



The Evolution of Bibliographic Systems in the United States, 1876-1945

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THIS PAPER IS an attempt to describe the structure of the mechanisms and problems in the distribution and utilization of bibliographic data in U.S. libraries in the period from 1876 to 1945, or from the founding of the American Library Association to the close of the precomputer age. In this paper, a bibliographic system is defined as the compilation and nationwide dissemination of bibliographic information, either cooperatively or from a central source agency, to independent libraries. For the period under consideration it is appropriate to speak of the evolution rather than the development of such systems.

The purpose of a national bibliographic system is obscured by the terminology of the times. In the voluminous literature on economy in cataloging, for example, librarians did not project a national bibliographic system but wrote in terms of specific topics. They wanted better catalogs with less expenditure of time and money and tended to omit stating the obvious—namely, that the savings would result in better service to library users. The system could release staff time and energy for more direct service to users or for expanded services. It would also provide higher quality bibliographic data, expand subject access to library materials, include more efficient access to a greater number of bibliographic entities, and furnish location information for a particular item needed but not available in the user's local library.

A comprehensive universal bibliographic system remains a dream of librarians. Two aspects of the system, bibliographic data from a central source and access to the item by interlibrary lending, had been part of Jewett's dream for the Smithsonian Institution. His ill-fated

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scheme for the production of library catalogs from a central stock of cooperatively prepared catalog entries was part of his plan for the accomplishment of "that cherished dream of scholars, a *universal catalogue*."¹ Jewett's catalog would include location information, and he envisioned the establishment of a system of exchanges and interlibrary loans, the latter "with certain stringent conditions."²

That these two aspects of a national bibliographic system were discussed at the 1876 Conference of Librarians is not surprising. James G. Barnwell, librarian of the Philadelphia Mercantile Library, argued the "necessity and practicability" of a universal catalog which would include "the literary stores of every existing or possible library" and allow "millions of readers . . . by instant reference to ascertain what books existed on certain subjects or by certain authors." Moreover, Barnwell continued, this ideal catalog, when properly marked, would "obviate the necessity of either issuing printed catalogues, or of preparing card catalogues, except for books published later than the period covered by the general catalogue."³

The discussions at the conference were on a more practical level and included: "preparation of printed titles for the common use of libraries," i.e., cooperative cataloging, the continuation of Poole's *Index of Periodical Literature*, and a general subject index of works other than periodicals, similar in plan to Poole's *Index* and compiled on a cooperative basis.⁴

Although interlibrary loan was not among the topics presented at the 1876 conference, it had been suggested for consideration by the conference. In a letter to the editor in the first issue of the *American Library Journal*, Samuel S. Green wrote that "much good would result" if libraries agreed to help one another by lending books to each other "for short periods of time."⁵ By referring to "books of reference," by excluding "exceptionally valuable books," and by citing the Boston Public Library's policy of allowing nonresident students to borrow books "needed in the pursuit of their special investigations," Green implicitly defined the scope of interlibrary loans as books to aid research by serious scholars. These restrictions as to kinds of materials and types of readers became the controversial points in the ALA's attempts to define acceptable interlibrary loan practices.⁶

The interrelated themes of efficiency and economy, dominated the 1876 conference and the early period of organized librarianship. Maximum economy in cataloging could be achieved if cataloging data were available from a central source; in turn, the better catalog would provide more efficient service for the individual reader. In cataloging,

the first step was seen as standardization. Barnwell gave first importance to an expertly compiled code of rules to be adhered to with "the most slavish servility; for entire uniformity, next to accuracy of description, is the most essential element of a useful catalogue."⁷

The new association began work almost immediately on standardization. In January 1877, Melvil Dewey published a proposed set of rules to be adopted as the standard for catalog entries,⁸ while the selection of a standard size for catalog cards was the first work of the Committee on Co-operation.⁹ It took only seven years for the ALA to agree on a set of cataloging rules—but it would be seventeen years before it attempted to supply from a central bureau printed catalog cards which, because of the lack of agreement, were furnished in a variety of sizes.

Standardization is a first requisite for a bibliographic system but for current publications, such a system also requires: (1) comprehensive, if not complete, access to current publications; (2) staff, adequate in number and competent in bibliography and subject analysis and with the requisite facility in foreign languages; (3) legitimacy of the entries as conforming to an accepted code and standards; (4) efficient means of disseminating the bibliographic data; (5) economical means for reproducing the entries; and (6) agreement on lending policies, practices and payment of costs. For retrospective coverage, the ideal system would presuppose: (1) a complete national trade bibliography; (2) published catalogs of the great national and special libraries; (3) analytical indexes to periodicals and other serials; and (4) union catalogs, union lists of serial holdings, etc., for the location of individual items.

