Evaluation of Centers: the Views of Members

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THE SCOPE of this chapter is limited primarily to the views of autonomous public libraries which have agreed to participate in centralized processing programs. The processing may be (1) performed by a center created by joint agreement and supported wholly or in part by its membership; (2) offered as a service at a fee, usually by an established library, with the aid of Federal and/or state funds; (3) included as one of many services, generally free, within a systems structure as in New York State.

The member library, the *raison d'être* of centralized processing services as organized in the sixties, functions as the pivotal factor in assessing the worth and the impact of the services received. While it may be assumed that each processing center has information, whether complete or fragmentary, on its constituents' reactions to its services, few studies have focused attention on membership. The main focus has been rather on the centers themselves, as can readily be seen in Mary Hanley's bibliographic essay surveying the literature from 1959 to 1963, "Centralized Processing, Recent Trends and Current Status; A Review and Synthesis of the Literature."[1] While such emphasis reflected a timely interest in the procedural structuring of services to a constituency of autonomous public libraries, with possible imitation in other locales, individuality of the member library almost inescapably disappeared into the profile of the centralized program.

The very fact that present members accept the services, or are not altogether dissatisfied with their agreements or contractual arrangements, gives evidence to non-members of probable rewards of participation. At least four current manifestations contribute to this view: (1) the rare instances of withdrawal by members; (2) the continuing emergence of new centralized processing programs, such as that of the Fort Worth, Texas, Public Library; (3) such increases in mem-

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bership as have occurred recently in the Northern Colorado Processing Center [2] and the Rogue Valley Library Federation in Oregon; [3] and (4) the continuing recommendations for centralization, the more recent urging fewer centers with larger memberships. Among these last have been reports of surveys made for the states of Missouri,[4] New York,[5] and Pennsylvania.[6]

Views of Members and Potential Members in Missouri, New York, and Pennsylvania

Before the recommendations were made, there was some study in each of the three states of the attitudes and views of members and of potential members. The findings are briefly summarized below:

Missouri. Here, where two centers had been established within a period of three years and were inevitably competitors since neither acknowledged any geographical limitation within the state, attitudes of nonmembers as well as members were perhaps too early explored. Of forty-nine nonmembers who responded to the following question:

> Would you consider centralized processing for your library, provided you could receive the type you wish at a reasonable cost?

only 10 percent were "very interested" and only 14 percent were "interested." The other 76 percent were "not interested," "not sure," or did not respond.[7]

Another questionnaire emphasizing the variables between the two centers and addressed to their member libraries led to a conclusion that "in general members of the Southwest Missouri Library Service expressed a higher degree of satisfaction throughout" [8] than did members of the other center. Continuing inquiry by the State Library produced findings which, though still confidential, presumably confirmed some discontent. The findings further prompted the State Library in 1965 to make "A Survey of Processing Centers in the United States," [9] on which was predicated the recommendation that there be only one center.[4]

New York. For the survey on *Centralized Processing for the Public Libraries of New York State,*[10] questionnaires were distributed to the member libraries of five systems. While responses varied among members within each system, the majority evaluated all the various processing elements as "much better" than those same elements before centralized processing. In comparing their expectations with subsequent reality, the libraries' responses were distributed fairly evenly

among the three gradations: "much better than expected," "better than expected," and "about as expected."[11] Further analysis of the responses in relation to the size of each library suggested that the smaller libraries tended to rate centralized processing higher than did the larger libraries.[12]

While the general reaction of nearly all the member libraries can only be viewed as "extremely favorable," a number of causes for dissatisfaction were noted. By far the most frequently cited (by thirty-nine libraries) was the problem of speed of delivery. Thirteen libraries took an unfavorable view of cataloging information furnished. Other grounds for complaint, each mentioned by from two to six members, were catalog cards; selections included on book lists from the systems headquarters; billing procedures; variations from the library's previous cataloging; and limited cataloging.[13]

