium and both to the purpose, in regard to a union catalog the type must be suitable for the place and both be proper for the use planned. The union catalog of art in Baltimore fits this specification: made for the general public, it was wisely located in the public library and logically was of the type—dictionary—most familiar and helpful to that group of users. It is suggested that the abandonment of the subject catalog in Philadelphia may have been permitted because no particular group made extensive use of it. For what group was it planned? If for the general public, the location may have been at fault—thousands of public library patrons are hesitant to enter an art museum; if for the art scholar, the fault perhaps lay in the type—for him, the author catalog seems indicated rather than the subject approach.

### *Chicago Catalog*

In planning the third of this group of union catalogs of art, the attempt was

made to consider these three factors of place, type, and user. The now developing Union Catalog of Art in Chicago<sup>4</sup> is designed primarily for the art specialist; it is therefore to be a main entry catalog, since the most common question is expected to be: Where in Chicago is which edition of this particular title? Work on this catalog is now in progress under the direction of an editor, library trained and with experience in an art library, appointed on a three-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The editor has conferred with representatives of the cooperating libraries in order to define the scope of the catalog, which is to include fine arts and related fields, as archeology, art of the American Indian, book arts, costume, landscape gardening, numismatics, and such theater arts as scenery and settings, costume, and make-up. A list of subject headings has been compiled, so that there will be drawn into a coherent pattern the various ramifications of the fields covered. The participating libraries are of different types, and therefore, as one might expect, a variation in approach is necessary for each. After surveys and discussions, the editor mapped out methods of procedure. For the W.P.A. workers these procedures are broken down to clearly stated work steps; this is done by the library-trained W.P.A. supervisor. Groups of workers are now engaged in transcribing cards in the catalogs and shelflists, coordinating the slips from the various libraries, and typing the permanent cards. All copies and editions of a title located are to be indicated in the permanent catalog.

<sup>4</sup> Art Institute of Chicago libraries, Chicago Public Library, Newberry Library, and University of Chicago Libraries.

### *Location of Chicago Catalog*

The catalog is to be housed on the University of Chicago campus, adjacent to the Art Library. Scholars in Chicago and elsewhere are accustomed to call on the university libraries for reference aid and interlibrary loans. With the establishment of the Union Catalog of Art in Chicago on this campus, further reference assistance will be available, covering not only the university collections but also those of the cooperating libraries. In instances where materials may not be sent on interlibrary loan, the fully equipped microphotographic laboratory of the university may be utilized, so that a negative or positive film of pages from a rare book in any of the cooperating libraries can be substituted for the volume itself. The service of the catalog, while primarily planned for the scholar, will at the same time be available to the general public through the participation of the Chicago Public Library, which will be able to request assistance for its patrons.

The stress in these remarks has been on the aid to the user of the union catalog. Its service to the cooperating libraries, in disclosing unique titles so as to prevent unnecessary duplication, in giving information to catalog departments in regard to anonymous and pseudonymous items, and so forth, is probably obvious. Cooperation typified by the union catalog, which will offer assistance to individuals and libraries, seems particularly important at this time. While European libraries are being destroyed or collections scattered, and European book markets are practically closed, we must make available for their fullest use the collections in this country.