The situation in 1876 was far from meeting the requirements of a system. A comprehensive national bibliography of U.S. publications was not available. The United States was, according to Frederick Leyboldt, "almost the only civilized country . . . not represented by a national bibliography, that is, a complete and accurate title record of all books published in the country, inclusive of the various editions of early issues and of all the changed or revised editions of more recent date."¹⁰ He felt that the situation was irredeemable at such a late date and proposed instead a "Practical Finding List," an alphabetical author/title/subject record of all American books in print. The first parts of this list, *The American Catalogue*, listing books in print and for sale on July 1, 1876, did not appear until 1878. The first volume was completed in 1880 with the subject index volume appearing in 1881. The work was not a financial success, in part because Leyboldt had

underestimated the enormous amount of labor which would be required and in part because of the lack of support from the book trade.¹¹ Leypoldt and his successor, Richard R. Bowker, did not attempt another basic list but issued supplements to update the work until 1910. Librarians, however, had turned to the H.W. Wilson Company's *Cumulative Book Index* (begun in 1898) and its *United States Catalog* (1899) for the comprehensive record of American publications. The usefulness and popularity of both publications was enhanced by the dictionary-catalog form adopted shortly after their first appearance.

A current trade bibliography did exist. Alphabetical lists of U.S. publications were appearing in the *Publishers' Weekly* with a monthly cumulation in the first issue of the succeeding month. Although the entries were "full" by the standards of the time, the information was supplied by the publishers rather than taken from the book itself. Subscription books were not included in the lists, since the latter were limited to books for sale in the trade.¹²

United States national trade bibliography was therefore still in its infancy in 1876. On the other hand, the printing of the catalogs of the large libraries was beginning to decline.¹³ The most recent author catalog of the largest library—the Library of Congress—had been published in 1864 and thus included only 85,000 of its 300,000 volumes. Eight annual supplements could be consulted for additions up through the year 1872. The ninth supplement (which was to be the last) appeared in 1876, but covered only the most important works acquired in the period 1873-75. The subject catalog of the library, an alphabetic-classed one, was more recent, having been published in 1869, and it included some 96,000 volumes. There were no supplements to the subject catalog, although the 1876 supplement to the author catalog included a subject index for the years 1873-75.

Both the Boston Public and Harvard libraries, the second and fourth largest in the United States in 1876, had abandoned complete printed catalogs. The Boston Public Library preferred separate classed lists of its popular collection, such as its 1873 class list of history, biography and travel. The third largest collection was that of the New York Mercantile Library with 160,613 volumes. Its last catalog appeared in 1866, with supplements in 1869 and 1872.

The catalog of the Astor Library, the fifth largest library, could have been considered a substantial contribution to a national library catalog. Published between 1857 and 1861, with a supplement in 1866, it contained entries for approximately two-thirds of its 152,446

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volumes. With 105,000 volumes, the library of the Boston Athenaeum was not among the largest but its catalog (of which only the first two volumes were available in 1876) should be mentioned because it was already drawing praise for its meticulous accuracy and usefulness.¹⁴

The heart of a national bibliographic system is a central source of bibliographic data. One aspect, the subject indexing of periodical literature, was considered separately at the 1876 conference. Specifically, this was the revival or continuation of William F. Poole's *Index to Periodical Literature*, of which the last edition had appeared in 1853. A special committee was appointed to consider and report on a plan for carrying out the work cooperatively.¹⁵ Approximately fifty libraries, each indexing one or more series of periodicals, contributed the entries which were then incorporated into a single alphabetical arrangement by Poole and William Fletcher. The project inevitably required more time than originally anticipated, and the first volume was not published until 1882. This date was nevertheless more than ten years before the beginning of a central source of catalog cards for books.

