Introduction

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For the past several centuries the codex book and, more recently, the periodical, has been the dominant medium for the transmission of ideas. During this time great progress has been made in the techniques of reproducing the printed page and in developing effective bibliographic control over the contents and location of titles.

The use of photographic methods for recording and transmitting information is relatively new. Although the principles of microphotography have been known for a full century, it is only in the last twenty years that photoduplication has come to have real significance for libraries, and only in the past decade have most of the large microtext subscription projects been developed. Considering the fact that we have not completely solved the problems of the book, it is little wonder that today we are trying to extricate ourselves from the bibliographic complications inherent in this new medium.

It is generally acknowledged that photoduplication will not cure all of the ills of the library. It is further recognized that microforms will not replace the codex book but will supplement it as a method of obtaining lesser used material. However, it is in this precise area of "lesser used" materials that most problems of a library occur. This is the area which has most of the poor paper, the greatest bulk, and represents the largest expenditure of money for acquisitions, processing, and servicing. It is in this area that most of the photographic opportunities lie.

What should be produced on microforms, by whom, in which format, and how should they be distributed and bibliographically controlled? It is generally accepted that newspapers and similar materials are prime candidates for photocopying because of their bulk, poor paper, binding cost, and rapid decrease in popular demand. For a

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number of years commercial companies have been filming and selling prints for a variety of newspaper titles. Some libraries have also sold prints as a by-product of local filming.

More recently, libraries have come to the realization that pride of possession for much of this material was an expensive illusion. Their needs could be adequately met at a lower cost by cooperatively subscribing to the creation of one master film which could be borrowed from a central location when needed. The development of the Xerox-Copyflo method of electrostatic enlargement printing from microfilm should do much to promote the concept of a central file of film with selective orders for needed items, rather than simply spending money on an unselected mass of titles which happen to be listed in a bibliography or pertain to a particular subject.

The minuscule characteristics of microforms should make them ideal for interlibrary lending, and indeed, many reels of newspapers and dissertations are exchanged. However, how many of us have borrowed or lent an item from the Microcard Rolls Series, the Microprint Evans’ project, or a volume of the Sessional Papers? A union list of materials on microfilm has been compiled in Southern California. Is this type of regional or national bibliography necessary before the lending of microforms will be as effective as lending the book?

We accept the fact that reel microfilm is most suitable for newspapers, and that text material can be used satisfactorily on most types of microforms, but how satisfactory is it to use a bibliography, an index, or a documentary source work on microform? What complications will the scholar face when using the Monumenta Germania Historica on microfiche, or Migne’s Patrologia on microcard? Why should we not have some method of examining and reporting on this type of problem, just as we have expert reviews of books?

Is it always desirable to have cards in the public catalog for all titles held on microforms, or will printed bibliographies suffice? It can be argued that Pollard and Redgrave, Tremaine, Sabin, Sowerby, and Evans are sufficiently well known by the scholarly community to serve as an index to the microform files. However, this type of bibliographic control by familiar association does not exist in a check list of several thousand assorted microform titles selected to represent a subject or a chronological grouping of material. If cataloging is desirable, should the producers of microforms be expected to provide “cataloging at source,” or to actually furnish the cards as an integral part of the subscription? It is interesting to note that the International
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Documentation Center in Sweden is providing catalog cards for all the microfiche titles that it issues.

What type of bibliographic control is needed for the individual titles of newspapers, books, serials, documents, and manuscripts that are being produced in an ever increasing number? Is it sufficient to report titles in the National Union Catalog, or should these microforms be recorded in a separate listing such as the Union List of Microfilms? The Microcard Foundation issues a consolidated catalog, and individual microfilming companies publish lists, but is there a need for a master “Microforms in Print” catalog which would integrate the titles available from all commercial producers?

“Sales catalogs” of microforms produced abroad have started to make an appearance, unknown to many librarians. Should not these catalogs also be consolidated to avoid the necessity of having to solicit and work with a variety of individual lists? It takes quite a bit of digging to discover whether the Journal of the Marine Biological Association is available on film. It happens that this title, as well as many other unique offerings, are available from an English commercial firm.

How many librarians are aware of such catalogs as the following: Microtheque-France. Catalogue des microfiches et microcartes editee en France; Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Library. Catalogue of the rare Hebrew codices and manuscripts and ancient prints in the Kaufman collection reproduced on microcards. Budapest, 1958; Duchemin, Catalogues des microfilms de securite et de complements conserves dans les Archives des departements, Paris, 1955. There are a score of additional catalogs representing institutional holdings on microforms from Cracow to Panama City. The present situation would certainly suggest a bibliography of microform bibliographies that would extend the recent list compiled by J. L. Dewton at the Library of Congress.

The problems which have been noted are only a few of many which are considered by the contributors to this issue of Library Trends. Several of the articles cover topics which admit positive suggestions or solutions to library photographic problems. Other writers are concerned with difficulties for which there seems to be no immediate answer. It is believed that a major contribution has been made if some of the difficulties in photoduplication have been defined, since, once a problem has been accurately circumscribed, the solution is more easily attained.