

A Survey on Capabilities of UNIMARC and IRANMARC for Archival Recourses Management on the Basis of Specialists Viewpoints

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Abstract

If archival centers organize archival resources on the basis of safe and global archival standards, then they will be useful for scholars. Bibliographic relations are important and essential in organizing and managing of archives. These relations are predicted for books in libraries by UNIMARC and IRANMARC. So, current research has studied on capabilities of UNIMARC and IRANMARC for management of archival materials. Findings revealed that on the basis of Specialists' viewpoints basically UNIMARC and IRANMARC did not focus on hierarchical rules for archival materials. It seems that although UNIMARC is comprehensive for organizing library materials, it cannot provide necessary details for description, identification and classification of all complex relations in archival collections.

Keywords: UNIMARC, IRANMARC, archival materials

Introduction

Archival community tries to use standard methods for arrangement and description of archival materials. For example, archivists found that they must use a standard and unique format for presenting information of finding aids to establish connection among several collections. So, they used USMARC for describing of archival materials. In the late of 1970, archivists focused on AMC MARC for establish bibliographic relations among archival materials. It was a challenge for archivists and could not satisfy their information needs. So archivists tried to use special standards for managing of archival materials. But a basic question is that what are the solutions of UNIMARC and IRANMARC for arrangement of bibliographic relations in archival collections? Current research wants to answer this question.

Literature Review

There are researches that are about using UNIMARC in description of bibliographic

relations for archival and library materials. Weber (1990) stated that archivists for information description of archival materials must use AMC MARC. He believed that this kind of MARC can describe related records to different archival materials. Kokabi (1994) in his PhD thesis indicated that UNIMARC can be customized for Iranian publications. Kokabi (1996) found that MARC is an efficient format and a valuable tool for data exchange and collaboration cataloging. He stated that Iranians can use UNIMARC as a technical base for creating IRANMARC. UNIMARC can present relations among bibliographic works and subject or author sharing among these works. He believed that 4xx in UNIMARC has been created for indicating the relations among records. Hopkinson (2006) said that MARC has been criticized as having an antiquated record structure but this is now overcome since records can be exchanged in an XML record structure. This has its disadvantage: the common format is no longer necessarily the one that is supported first as we saw from the account of the instance with TALIS where the less standard XML transfer methodology was the one given priority. Tools like CDS/ISIS and other library management systems depend on these stable formats. Stocking (2008) stated that UK archivists implemented successfully beta version on EAD in 1997. They found that EAD is more practical than AMC MARC. For example, using EAD in Archive Hub project in UK, all users can access to holding of 150 UK archival centers.

Methodology

Current research is a descriptive study. In this research, 11 specialists that had studies and experiences in MARC and archive fields were identified. Using email communications during September 2010 to March 2011, they answered to questions. They were asked if UNIMARC and IRANMARC can support archival materials relations? If UNIMARC and IRANMARC, specially block 4, support relations among archival materials, then this point can be concluded that UNIMARC and IRANMARC can manage archival materials and can be used in Iranian archival softwares.

Findings

It seems that fields of block 4 are useful for archival centers. These fields include:

- 461 Set Level
- 462 Subset Level
- 463 Piece Level
- 464 Piece-Analytic Level

Each linking entry field in a record will contain subfields that identify the item to which the link is being made. The data in this field should be sufficient to identify the record for the item being linked to, or, if there is no record, to identify the item itself (UNIMARC, 1994). In these fields, different levels of document components are linked together. On the other hand, in the archival area and on the basis on defined rules in this area, hierarchical levels of documents include: Fonds, Subfonds, Series, Subseries and Items.

Studies revealed that UNIMARC consider archival materials as non book materials and can not establish relationship among them. Block 4 in UNIMARC is similar to archival principles, but it can not support hierarchical relations in archives.

In this part, viewpoints of MARC and archive specialists are presented:

These respondents were archivists in National Library and Archives of I.R. of Iran, PhD

student on archival studies in University College London, Head of Library Systems and Bibliographic Services Middlesex University, faculty member of Alzahra University, and library software specialist.

Responder 1 said: Block 4 in UNIMARC is Linking Entry Block. This block has not any descriptive information on documents. Structure of UNIMARC and IRANMARC is complete. They can storage data on museum objects, carpets, historical building, and so on. Safe fields are designed for them in UNIMARC and IRANMARC.

Responder 2 said: We must pay attention to failed experiences in UK or USA about using AMC MARC in archival softwares. It seems that there is no reason to use UNIMARC for archives and experience wrong way.

Responder 3 said: In UNIMARC as well as MARC 21, xx4 is used in bibliographic data format. Traditional MARC is flat, but MARC xml is flexible and hierarchical. This kind of MARC can support all levels and has not any limitation. Any relationship in archival materials can be defined in MARC.

Responder 4 stated that In IRANMARC, we used 481 and 482 fields only for manuscripts. It seems that we must use ISAD and flexible protocols.

Responder 5 said: MARC and bibliographic systems in general terms, have been used for the description of archives. However, EAD is most suitable for archival description. Links could be done using the 4xx block. However, due to the ISO2709 record length, it is most of the times difficult to implement such links in bibliographic system. You could probably use the 461 SET field to show the hierarchical links, but you should always keep in mind that the ISO 2709 has a limited record length and inserting multiple links will probably result to exceed this length and not produce valid ISO 2709 records.

Responder 6 said: It seems that in arrangement and description of archival materials, MARC is not enough alone. We need a collection of archival standards here and we can use only a standard. In archival area, archivists want to indentify provenance of documents. I think we must focus on archival metadata.

Responder 7 stated that: Structure of UNIMARC is flat and can not be used for future need of archivists. UNIMARC has not been forecasted for archives.

Responder 8 said: We are developing a version of UNIMARC for manuscripts. I think that it is important to have MARC for archives with any MARC format so that libraries that have some archival material can incorporate them into the same database. My colleagues on the PUC are not so certain that it is feasible. In the early 1990s, I worked at the Tate Gallery and the UK Society of Archivists was very interested in this. I worked on adapting UK MARC to archival material based on what US MARC AMC does. However in the mid-1990s, the archival world decided to use mark-up language instead, so they could carry on producing word processed archival lists and just MARC up the access points for the computer system to index. This was called EAD. What is required is for someone to take UNIMARC and develop it. I have encouraged the PUC to develop UNIMARC in this direction but they come from national libraries and do not have many archives.

Responder 9 said: Although UNIMARC emphasizes on monographs and non book materials, it is not possible to separate different entities of archival materials in UNIMARC.

Responder 10 said: UNIMARC cannot support archival materials, because basically it has not been created for management of archival materials.

Responder 11 believed that: UNIMARC was suggested and created for information

transforming, not information maintaining. So, UNIMARC has fundamental problems for supporting hierarchical structure.

Conclusion

Findings revealed that UNIMARC has considered archival materials as non book materials. Actually UNIMARC and IRANMARC have not focus on archival standards and rules. Failed experiences in UK and USA for using AMC MARC for archival material organization and inability of AMC MARC for satisfying archivists' information needs, indicated that UNIMARC like AMC MARC cannot support hierarchical rules in archives. Study on Specialists' viewpoints indicated that UNIMARC and IRANMARC are not adapted with arrangement and description in archive principles. Basically UNIMARC and IRANMARC cannot support archival materials, they do not follow hierarchal rules and focus on library materials more than archives. Studies indicated that on the basis of ISO 2709 and records length, importing multiple links in bibliographic systems is difficult and has limitation. This point can be a disadvantage for UNIMARC. Although UNIMARC can completely support library materials, but it can not describe and classify all complex relations in archival collections.

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