programs rest on delicate underpinnings which can always be strengthened by reviewing goals and the factors which influence their accomplishment.—Laine Farley, University of California, Riverside.


This book is intended to serve as a beginner's self-instruction manual to online searching. It is meant to be used as “part of an on-going, hands-on learning process.” The authors suggest the use of the Dialog Lab Workbook, and the appendix of this book contains possible solutions to the workbook's exercises.

This book uses a combination of practical and theoretical information to give the student a good introduction to the subject. It begins with an overview of the different types of databases, lists of the vendors, and which databases they provide. The overview also contains information about how the database is constructed by showing sample records and the possible indexes that result from them.

There is a brief introduction to terminals and modems after which is a sample search session. This introductory session as well as the advanced techniques in the later chapters are all examples of searching on Dialog. The authors do this to avoid the confusion of having a beginner try to learn three different systems at the same time. The initial chapter covers basic commands and Boolean operators. A chapter on the reference interview serves as a good introduction to determining the benefits of free text versus controlled vocabulary searches. The discussion of the operators which can be used with free text searching point out the sophisticated capabilities of this kind of search. Multi-database searching is also described.

The three major search services—BRS, DIALOG, and SDC—are compared as to hours of availability, cost, system features, and availability of training. The book concludes with chapters on manag-
ing an online search service, the future of 
online searching, and a glossary.—Susan 
Jurist, Research Libraries Group, Stanford.

Dodd, Sue A. Cataloging Machine-Readable 
Data Files: An Interpretive Manual. Chi-
248p. $35 LC 82-11597 ISBN 0-8389- 
0365-7.

Machine-readable data files (MRDF) 
have existed for forty years, data archives 
and data libraries for almost thirty years, 
yet it was not until the 1970s that ALA's 
Resources and Technical Services Divi-
sion appointed the Subcommittee to Rec-
ommend Rules for Cataloging Machine-
Readable Data Files. The inclusion in 
AACR2 of chapter 9—Machine-Readable 
Data Files—incorporates the recommen-
dations made by the committee in its final 
report, and constitutes the library commu-
nity's official recognition of MRDF as le-
gitimate resource materials.

The format of AACR2, however, pre-
cluded the inclusion of appropriate back-
ground material necessary for under-
standing the fluid nature of MRDF and the 
difficulties associated with cataloging and 
controlling them; hence the necessity for 
this manual.

In the preface, Dodd sets the objectives 
of the manual: "(1) to provide guidelines 
for establishing bibliographic conventions 
for MRDF . . . ; (2) to suggest integrated 
levels of recordkeeping for MRDF; (3) to 
bring into sharper focus the AACR2 rules 
as they relate to cataloging computerized 
files; (4) to provide notes, examples, and 
interpretations of MRDF cataloging, 
which would otherwise not be available; 
and (5) to provide working tools for those 
cataloging MRDF for the first time."

The manual is divided into three basic 
sections. Part 1 describes MRDF in basic 
terms to the uninitiated, and discusses the 
distinction between documentation and 
data files. Part 2 is a step-by-step interpre-
tation of AACR2 chapter 9, and chapter 21 
as it relates to MRDF. Each part begins 
with a summary quote from the specific 
rule followed by interpretation and exam-
pies related to a variety of MRDF (text 
files, numeric files, program files). Part 3 
includes sample catalog cards for all types