As with all printed indexes, currentness remained a problem. Five quinquennial supplements were issued, the fifth and last covering the years 1902-06. Monthly updating was attempted by the cooperating libraries as the *Cooperative Index to Periodicals*, edited by Fletcher and published as a supplement to the *Library Journal* from the spring of 1883 until the end of 1884. It then became a quarterly, but in 1890 and 1891 was issued only as an annual. The solution came in 1901 when H.W. Wilson launched his *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. Begun as an index of twenty periodicals, it expanded to the indispensable library tool known today.¹⁶

In spite of some limitations in the product, the work of the ALA committee on Poole's *Index* was significant in its reflection of librarians' will to provide wider service to readers by cooperative work when capital was lacking. Even more significant was the permanent establishment of the precedent for excluding analytics for periodical literature from the catalog.

Analysis of the publications of the principal learned societies and of certain scholarly periodicals in the catalog was not discontinued immediately. In 1898, the Publishing Section of ALA established a limited cooperative program of printed card analytics prepared by five libraries for 184 such serials specifically devoted to history, philology, economics, fine arts and literature.¹⁷ The exclusion of purely scientific publications was due to the announced plan of the

Royal Society for publishing an index to scientific literature.¹⁸ The number and actual titles analyzed varied from year to year as the periodicals were added to the Wilson indexes and as the analysis of monographic series was undertaken by the Library of Congress. By 1914, only lengthy papers in the transactions and memoirs of learned societies and some monographic series were being analyzed.¹⁹ Difficulties in receiving foreign serials during World War I further reduced the program, and it was abolished in 1918 when the H.W. Wilson Company offered to include the titles in its *Readers' Guide Supplement*.²⁰

An even greater cooperative project, first undertaken in the early 1920s, created the powerful tool for interlibrary loan, the *Union List of Serials*. In cooperation with H.W. Wilson, under an advisory committee of the ALA, 225 libraries in the United States and Canada checked their holdings of 75,000 serial titles. The first edition was published in 1927 and was followed by two supplements. A second edition, financed in part by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, was published in 1943. More than 600 cooperating libraries checked their holdings for this list, which included between 115,000 and 120,000 titles. Further progress in the development of this integral part of the national bibliographic system is outside the chronological scope of this paper.

Progress toward a central source of cataloging data was much slower and more difficult than the continuation of Poole's *Index*. Melvil Dewey, the leader of the discussion on the question at the conference, summarized the options in an early issue of the *Library Journal*: "Shall we try to establish a central cataloguing bureau supported by the Association? Can the publishers be induced to prepare suitable titles and furnish them with the books? Is it practicable for the Library of Congress to catalogue for the whole country?"²¹ The last alternative had been answered at the conference: the Library of Congress was much too crowded and its staff too small to undertake the work.²²

With no assistance forthcoming from the Library of Congress, the publishers' route was tried. That publishers should insert in the book a bibliographic record on uniform-sized slips of paper had been a preconference suggestion in the *Publishers' Weekly*, which credited Justin Winsor for the idea.²³ The conference also approved the proposal, but with the unrealistic proviso that the publishers not prepare the entries themselves but "pay for having it done by a competent person appointed by the librarians."²⁴

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It was not until the summer of 1878 that the ALA Committee on Publishers' Title-Slips, supported by and in cooperation with Richard R. Bowker and Frederick Leypoldt of the *Publishers' Weekly*, was prepared to initiate the project, which was implemented with modifications the following year. The *Publishers' Weekly* agreed to prepare the entries for its "Weekly Record of Publications" according to the proposed ALA cataloging rules and under the supervision of Justin Winsor and Charles A. Cutter. Copies of the entries, printed on thin sheets of paper suitable for pasting on cards, were to be sent each month to subscribers of the *Library Journal* as a supplement. Extra copies would be furnished for an annual subscription of one dollar.²⁵

The new style entry first appeared in the September 14, 1878, issue of the *Publishers' Weekly*. The entries taken directly from books furnished by the publishers were printed in 8-point type; the entries prepared from publishers' descriptions, as in the former practice, were printed in 6-point type. The *Title-Slip Registry* was not begun until the January 1879 issue.²⁶

Subscriptions to the separate lists were also offered to the book trade as the *Book Registry* but the response was negligible. Librarians, too, failed to support the project and it was discontinued early in 1880.²⁷

The reason for the lack of support by librarians is not clear. Jim Ranz has suggested that the failure of this and other early schemes was due to the librarians' uncertainty about the permanence of the schemes, any one of which would have required "basic and far-reaching changes in their normal cataloguing practices."²⁸ The lack of standardization was probably the major factor: the rules of the American Library Association were by no means unanimously accepted by librarians.²⁹

In the particular case of the failure of the *Title-Slip Registry*, there were several other factors. First, the entries were limited to American or imported imprints, and not all publishers cooperated in furnishing copies of the books for cataloging. Second, *Publishers' Weekly* was a business enterprise seeking to serve the book trade. Preparation of the entries under the supervision of "the Library Association authorities"³⁰ must have delayed the listings which the book trade needed promptly. There was also, it seems, a difference of opinion concerning the content of the annotations between what was acceptable on catalog entries and what was acceptable to the publishers and helpful to the trade.

