Statement on the Transposition/Arrangement and Presence/Absence of Parts Positions of the 006 and 008 Fields

Music Library Association
Bibliographic Control Committee
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Background

At the 2008 Newport meeting of the MARC Formats Subcommittee, it was the sense of both the Subcommittee and some of the visitors present that the Bibliographic Control Committee should issue an official statement regarding the transposition/arrangement and presence/absence of parts bytes of the 006 and 008 fields. These bytes were included in Proposal no. 2002-14/3:008/21 and Proposal no. 2002-14/4: 008/33 (Music), available at http://www.loc.gov/marc/marbi/2002/2002-14.html. These proposals were made as concessions to the British cataloging community, which uses these bytes. However, since there is no consensus among U.S. and Canadian catalogers on how these fields should be used, their inclusion posed the potential for some confusion and inconsistency among shared records.

Recommendations

In the sound recordings format, the OCLC defaults for positions 008/21 (parts) and 008/33 (transposition/arrangement) are both "n" (not applicable), since these bytes can only be applied to notated music. In the scores format, the defaults are blank for both positions. Since both positions are optional, these are the only logical defaults. Also, some confusion has been expressed regarding the meaning of the presence/absence of parts byte; and this recommendation is in part to allay such confusion by recommending that the position not be coded.

The MARC Formats Subcommittee recommends that the OCLC defaults be used for these bytes. Reasons for this include inconsistent coding in USMARC 008/21, based on differing interpretations of the coded values, which led to this byte becoming obsolete in USMARC in 1988. U.S. and Canadian cataloging records did not include this information from 1988 to 2002. The Music Library Association feels that there are currently better ways for online catalogs to retrieve records with or without parts, especially since dependence on coded data for retrieval has lessened considerably since 1988. Also, U.S. and Canadian catalogers did not have the ability to code arrangement/transposition at all until 2002; and there is no perception among that community that providing these values would help catalog users in record retrieval.