

Original Cataloging Using CAT ME Plus at the University of Florida

by Carol Walton and
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When the University of Florida Libraries Catalog Department agreed to be a test site for OCLC's new PRISM service in 1990, we also agreed to test the new Catalog Micro Enhancer (CAT ME) Plus software. Although we have been OCLC members for sixteen years, we had never before used any of the cataloging microenhancer products.

We began the test with the hope to increase the efficiency of some of our cataloging processes but with no concrete expectations. What we have found is that the CAT ME Plus program has completely revolutionized our original monographic cataloging processes and enabled us to survive the loss of one of our three data entry positions without experiencing a backlog in OCLC inputting.

The CAT ME Plus program is designed, among other things, to "use batch online searching and processing, constant data, and word processing features to reduce telecommunications costs, staff time, and workstation time required for routine cataloging." The initial attraction for us was the promised capability of doing much of our work offline.

The software requires at least 640K of RAM and a 20MB formatted hard disk with DOS version 3.1 or higher. We have made very effective use of the program because we have numerous PCs, as well as OCLC workstations, meeting these requirements. Most of our professional catalogers have IBM or IBM-compatible PCs at their desks that double as terminals for our NOTIS-based online catalog. In the catalog department we currently have the program loaded on thirteen PCs and four OCLC M-310 or M-386 workstations.

The Old Way of Doing Things

Prior to having access to CAT ME Plus, our original catalogers created workforms either by using a word-processing program, by keying in a workform as a temporary record in the online catalog and then printing it off, by typing, handwriting, or by some combination of all four possibilities. Three data entry operators next keyed the records into the OCLC save file.

Revision was accomplished by having the catalogers review a printout of the saved record and mark needed changes. The inputters then worked from the edited printout to make corrections, enter the record into the OCLC database, and transfer the completed record into our local catalog by means of a locally developed OCLC-to-NOTIS interface program.

Because we tried to avoid a backlog in our OCLC inputting, the three data entry operators, who handled only monographic workforms, normally spent from three to five hours each day entering original workforms, enhancing, updating, and loading existing OCLC records into the local catalog. The inputters were tired and were beginning to suffer the physical symptoms associated with stress on the wrists, fingers, arms, and eyes.

Additionally, there was a great deal of consultation over workforms because someone could not read a cataloger's handwriting, the wrong diacritics had been keyed, or some minor tagging problem generated an error message and interrupted the inputting process. There was also considerable frustration over the routine double keying that was necessary to get our originals loaded into OCLC

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and brought back into our local system.

A New Era Dawns

We began to experiment with CAT ME Plus in October 1990. OCLC staff were always available to help us with problems involving the software's test versions. In December 1990, we loaded a test version of the software into every PC and OCLC workstation with a hard drive and began to train the catalogers and inputting staff to work with the program.

Because the program causes the PC keyboards to mimic the OCLC keyboards, we conducted initial training by having the catalogers key each other's workforms interactively at an OCLC workstation. In addition to the keyboard similarity, the program also has all of the wonderful editing features available with the PRISM service, such as constant data records.

All our original monograph catalogers have been working with the program continuously since December 1990 (using the production version since March 1991), refining the procedures and working through a variety of minor and some significant problems. Using CAT ME Plus, our monographic catalogers now key their workforms into a CAT ME file saved on a floppy disk. When they have finished keying in the day's work and marking the workforms in their files to update, they submit their disks for OCLC processing.

To avoid creating duplicate records, the cataloger either searches OCLC interactively immediately before submitting the file or else enters search keys into a separate file on the same disk. If a search key file is present, the inputter processes that file first and returns the disk to the cata-

loger for evaluation if any records matching the search keys are found.

The next morning, the data entry operators take the floppies to an OCLC workstation, where they call up the CAT ME Plus program and begin to process the disks. Automatic validation occurs with CAT ME processing just as it does with the regular PRISM service.