This generally favorable reaction seemingly had little relevance to the surveyors' recommendation for one statewide center for acquisitions and cataloging. It must be noted, however, that in their "Member Library Questionnaire,"[10] all questions pertained to the single systems now operating, not to a multi-system kind of structure, except for a question on the "union catalog" which asked for opinions on possible alternatives concerning the scope of a "printed union catalog in your library." The responses to the choices presented indicated a supreme indifference to (or a rejection of) a union catalog encompassing the holdings of all twenty-two systems (excluding the holdings of the Reference Department of the New York Public Library) and a strong preference for a union catalog for each system. It may be assumed, consequently, that the views of the members influenced the recommendations, which apparently amount to a compromise, that there is to be a statewide union book catalog and nine regional book catalogs.

Committees appointed by the State Library, with membership on a systems level, are currently exploring the possible impact of the proposed measures on the systems structure as it is now designed and as it is envisioned for all types of libraries, not public libraries alone. Thus the voices, resonant or muted, of member libraries must be amplified through representation.

Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, where a district type of structure similar to the systems program of New York State has been evolving, the Free Library of Philadelphia, as a District Center, explored the advisability of offering centralized processing to its member librar-

ies.[14] An appraisal (in part a profile study) of the member libraries and of the services available through the District Center Library suggested that more services were being offered than had thus far been incorporated into the individual library programs.[15] Moreover, the pattern of duplication of titles among the member libraries, as well as the inclusion of more than 90 percent of the titles in the *Catalog of Books* of the Free Library of Philadelphia, prompted a proposal to the member libraries for an experiment investigating the usefulness and limitations of the *Catalog* as an index to each member's collection.[16] In contrast, therefore, to the systems level of planning in New York, the member libraries of one district in Pennsylvania have been urged to participate in a study which might well suggest that member libraries in other districts would find usefulness in a similar catalog.

Views of Members (1965)

From the writer's study of existing centralized processing programs, undertaken as a preliminary to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Processing Center Feasibility Study, certain views of members emerge. For example, in Missouri the members of the Library Services Center appeared to be unwilling or unable to agree to an increase in the 75 cent charge per volume paid to the Center whatever the consequence.[17] In New York the members seemed satisfied with the processing services within their own systems and undisturbed that the movement from a local to a systems level had merely escalated diversification and had not achieved standardization among the systems.[18] The study also found that in certain instances all member libraries had endorsed the standard procedures devised for centralization, but support and acceptance of such procedures were not always forthcoming. In some cases, each member had agreed to route a certain percentage of its book budget through its center, but some were not adhering to the agreement. A reluctance to extend the services of a center to other types of libraries permeated some of the thinking of members, although not necessarily that of the centers.

In the "Participant Satisfaction" section of the study based on the responses from the membership of two centralized programs, the most common criticism related to slowness of service; however, despite some captious observations, it appeared to be the consensus that centers are more satisfactory than unsatisfactory. Among the criticisms of center operations, each of which would seem to call for immediate remedial action, were: (1) too frequent delivery of wrong title; (2)

classification numbers different for two editions and sometimes for a copy added later; (3) excessive number of typing errors; and (4) allocation of more time to contract members than to full members, with consequent delays for the latter.[19]

When to these criticisms is added sustained evidence of changes being made on catalog cards by some member libraries, acceptance of centralization and the views of the members appear to be neither totally acquiescent nor totally euphoric.

Current Views and Attitudes of Members (1967)

Selected from the tentative list of more than sixty processing centers for public libraries identified in *Library Resources & Technical Services* in 1966,[20] fifteen centers in ten states were recently invited to distribute questionnaires to their members, and, if appropriate, to a former member.* Each center distributed from five to ten, a total of a hundred and thirty-two questionnaires. Ninety, or 68 percent, were returned; member libraries represented were eighty-seven public, one school, one junior college, and one four-year college. More than half of the respondents may be considered thoroughly knowledgeable in their experiences and judgments, on the basis of their having been members of a center for more than three years:

Length of Membership	Number of Respondents
Less than one year	2
From one to three years	24
From four to six years	18
From seven to ten years	23
More than ten years	18
No response	5

* The responses both of the centers and of the member libraries offer gratifying evidence of their interest in centralized processing and of their willingness to give thoughtful attention to yet another questionnaire which inevitably encroached upon their valuable time. The author gratefully acknowledges their help, and also that of Miss Wilma W. Waite, formerly of the University of California Library, Berkeley, without whose assistance in coding the answers to the questionnaires the study could not have been completed.