Finally, perhaps Frederic Vinton, librarian of Princeton, was expressing a more widespread attitude than was normally acknowl-

edged in the pages of the *Library Journal*. Vinton feared that "co-operative cataloguing (by which each librarian shall have the least possible writing to do) is unfavorable to good librarianship. For myself, I would on no account lose that familiarity with the subjects and even the places of my books which results from having catalogued and located every one."³¹

In 1887, the ALA publication section made another attempt to establish a central source of printed cards, this time as an experiment but again in cooperation with *Publishers' Weekly*. Cards for 100 of the best books published between September 1 and December 31 were prepared from the *Publishers' Weekly* record of new books for the *American Annual Catalogue*. One copy of each card was furnished to subscribers for \$1.00, with additional cards available for one cent each, but cards for individual titles were not available. Continuation of the program on a regular basis was dependent on the success of the experiment.³² It was said that the experiment was "not on a sufficiently large scale and with sufficient promptness to give a fair commercial test of the support for such a scheme."³³ Its experimental nature can scarcely have been conducive to success and a key factor may well have been the all-or-none feature; this seems also to have been a major cause of the failure of later schemes by the Library Bureau and ALA.

The seventeen-year search for a central source of printed catalog entries seemed to be at an end in December 1893, when the Library Bureau advertised "Printed Catalog Cards for Current Books/A Guaranteed Fact, Not a Mere Experiment."³⁴ Libraries were required to subscribe to the entire series to be printed during the year, with the price in units of 1,000 cards based on three different weights. An average annual subscription, at \$7.50 per thousand for the lightest weight, cost \$37.50. There were only forty-nine subscribers for fifty-nine sets, and even this small number had to be printed on a variety of card sizes.³⁵

Delayed receipt of the cards was attributed by the Library Bureau to lack of cooperation from the publishers on whom it depended for free advance copies of the publications.³⁶ This was the principal reason for the transfer of the project to the ALA Publishing Section in October 1896 since the noncommercial nature of the latter might encourage greater publisher participation. The project was thereafter housed in the Boston Athenaeum where the secretary of the publishing section, William C. Lane, was librarian.³⁷ Because of the free office space and the free books, which were sold, the project made a

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small profit.³⁸ The number of titles varied slightly from year to year, but the number of subscribers remained at approximately sixty. The number of titles was too limited for the larger libraries, but too large for the smaller libraries unable to justify the expense for so many unwanted cards.³⁹ A proposal to allow the purchase of specific titles was rejected because of the cost of "such individualistic selection."⁴⁰ The same proposal received enthusiastic support at the Montreal meeting of the ALA in 1900.⁴¹ A new plan, proposed in January 1901, would have allowed libraries to select only the titles wanted but required a minimum subscription of 500 titles at 5 cents per title in order to protect the association against financial loss.⁴² This plan was not implemented because of the poor response, and the requirement of subscription to the entire series remained unchanged.⁴³

At the same time that responsibility for the printed catalog card project was being transferred to ALA in 1896, the situation was changing at the Library of Congress, which had been repeatedly named as the only logical source of centralized cataloging for the nation. In 1876 only one of the requisites for a national bibliographic system was there: comprehensive access to the current publications of the United States. In the first five years following the passage of the Copyright Act of 1870, which transferred copyright activities from the Patent Office to the Library of Congress, the library had received almost twice as many volumes as it had in the preceding seventy-five years.⁴⁴ (A slight increase in the number of volumes deposited followed the enactment of the so-called "international copyright" law in 1891, extending copyright to citizens of other nations establishing reciprocity with the United States.⁴⁵)

The move into the new Library of Congress building in 1897 alleviated only the space problem noted at the 1876 conference in explanation of the library's inability to assist in the preparation of printed catalog entries; the staff remained inadequate. In 1896, Ainsworth Rand Spofford, LC's librarian, was asking for a catalog staff of only eight, whereas Herbert Putnam at the Boston Public Library had sixteen for cataloging and an additional eight for classification and shelving.⁴⁶

