

CENTRALIZED BIBLIOGRAPHIC-HEADINGS AUTHORITY CONTROL CHARGE TO THE TSPC AUTHORITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Background: The Technical Services Planning Committee is concerned about the increasing difficulty of maintaining the controlled headings in our bibliographic databases. Implicit in this concern is the question of costs-of-maintenance versus benefits derived from this essential but complicated bibliographic database-access system. Four facts stand out in this regard: first, individual, institution-specific bibliographic databases are becoming less central in the typical library users search for information; second, this notwithstanding, there is considerable demand to increase the speed and quantity of cataloging for non-traditional resources, especially those in audio-visual and electronic formats; third, it is becoming extremely difficult, if not impossible, to maintain the requisite expertise on each campus to assure the level of bibliographic-headings accuracy and consistency that we all desire to provide our users; and, finally, increasing familiarity with Aleph has raised concerns that the maintenance of controlled headings will continue to be a process that needs a great deal of expertise as it is not as automated as was earlier thought. Short of accepting the gradual degradation in the quality of our databases, the Committee sees two possible solutions: the acquisition, either individually or collectively, of commercial, third-party headings-maintenance services (a solution now being used by many libraries) or the centralization of, at least some, expertise and authorities-maintenance activities. While the Authorities Subcommittee may wish to also consider the former solution, it is the latter process that the TSPC is particularly interested in having studied.

The Charge:

Explore the concept and value of establishing a centralized SUL authority maintenance program, or a combination of FCLA/local efforts, to bridge the gap between the current capabilities in NOTIS and uncertain abilities of ALEPH. A preliminary report on recommendations and, if needed, areas that still need further investigation is to be completed in September 2003.

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