Since the respondents from fourteen centers represent a membership using the card catalog format, some of the findings must be viewed in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of that structure. One center and its members, the Black Gold Cooperative Library System, Ventura, California, have adopted the book catalog format. Because of the special interest in its introduction, use, and acceptance within a library system, a supplementary study is to be made on that System's book catalog. It is anticipated that the study will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Library Resources & Technical Services.*

Because the respondents varied in size from small autonomous pub-
lic libraries to regional systems encompassing a network of libraries,
the ranges in the data given below are naturally wide.

Internal characteristics. Brief comparisons of members' book budg-
ets, professional and non-professional staff, and the size of their card
catalogs suggest the diversities among the centers. Because responses
were received from members of five centers in a single state, data re-
lating to that state are sometimes grouped separately.

Book Budgets	*Before*	*After*
	(Year before joining)	(1966/67 or 1967)
	Range	*Range*
In one state	$500 to $ 95,658	$700 to $ 55,832
In other states	820 to 116,000	900 to 150,000

Volumes added	*Before*	*After*
	(Year before joining)	(Most recent data)
	Range	*Range*
In one state	261 to 161,575	420 to 133,438
In other states	327 to 79,181	659 to 181,127

Size of public card catalog (Trays)	*Before*	*After*
	(At time of joining)	(As of January 1967)
	Range	*Range*
In one state	4 to 285	15 to 395
In other states	2 to 326	8 to 326

*Professional * staff*	*Full time*	*Part time*	
Same size	49	70	
Increase	31	15	
Decrease	7	2	
No response	3	3	

Staff other than professional	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Volunteers*
Same size	30	30	72
Increase	51	52	10
Decrease	6	5	4
No response	3	3	3
No record kept	—	—	1

Though the trend is obviously toward increases, it cannot be as-
sumed that the increases are either simply concomitant with or the
result of participation in the centers. Participation, however, may be

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* The definitions of "professional" varied from "one who can perform professional
duties" to "at least a B.S. with library science specialty" to "master's degree from
ALA accredited school."

a more likely cause in those situations where funds were dependent on it.

Cataloging and classification. Only twenty-one of the ninety member libraries indicated that before joining the centers they had already written cataloging and classification policies (no policy: 59; no response: 10). Eighty-one respondents identified cataloging and classification as follows:

	Number of member libraries
As the responsibility of:	
Head librarian	31
Professional assistant	24
Volunteers	2
As the joint responsibility of:	
Head librarian and professional assistant	10
Head librarian and a non-professional assistant	7
Head librarian, professional and non-professional assistants	3
Head librarian and volunteers	1
Professional and non-professional assistants	3
No response	9

The classification used before joining was the Dewey Decimal Classification, although not necessarily the latest edition; after joining, the members indicated the use of:

Dewey only	72
LC only	3
Both Dewey and LC	7
No response	8

Cutter numbers appear to have been little used before joining, and to be used still less afterwards:

	Yes	*For biography only*	*No*	*No Response*
Before joining	18	3	61	8
After joining	14	4	65	7

For subject headings the use of Sears (from the fifth to the ninth editions) and of the Library of Congress list (sixth and seventh editions) was noted as follows:

	Sears only	*LC only*	*Both*	*No response*
Before joining	60	9	9	12
After joining	30	43	11	6

All of the member libraries maintained card catalogs with varying degrees of syndetic structure. After joining, use of the following types of references increased slightly:

Kinds of references	Before	After
Name	57	68
See	64	75
See also	59	72

Other kinds identified were those made for general references and "See [or See also] Vertical File."