Standardization of cataloging practice had progressed considerably by the time of William C. Lane's survey in 1893,⁴⁷ but the Library of Congress entries were modeled more on British Museum practice than ALA rules. Spofford was not in sympathy with current trends in American cataloging. He was opposed to dictionary catalogs, to card catalogs (except for staff use as supplements to printed catalogs), and

to close classification.⁴⁸ Furthermore, even if its catalog entries had been acceptable to other American libraries, the library had no more economical means of dissemination than any other library; the printing of its author catalog had been suspended in 1880 for lack of funds.⁴⁹

One of the provisions of the 1891 copyright law required the Librarian of Congress to compile a weekly list of all publications deposited for copyright. The list was published by the Treasury Department primarily for the use of customs officials.⁵⁰ The publication was not significant bibliographically, but it did provide the means by which the Library of Congress secured its first printed catalog cards. John Russell Young, appointed Librarian of Congress in 1897, confronted the inadequate budget and staff shortage by asking the new chief of the Catalogue Department, J.C.M. Hanson, to find some way of combining the copyright listing with the cataloging in order to avoid duplication of work. Hanson, in cooperation with Thorvald Solberg, the Register of Copyrights, arranged to make the entries for the list in return for printed catalog entries. Hanson, a strong supporter of the cooperative movement in cataloging, described the new form of the entries as following insofar as possible the practice of the major American libraries. The entries, Hanson reported to Young, would then be useful to other libraries and would save them the cost of cataloging.⁵¹

The new entries appeared in the April 27, 1898, issue of the *Catalogue of Title Entries of Books and Other Articles Entered in the Office of the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress*, in the subdivision "Books proper," and evoked editorial praise from the *Library Journal*. The writer of the editorial hoped that these "authoritative" entries made in accordance with "bibliographical methods" would be made available on cards to other libraries.⁵² The Library of Congress did not itself receive printed cards until July, when the Government Printing Office agreed to print fifty copies of each of the entries on cards for the library.⁵³

The groundwork for centralized cataloging was ready when Putnam succeeded Young as Librarian in 1899. Putnam was successful in securing from Congress the necessary funds for enlarging the staff. In December 1900, the Government Printing Office established a branch in LC and the printing of all catalog entries—not just those for the copyright deposits—began.⁵⁴

At the ALA meeting in July 1901, Putnam announced the willing-

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ness of LC to supply copies of its printed cards to other libraries.⁵⁵ The plan being proposed at that point, however, was supply by way of the ALA Publishing Board for resale to libraries. By late September, Putnam had made the necessary legal arrangements with the Public Printer to sell the cards directly to libraries as extra copies of government publications, at cost plus 10 percent, and announced the decision to the New York Library Association at its Lake Placid meeting.⁵⁶ The Publishing Board, which was also meeting at Lake Placid, "expressed great satisfaction in transferring this work to the Library of Congress."⁵⁷

In an interview published in the Washington *Evening Star*, Putnam explained in detail the value of the catalog card distribution to libraries and scholars. A copy of this statement was enclosed with the circular mailed to approximately 500 libraries announcing that LC was prepared to accept orders for copies of any of its printed catalog cards.⁵⁸ The response in inquiries and orders was not only prompt but far greater in volume than had been anticipated; the response to the quality of the cataloging was equally gratifying.⁵⁹

The Library of Congress had made some changes in its card style earlier in 1901 in response to recommendations of the Advisory Catalog Committee of the ALA Publishing Board, appointed in 1900 and chaired by Hanson. These changes were mainly in typography and in the spacing on the card.⁶⁰ The library agreed to confine the printed area to 12.5 × 5 centimeters, but did not agree to "attempt, at least at present," to clip the cards to the smaller size.⁶¹ This decision removed a major handicap to the economical distribution of catalog cards and assured the standardization of the size.

In considering the failure or limited success of the earlier schemes, certain factors can be identified as contributing to the immediate success of the Library of Congress's distribution of its printed catalog cards. First, card catalogs enjoyed growing popularity during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This alone, however, would not have assured the success of the ALA project. The cost of the Library of Congress cards—two cents for the first card and either one-half or four-tenths of one cent for additional cards—was approximately the same as for the ALA cards. An average set of three Library of Congress cards cost approximately one cent per card; the cost of an ALA card, depending on the weight, was three-fourths of one cent for the lightest, nine-tenths of one cent for medium, and one and one-half cents for the heaviest. The essential difference was ap-

parently the freedom to purchase only the cards wanted from the Library of Congress instead of having to pay for all cards issued by the ALA.

