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Ronald Hagler's *The Bibliographic Record and Information Technology*, 3d ed. (book review)

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Judith Dye
EDITOR

PROFESSIONAL MATERIALS

The Bibliographic Record and Information Technology. 3d. ed. By Ronald Hagler. Chicago: ALA, 1997. 394p. ALA members \$40.50; others \$45 (ISBN 0-8389-0707-5).

This is the third edition of this title, commonly referred to as *BRIT*, since 1982. The author, Ronald Hagler, is on the faculty of the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia. His familiarity with the bibliographic record is evident in this work, thus explaining why he was invited to speak at the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR in October 1997.

In the author's own words, "This is a conceptual treatment of current bibliographic practice in the context of its principles and history" (p. xv). The material is presented in two parts: "Principles of Bibliographic Control" and "Library Standards," which could perhaps be summarized as "theory" and "practice." In some ways the grouping and ordering of topics are unusual, but the ap-

proach does make for a good flow for reading. The first chapter, "The History and Language of Bibliography," sets the stage for those to follow, and here, as throughout the book, historical information is skillfully interwoven with current concepts.

Records in the three types of bibliographic files—A&I (abstracting and indexing) publications, monographic bibliographies, and library catalogs—are discussed, including similarities and differences between the types. The distinctions are important but are becoming less obvious as searchers now access all record types through the very same computer interface, either remotely or from the library. Since the central focus of this work is the bibliographic record in the library catalog, the treatment of the other two types of records is handled mostly in terms of contrasting them with the catalog record. This is a bit confusing at times.

There is a good balance of technical details resulting from automation throughout, and some mention of manual files. A number of library concepts, organizations, and occurrences are explained in a way that properly place them in context, which is not an easy task considering the complexity of the topic. Included are the origins of the various cataloging codes through the present AACR2R, the development of bibliographic utilities, precision versus recall in searching, and local integrated library systems. The obligatory emphasis upon standards for providing consistency and cost-efficiency is present, and the description of the evolution and the flexibility of these standards serves to drive the points home.

Part 2, which I consider to be the more specific "cataloging" half, is not practical in the sense that one could learn how to catalog by reading it. However, the section does bring concepts together in an interesting way while covering the basics of authority control, subject analysis, bibliographic formats, filing rules, and the MARC format. The

latter is handled in an appendix that was changed from the previous edition in which the various MARC tags were listed. This MARC overview is more general, and it occurred to me that it may no longer need to be set apart in an appendix, as its new approach reads rather like one of the other chapters.

References to the Internet and current trends in automation are made sparingly. As a result of this and the fact that much of the information is delivered in a very general way, the reader is left with a sense that this title has been published to stay timely and up-to-date. The typeface is very pleasing, making this work easy to read, and the index is preceded by an explanation of its arrangement. There is no formal bibliography, although there are chapter notes compiled at the back of the book. The author explains his rationale for this, but I could not help feeling that a bibliography would have completed the package perfectly. I expected to encounter a closing summary or conclusion-type essay; however, this does not exist, making the ending with the MARC appendix rather abrupt.

The author identifies his target audience as library studies students in his preface, but he further elaborates that this text is designed for prospective reference librarians as well as prospective catalogers. In my opinion, this is an excellent text for such audiences, though I did find myself doubting that it would actually find its way into noncataloging library school courses. As a career cataloger who has not read a "library school" text in quite a long time, I enjoyed reading this one very much. It is well suited to its desired, broader audience due to its ability to present the bibliographic record from a variety of perspectives. The book provided me with a welcome opportunity to step back and view the bigger picture, while at the same time reinforcing how and where my cataloging contributions fit into the scene.
—Ellen McGrath, *Head of Cataloging, Charles B. Sears Law Library, State University of New York at Buffalo*