Frequency of filing cards varied among the libraries from "Daily" to "As time permits" with "Weekly" and "As time permits" being the most frequently cited. Their becoming members of centers apparently did not alter the situation.

The use of printed card services before joining implied a reliance on the catalog data:

Sources of cards	Number of libraries using
Library of Congress only	10
Wilson only	12
Both LC and Wilson	24
Other sources only	5
Other sources, plus LC and/or Wilson	12
Checked "no," all categories	17
No response	10

The reluctance to accept data without change contributed to, if it did not foreordain, a similar reluctance to accept data without change from centers. The responses were:

Always accept data	10
Sometimes	56
Never	1
No response	23

Among the changes made locally were the following:

From Sears to LC headings or from LC to Sears
Changes in or shortening of classification numbers to maintain consistency
Addition or deletion of subject headings
Corrections of simple errors
Updating in accordance with newer editions of Dewey
Changes in entry to pseudonym or title page form
Elimination of joint author cards (and of similar added entries).

The number of hours spent weekly on cataloging and classification, before and after joining centers, was estimated thus:

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	Before		After	
	Range	Average	Range	Average
In one state	8 to 40	25	2 to 40	10+
In other states	3 to 45½	32	½ to 40	10+

Data furnished on processing costs per volume prior to joining centers were too sparse to be of significance; the few supplied ranged from $.75 to $2.40 per volume.

Factors attracting members to centralized services. Some awareness of, or experience with, commercial processing services may have been a stimulus, even though no reference was made to it directly. The responses to the question, "Did you consider using the services of a *commercial* processing company?" were:

| Yes | 22 | No | 60 | No response | 8 |

Ten libraries indicated that they had contracted with commercial companies for periods of time ranging from one month to five years. The reasons given for discontinuance included:

More expensive than processing books ourselves
We tried_____but unfortunately the major portion came with
a little card reading, "Sorry, we cannot supply cards for this title"
We also tried_____but had to make so many additions or
changes that it was not practical
Slow service.

Among specific factors which attracted the autonomous libraries to the centralized processing programs were:

Opportunity for cooperation between libraries
Possible cost savings
Concentration of purchasing power
Low cost of cards
Uniformity of cataloging and book preparation
Opportunity of becoming acquainted with the_____Center and
thereby becoming more professional
Availability of review copies for selection
Increase in time for work with public, to institute programs of
service
Inducements of Federal and/or state aid monies.

Typifying the plight of many small libraries was the poignant admission by one member: "We had no cataloger, and I was having to do all the cataloging at night so I was desperately in need of the Center."

Becoming a member. Sixty-two respondents indicated that upon joining they had agreed to accept the centralized services to be offered as defined in agreements, manuals, and the like, prepared by the centers. Only one indicated that no agreement had been made; in twelve cases the libraries had agreed in principle.

Forty-nine members reported that some compromises had been made in their cataloging and classification policies. One held the view that few compromises had been made because the member libraries themselves decided most of the policies, and usually the procedures adopted had been those of the majority. Another noted as a compromise, "the loss of Wilson."

The compromises adopted in the various systems are diverse. Those most frequently cited relate to:

	Compromises
Main entry	Accepting LC as authority; abandoning CBI Accepting or abandoning use of pseudonyms Accepting name on title page as entry Omitting authors' dates
Descriptive data	Accepting more collation; no collation Omitting place in imprint Abandoning annotations
Classification	Accepting different edition of Dewey Using longer Dewey numbers Using different Dewey numbers (B instead of 92) Accepting LC; abandoning Dewey
Cutter numbers	Abandoning Cutter numbers Using three Cutter figures instead of one Using Cutter for biography only Using full surname of biographee
Subject headings	Changing from Sears to LC Accepting subject headings on cards in black capitals instead of lower case red letters
Preparation of materials	Placement of call numbers Placement of book card, book pocket, etc. Use of plastic jackets

Services available. While all the members receive cataloging and classification services, the following variations were reported:

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	Members reporting
Receiving complete set of cards ready for filing	74
Receiving set of cards on which classification numbers and/or added entries must be typed	11