The broad bibliographical data base offered by the Library of Congress, especially when combined with the freedom to select individual titles, contributed significantly to the immediate success of the scheme. Instead of being restricted to current publications of American publishers, cards were available for all additions to the library and for all the books in its collection as they were recataloged. It is interesting to speculate on the acceptability of the Library of Congress entries if Spofford had been in a position to offer them to other libraries in 1876. As it happened, the entries were legitimized both as emanating from the national library and as conforming to current cataloging practice. This combination was a most powerful factor in the establishment of the core of the national bibliographic system.

Another factor was suggested by J.C.M. Hanson, chief of the Catalog Division at LC until 1910. From the nature of the extensive correspondence relating to the cataloging, he was "tempted to conclude that a large proportion of the subscribers have been led to adopt the printed cards because they value the suggestions in regard to subjects."⁶² The validity of Hanson's assessment may be checked by the literature of the period which stressed the need for more and better subject indexing. The Library of Congress subject headings were an important contribution to the system. That the "bibliographic apparatus" offered by the library's printed cards did not include standardized call numbers was a source of keen disappointment to Putnam.⁶³

A component of the system which evolved from the printed card service of the Library of Congress was first suggested by Putnam a year before the service began. In order to enrich the bibliographical record of local United States history at LC, he asked each state library to send a copy of its catalog entries for local material. In return, he offered a copy of each of the catalog cards to be printed by the library.⁶⁴ The first exchange was with the New York Public Library. Putnam's purpose had broadened and he envisioned research centers throughout the country having a card record of the resources of the Library of Congress just as the Library of Congress would have a record of every book of research value in other great collections outside Washington.⁶⁵ The program established included exchanges of cards with the large libraries printing their own catalog cards and also a "deposit" of the LC printed cards with twenty-five geographic-

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ally dispersed centers of research and library activity in the United States and Canada.⁶⁶ The number of depository libraries increased later.

The cards received by the Library of Congress from the "exchange" libraries were incorporated into its union catalog which included, in addition to a complete set of its own cards, the cards it printed from "cooperative" copy. The program of cooperation expanding the coverage of available catalog records began in 1902 with the current accessions of the Department of Agriculture Library. It was later extended to other government libraries and in 1910 to the depository libraries when they were asked to supply catalog copy for books not in LC's collections. Some of the depository sets were used primarily as reference tools for cataloging. The value of a depository set as an interlibrary loan tool increased as it was expanded by the interfiling of the cards of other libraries to form a "repertory" or union catalog.⁶⁷

The honor of having the first (and for almost one-quarter century the only) regional union catalog in this country belongs to the State Library of California at Sacramento. Established in 1909 as a union list of periodicals, it was gradually expanded to cover the nonfiction holdings of the county and municipal libraries of California. A Library of Congress depository set was added in 1914, as were cards from other major libraries either printing or otherwise reproducing their cards for distribution.⁶⁸

During the depression of the 1930s the union catalog idea burgeoned. By 1940, Arthur B. Berthold identified forty-nine regional union catalogs, not including twenty-five libraries having unexpanded Library of Congress depository catalogs.⁶⁹ Reduction in library budgets during the depression forced re-evaluation of acquisition policies and increased the sense of urgency for cooperative policies in the purchase, cataloging, and lending of library materials. The immediate impetus for the establishment of union catalogs as a response to the need for greater cooperation was the availability of free labor from the Work Projects Administration and other federal government relief agencies. The successful application of microphotographic techniques was also important in facilitating the compilation of the catalogs.⁷⁰ In fact, microfilming in libraries, introduced in the United States in the 1930s, functioned in a dual capacity. It was used for compiling the union catalog, in which the rare or needed item could be located for interlibrary borrowing, and was then used for copying the item for lending or purchase.⁷¹

Photography has also played another role in transferring the em-

phasis in the national bibliographic system from cards to other formats. The publication of *A Catalog of Books Represented by Library of Congress Printed Cards, Issued to July 31, 1942* was made possible by the techniques of photographic reproduction. This great enterprise, as John Dawson has said, introduced a new era in American bibliography;⁷² it serves, too, as the apex of the national bibliographic system in the precomputer era.

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