

The Development of Authority Database in National Library of China

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Friends and Colleagues:

I have great pleasure to be here with all friends to discuss authority control, and to have the opportunity to introduce you National Library of China and the development of authority database in NLC.

1. NLC: an introduction

The predecessor of National Library of China is the Capital Library of Qing Dynasty, which was founded on September 9, 1909, and began to be open to the public on August 27, 1912. In 1916, the Capital Library began to receive legal deposit copies of Chinese publications. This indicates that the library had some functions as a national library. In July 1928, the Capital Library was renamed to be National Library of Beiping. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, National Library of Beiping was renamed to be Beijing Library. On December 12, 1998, the State Council approved that the Chinese name of the library is changed to be Zhong Guo Guo Jia Tu Shu Guan {National Library of China}. The library covers an area of 14 hectares, including 4 hectares covered by the branch library, and has a total floor space of 170,000 square meters.

National Library of China is a comprehensive research library and a national general repository of publications, with the functions of collecting, processing, storage, research, utilization and dissemination of knowledge and information. NLC is also a national center of bibliographical records, a national center of library information networks and a national center of research and development in library and information science. NLC provides service for the central government, priority readers in research, educational and production institutions, and the public. NLC is also responsible for the fulfillment of cultural agreements with foreign countries on behalf of our government and the promotion of exchange and cooperation with libraries and cultural institutions all around the world.

NLC has a large quantity and various kinds of collections, some of which date back to the Royal Library of Southern Song Dynasty in 700 years ago. According to the statistics of 2001, there are about 23 million volumes/items collected in NLC, ranking the fifth among national

libraries in the world and the first in Asia. There are 2.6 million volumes/items of rare books, inscriptions, rubbings, ancient maps, books in languages of Chinese ethnic minorities, manuscripts of notable authors, genealogies, local histories, etc. There are 35,000 items of inscriptions on animal bones and tortoise shells in the Shang Dynasty 3,000 years ago. With a policy to collect all publications published in China, NLC is the largest library collecting Chinese publications in the world. With publications in 115 foreign languages accounting for 50 % of the total collections, NLC is the largest library collecting foreign publications in China. NLC has also special collection of manuscript of notable authors, documents on the revolutionary history, Chinese doctoral dissertations, etc. NLC is one of the depository libraries of UN publications, and has publication exchange relationship with 692 libraries and institutions in 117 countries and regions in the world. With the development of information media, NLC has also collected many electronic publications. NLC's collections are increasing by 600,000-700,000 volumes/items every year.

2. NLC: a national center of bibliographic records

National Library of China has the function of being the national center of bibliographic records, publishing China National Bibliography, National Union Catalog and catalogs for collections in NLC. The function of National Center of Bibliographic Records is performed via the Department of Acquisition and Cataloging in NLC. This is the largest department in NLC. There are about 200 staff members. They are responsible for the Acquisition and Cataloging of books in Chinese and foreign languages, international exchange, compiling National Union Catalog, printed bibliographies and various kinds of bibliography databases. They are also responsible for the development of the cataloging rules and various standards.

In 1997, NLC established Online Library Cataloging Center, to organize computer cataloging nationwide, manage a Union Catalog on the network and promote the sharing of bibliographic records and document resources. Up to now, the Center has owned more than 600 members and users. At same time it has set up several Branch Centers separately in Guangdong, Guangxi, Sichuan provinces and other places. The center provides various services for users and members. As the bibliographic products, there are "Bibliographic DB for Chinese books (since 1949)", "Chinese doctoral dissertation DB", "Bibliographic DB for Chinese books (1911-1949)", "Bibliographic DB for books of Western Languages", "Bibliographic DB for Periodicals", "Bibliographic DB for Rare books", etc. The products forms are FD, CD, E-mail and Internet. In order to facilitate the exchange and sharing of MARC Records, the Center organized the experts and professors to revise the "China MARC Format Manual", "Description Rule for Authority Data Entries" which is based on the "Guidelines for Authority and reference Entries", "China MARC Format / Authorities" (trial edition) which is based on "UNIMARC / Authorities", etc. The Center also held Seminars and various Training courses for its members and users.

For many years, the National Library of China has been devoted itself to the compilation and development. Up to the present time, the largest products are Chinese Books MARC DB and Authority Control DB.

The Chinese books DB were compiled according to the ISBD(M) and the "China MARC

Format”(named CNMARC) which is generated on the basis of UNIMARC. All the rules of UNIMARC were absorbed by CNMARC, the field and subfield were all reserved in the CNMARC. It is therefore completely compatible with UNIMARC. In 1996, CNMARC has being approved as the culture professional standard by the Ministry of Culture of China. NLC has compiled over 1.1 million of CNMARC records for Chinese books since 1949.

3. Authority Control Database

Authority control is a necessary function in the bibliographic retrieval system. In order to ensure the completeness, constancy and retrieval efficiency of bibliographic data, we have fulfilled the following work for authority control:

I. In order to perfect retrieval and to meet the demands raised by documentation indexing, we have compiled “the Chinese Classification Subject Thesaurus” based on “Chinese Library Classification” and “ the Chinese Subject Thesaurus”, created “the Subject Thesaurus to Classification Corresponding List” and compiled the Chinese Classification Subject Thesaurus Database. We have collected 800,000 data, and compiled 120,000 records of the database.

II. In order to realize authority control, we have compiled “Chinese MARC Authority Format” (trial edition) and “Descriptive Rules for Entries of Authority Data” based on them to compile authority database.

III. Chinese Ancient Author database collect Chinese ancient individual authors and group authors, whose works have been handed down for generations, from the ancient times to 1911. There are more than 40,000 items.

It is a very hard task to make authority records for more than 40,000 ancient authors, as they are so intricate. In the recent years, the Rare Book and Special Collection Department have compiled 11,000 records. Each record includes author’s name, dates of birth and death, dynasty, place of birth, style and assumed name, family relations, imperial examination’s position, official position, major behavior and representative works.

IV. To set up a modern authors authority database. It has mainly collected authority records of authors who had expanded works and group author since 1912. The records include author’ name (original name, writing name), dates of birth and death, nation, title of works, male or female, birth place, position and so on.

Now there are more than 325,900 records in the database. They include personal names, group names and title names. 40,000 records were compiled in 2001. The data source were from two ways:

- From handbook and networking resource;
- From bibliographic records. Draw out several related fields from bibliographic records. Based on them to compile the name authority records.

At present the problem of authority control in Nation Library of China is that, there is not an authority control system connect with cataloging system. The cataloging stuff only can use the authority database offline. Therefore it is not an efficient system now. But this year NLC will introduce a new Library Management System. The authority control function will be realized on the new system.

In order to speed up the development of ancient and modern authors' file, we have taken different ways to seek cooperation both at home and aboard and we will try our best to fulfill this task as soon as possible and offer all colleagues throughout the world to share with you.

Thank you for your attention.

Readings and references

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