If one or more of the records in a cataloger's floppy file fails to process completely because of a validation problem, the inputter simply halts the process and returns the disk to the cataloger. Now it is the catalogers, rather than the inputters, who are responsible for fixing tagging errors and resubmitting the disk so that processing can be completed.

When all the records in a file process successfully, the inputter uses the export capabilities of the program and makes a printout of the file for final quality checking. The next step is to take the floppy to an OCLC-to-NOTIS interface terminal and upload the file into our local catalog.

Problems Along the Way

Nothing is ever perfect in any workflow. There are a couple of problems that limit our ability to utilize the program as effectively as we would like.

1. We are unable to process our serials originals using CAT ME Plus because we are a CONSER library. CAT ME Plus will not accept the special CONSER fields, and we must still key these records in interactively.

2. We have experienced some hardware incompatibility problems as we transfer the floppy disks between our PC/XTs and the OCLC M-386 dedicated terminals.

Libraries tend to have a mix of computer equipment ranging from the most recent developments to virtual antiques. Even if adequate funds are constantly available to buy the newest machines, maintaining compatibility with existing data media and the large amount of time required to convert older formats will ensure that most libraries will have a variety of disks at all times.

This works when older machines are used with older media, but it can cause problems when data must be exchanged across different computer generations. In the particular case of OCLC microcomputers, M-300 workstations may need to exchange disks with M-386 workstations. In theory, both workstations can read and write a common format: 360K 5.25-inch disks, which is the standard floppy used on M-300s and other PC/XT class machines. The M-386 normally writes to a higher density (1.2M), but it can be instructed to produce a 360K disk.

In practice, however, there are two obstacles to interchanging disks between the machines. First, although all 1.2M drives such as those used on the M-386 can write to a disk at the lower 360K density, the resulting disk frequently is unreadable on PC/XT class machines like the M-300. This is because the drives in the M-386 are capable of positioning the drive heads over the disk with a higher degree of precision than some M-300s can follow. The result is a disk that is written at M-300 density, but one some M-300s can't read!

The other potential problem concerns the medium itself. The high-density disks needed for the M-386 drives are constructed in such a way that they will not necessarily be centered properly on the disk spindle when used in an M-300. This has the same data

distorting effects that can be heard in a phonograph record when the spindle hole is not precisely in the middle of the disk.

Of the two problems, the second is the easier to cure: make sure all disks exchanged between M-386 and M-300 computers are low-density types, and are originally formatted on the M-300. These can be recognized either by the designation DD on the disk box or label, or by the shiny plastic ring in the center of the disk which assures precise centering in the M-300s. Use of high-density disks may seem to work for a while, yet suddenly produce unreadable results.

The first problem has no easy solution. If your M-386 and M-300 machines consistently have trouble exchanging disks, even when written at 360K on DD media, the only cure is to replace one of the M-300 disk drives with

a high-density 1.2M version. The cost of this operation will range between \$150 and \$200. We have followed this route on two of our PC/XT machines.

Weighing the Advantages

We have noted many advantages to using the CAT ME Plus program for entering original records into the OCLC database.

1. We avoid double keying by both catalogers and inputters.

2. We avoid the back and forth discussions because someone couldn't understand what someone else meant on a workform or because the inputter made a mistake.

3. Our two remaining data entry operators are able to process the same volume of mono-

graphic work as before, now handle serials original inputting as well, and spend only one and a half to three hours each day inputting. We save six to seven hours of staff time every day and process a higher volume of work with greater accuracy.

In addition to streamlining our processing of monographic originals, the CAT ME Plus program has enabled us to decrease the amount of time necessary for attaching our holdings to OCLC records (both monographs and serials) and has also allowed us to improve bibliographic searching routines for certain types of monographs. Although we have had some challenging moments as we tried to incorporate CAT ME Plus into our workflows, we would be very reluctant to return to our previous routines in any of the areas mentioned.

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