

Handling Microcards in Libraries

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EVERY effort has been made in the production of microcards to insure that their processing will be economical. They are of standard catalog card size and fit the filing cases already in libraries. At the top of each card are both the decimal and Library of Congress classification numbers, as well as a subject heading chosen, if at all possible, from the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. The author entry on each is one established after proper bibliographical research. The first card of each title is a full catalog entry.

At the Wesleyan library, the following simple procedure has been developed to care for its growing collection of microcards. Microcards are ordered exactly the same as books, specifying "microcard edition." When microcards are received they are checked against the orders as in the case of books. Then each microcard is rubber stamped "Wesleyan University Library" on its back to indicate its ownership. Next, the first card of a *volume* is accessioned. In other words, every card is stamped to show ownership, but where there are several cards to make up one volume only the first card of the "volume" is accessioned. The accession number is stamped on the back just below the hole. The Wesleyan stamp is centered and affixed below the accession number, both facing up so that it is readable without taking it out from the catalog drawer.

For statistical purposes each *volume* of a

work in microcard form is counted just as if it were a volume in book form. The Microcard Committee advised this, believing that the possession of a text is the important factor—not whether the text is one in microfilm, photostat, microcard or book form.

Whereas Rider suggested in *The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library* that microcards might be interfiled with the public catalog, he has since decided that ordinarily it is better to store a library's microcards in a separate file, representing them in the catalog with typewritten or L.C. catalog cards. The idea of having a microcard file arranged by author or subject to form a catalog works well for an individual's microcard collection or for a small or specialized microcard library, or in other cases where it is necessary to avoid expensive cataloging. But for a large library the interfiling of microcards with the existing card catalog is neither economical nor practical. Instead of representing a long set with one card it might mean incorporating several hundred cards into an already crowded catalog. These microcards would have to be extracted from the catalog for use in a reading machine which might be some distance from the catalog. Certainly the removal of cards from a main catalog is never to be encouraged. Only independent cataloging can give uniformity to conform with the special local idiosyncracies of the library purchasing microcards.

On the other hand, with the basic cataloging information provided on the heading for the first card of each microcarded title, the cataloging of microcards is much easier

than the cataloging of books. Just imagine what a saving it would mean if books came from their publishers with the authority work for the main entry done, with classification and subject indicated—not to mention collation checked and notes suitably worded!

Therefore, microcards at Wesleyan are filed in a separate room from the public catalog, where they are convenient to microcard readers but are under supervision. The cards are here filed by their L.C. classification and then by their author entries (since Cutter numbers are not given on microcards). The microcards in this classed arrangement form their own shelf list, thus saving the labor of typing a separate set of shelf list cards. A box is kept near the readers, with a request that cards be left in it after use, so that a staff member may refile them correctly. In a library using the decimal classification the cards would naturally be filed by D.C. number.

At Wesleyan, then, a regular set of catalog cards is typed for each microcard title not previously represented in the catalog. The microcard's Library of Congress number, preceded by the word "microcard" rubber stamped, is used as the microcard's call number. The subject heading on the microcard is checked with the Wesleyan subject heading list to see that it conforms with our local practice and further subject headings, added entries or cross references are added if desired. All other cataloging information needed is given in sufficient fullness on the first microcard so that a clerical assistant can make the necessary cards quickly and cheaply.

Because of the desirability of saving space wherever possible on microcards, paragraph-

ing which on L.C. cards sets off title, collation and notes has been discarded, all material being brought out flush with the margins. Supplements and indices are described in notes and in distribution statements in the second line rather than being set off as on Library of Congress cards. Death dates are omitted, not only to save space but to give uniformity because it is not practicable to republish microcards whenever authors die. Actually birth dates differentiate most authors of the same name with sufficient accuracy.

Folded material larger than the pages of the book in which it is found is uniformly photographed on the last microcard of each volume. It is also a general microcarding policy to arrange to have all index volumes at the end of the whole set for ease in finding. Since each volume is photographed as a unit (and the cards for that volume are numbered as a unit) an index volume on microcards may, however, be filed wherever desired. Thus an index volume may be filed after the last volume it indexes or after the whole set of cards for a given title.

In cases where we have both a book and a microcard copy of the same title the "microcard" stamp is affixed in the margin, with the Library of Congress classification on the author card for the book. (Wesleyan does not indicate additional copies on the secondary cards.) If there are variations in imprint information, the data for the microcard is added. Notes of completeness are made for microcard holdings, e.g., "Microcard set: v. 1-2" (in pencil).

As the use of microcards develops, improvement in headings may occur to librarians and their suggestions are welcome.