

# New Titles Lists and Special Bibliographies Report

## January-June 2020

### Introduction

In a public library adding new materials to the collection forms an important part of its service to the community. Users who follow favorite authors, series, or subjects want to know about the latest relevant materials. Others like to browse through recent materials to see if something arouses their interest or catches their attention.

Public libraries employ various means of reaching out to users to satisfy these needs. One of the most common is to set up shelves where recently acquired or theme-based materials can be displayed. There users can scan the materials quickly to determine what is of interest to them. In addition, libraries call attention to new materials by providing guides to the collection in the form of new titles lists or best sellers lists. They enable users to identify materials of potential interest with a minimum of effort.

In most libraries the catalog has become the primary tool for identifying materials in the collection. Library staff invest considerable time and effort in creating and maintaining it. In its computerized form the catalog is quite malleable. It can act as a form of search engine; it can provide detailed descriptive and holdings information about materials in the collection; it can record and maintain circulation information. In addition, it has the potential to generate specialized lists and bibliographies.

The purpose of this project was to explore the feasibility of the last function. The objective was to find a way to generate lists without the duplicative effort of copying information from the catalog and pasting it into a document. While such a document could serve multiple purposes, such as the generation of print copies and being posted online, the process of creating it would be laborious and time consuming. Instead, this project focused on taking metadata exported from the Polaris Library System and reformatting it so that it could be displayed in web pages. Such web pages could be added to the library's website, so that the lists would appear to be an integral part of the library's web presence.

### Methodology

The Polaris Library System has some built-in processes for exporting new title information. There are four RSS feeds: one each for print, large print, videos, and sound recordings. The output is in XML format which conforms to the RSS 2.0 standard with the following data fields: title, link, description, category, and date (of entry into the system). To make use of this output I adapted a web page that I had developed for the digital signage project. The web page contains JavaScript programming which converts the XML into HTML and formats the resulting output. Because I wanted a clean looking web page with clear delineation between the entries, I limited each one to the title field and a button that linked back to the catalog. In order to display the description field, I created a JavaScript function that displays the description in a pop-up box when one's pointer hovers over the title.

This was a good start, but there were significant limitations. Most important was the fact that each of the RSS output files represented only one day's cataloging. Typically new titles lists represent a longer time span, perhaps a week or two, perhaps a month. In order to achieve such coverage one would have to concatenate several days output manually and then find a way to order the entries other than by control number so that they would make sense to the users. Next in importance was the limited amount of bibliographic data in the RSS output. While the RSS title field represented the MARC 245 title statement field and the description the 520 summary field, the RSS records contained no metadata for series, material types, or subjects. Third, the RSS output did not contain records for electronic resources, which constitute an important and growing

part of the library's collection.. Finally, the fact that in a small library the volume of cataloging is not enough to generate any content for some of the feeds rendered the four-fold division rather useless. At this point I realized that I needed to work with full MARC records in order to accomplish the project's objectives.

With the assistance of cataloging contacts at ISU and UNI I learned the basics of the process that I needed to follow: to export MARC records from the cataloging system, convert them to MARCXML, and then process the MARCXML with JavaScript as I had the RSS feeds. In addition, I obtained some sample MARCXML files with which to practice.

### Exporting

The Polaris Library System enables records in the database to be exported *in toto*, by date range, or by control number range. Initially it seemed that exporting records by date range would be satisfactory for creating new titles lists. But that turned out not to be the case because older records that are edited will be saved with the current date and thus are mixed in with records newly loaded into the system. For this reason exporting records by control number worked better, but it necessitates keeping track of the control numbers. After some experimentation I found that exporting sets of a thousand or so records gave the best results.

In order to create bibliographies for authors, series, or subjects one has to load the selected records into a record set. Then one uses the export utility to export them. To use this process successfully it is necessary to modify the SQL export criteria that govern the process (Polaris is built on a Windows Server platform that uses a Microsoft SQL database). The library's Innovative Interfaces service representative kindly supplied me with the modified SQL export criteria necessary for this purpose.

### Converting

Converting MARC records into XML format has become much easier with the availability of MarcEdit. MarcEdit is highly thought of by professional catalogers because it can be used in many ways to create, modify, or convert records in and out of the MARC format. I used it to convert the binary MARC files exported by Polaris into XML and to sort the contents by title.

### Processing

The Library of Congress did an excellent job of creating an XML structure for the MARC record format. While it discards the directory in the final XML output, it maintains the leader, control fields, and data fields between clearly marked start and end tags. The field hierarchy is also respected with subfields nested within the control and data fields. MARC tags and indicators are treated as attributes of the respective fields and subfields.

When the appropriate JavaScript functions are invoked in a web page, the XML file is opened and its contents loaded into a variable, which can be further processed down through the hierarchy of fields and subfields. The contents of the variables are then arranged in an HTML structure for presentation to the user.

In the scripts created for the new titles lists and specialized bibliographies the leader and control fields 006, 007, and 008 are extracted from the XML and used to determine the material type of each item. Then the data fields are processed and the 245, 520, 490, and 856 fields are extracted. Finally the variables for the title statement, the material type, and the series are inserted into an HTML structure that repeats for each record. The variable for the summary field is inserted as a pop-up box. The variable for the control number is inserted into a button that will invoke the catalog record when pressed unless the material type is electronic book or electronic audiobook, in which case the variable for the content of the 856 field is substituted.

Because this processing is done client-side, that is, by the web browser that is used to access the web page, it can take a minute or so to process and display a thousand records. However, as in the case of the digital signage web pages, the load placed on the network is relatively light.

## Summary

By using metadata from the full MARC record it is possible to create new titles lists and specialized bibliographies that support library programming activities. Because of the recent large loads of Overdrive records I separated the New Titles list into two parts: one for electronic books and electronic audiobooks and another for printed materials, CDs, and videos. The separation enables users interested in either the electronic formats or traditional formats to scan the appropriate list quickly. Both lists are presented in the library's new website by means of an iframe, which enables them to be integrated within that format.

I have also created a specialized bibliography for Boone County history and genealogy. In addition to the materials in the Fireplace Room and behind the main service desk it contains entries for the electronic versions of the two Boone County histories, the Trail Tales indexes, and the photo collections of Boone County railroad stations and the Wagon Wheel Bridge that are on the Internet. Demonstration web pages for bibliographies of authors, series, and subjects are available on my EPL Project page at:

<https://sites.uni.edu/caswell/epl/>

One unexpected outcome of this project has been an improvement in my ability to keep the series entries for fiction up-to-date. By scanning the New Titles lists I can quickly pick out which titles are likely to need new or upgraded series, and corresponding subject or genre headings. The Novels in Series project is about to complete its fourth year and it is gratifying to find a way to make it more efficient.

Finally, let me say that the library is fortunate to have high quality software tools such as Polaris and LibCal. They are not only highly functional in their own right, but they can leverage the large human investment in creating and maintaining metadata by exporting it for reuse in other contexts.

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