The availability of certain other services was reported by some, but not all, members of the same center; the implication is that members had a choice. These services are:

	Members reporting
Centralized ordering	76
Preparation of each volume for use	77
Delivery of books with cards from centers	71
Delivery of books with shelf list cards only	6
Consultation services concerning cataloging and classification (example: via teletype)	37
Maintenance of card catalog	3

Cataloging by the centers. The responses to the question, "Did you transfer *all* cataloging responsibilities to the center?" were:

Yes 19 No 69 No response 2

Members of the same center differed as to the types of materials cataloged for them, as the following listings indicate:

Center A	All new trade materials; most replacements Pamphlets, phonorecords Everything sent to or delivered to processing center New titles in adult non-fiction; most of the children's books Adult non-fiction primarily but some items in other areas also All types (recent decision not to send fiction and/or easy juveniles) Hard cover books
Center B	Anything ordered through center Sets, continuations, some rush titles

Center C	All current materials; all state materials; books, and
	    pamphlets treated as books, available from source list
	    approved by center
	Anything we order

Center D	Books Books, paperbound Materials purchased through center Phonorecords All except gift books

For those libraries which did not transfer *all* responsibilities, the percentage of annual acquisitions cataloged by the centers ranged as follows:

In one state	46 percent to 99 percent
In other states	33 percent to 99.8 percent

In more detail, the percentages of annual acquisitions cataloged by the centers were:

% of acquisitions	Number of members
100	13
95–99	18
90–94	11
85–89	6
80–84	5
75–79	11
70–74	1
65–69	2
60–64	3
55–59	—
50–54	7
45–49	1
40–44	—
35–39	—
30–34	2
No response	10

One member indicated that 75 percent of its juvenile titles were being cataloged by the center.

Appropriate reference cards (name, see, see also) are furnished by some centers; thirty-five members indicated that they received them. Seemingly the service was not accepted by all members of the same center, however, for the responses varied. To some extent the availability for public consultation of Sears or LC subject heading lists compensated for an absence of references. Twenty-eight members reported that they made Sears available; twenty-six made LC available.

Payment for services. Some member libraries reported receiving the services without payment since the financial obligation had been assumed by the State Library with Federal and/or state monies. One member made an annual payment of $17,000 as a local contribution to a "cooperative project supported by state funds." Payments per volume were cited as:

Original Payment	Payment as of 1967
$ .30	$1.00
.75	.80
.80	1.20
1.20	.88
1.65	1.55

Payments for sets of cards alone were cited as being $.05 per set or as being included in the "15¢ per capita membership fee." The higher percentages of acquisitions cataloged by the centers correlate readily with minimal payments, except in one program where the local contributions are "based on formula worked out in plan of service." In that program the range of acquisitions cataloged was from 90 to 100 percent.

Members' responses to cataloging from the centers. Only thirty-seven libraries reported that they accepted the data on the catalog cards without change. Changes made by forty-eight members which do not accept the data related more frequently to classification and additions and subtractions than to main entry and to descriptive data. Thirty-four indicated making classification changes "once in a while" or "occasionally," and for books for young adults and juveniles. Additions and subtractions related to:

Adding subject headings
Changing from *Juv.* to *Y. A.*
Making subject headings agree with Sears
Making analytical entries
Deleting some subject headings
Adding location symbols
Correcting and adding for special needs
Adding copy numbers; coding for easy *J* books
Adding series and bibliographical notes
Adding title cards
Adding entries for translators and illustrators of fiction titles
Adding authors' dates and middle names

One member remarked that the most frequent changes involved the "exclusion of obscure catalog headings and fiction subject headings"; another noted "changing our older books to conform to Center."

Reasons for change. The multiplicity of reasons given for the necessity of making changes may be divided into those relating to (1) local adaptations, and (2) criticisms of cataloging by centers:

(1) *Reasons for local adaptations:*

Changes made more helpful to patron and staff
Need for uniformity/consistency with existing policies
Numbers using more than four or five decimals not needed
Difference in organization of library's easy and Juvenile collections
Need for subject headings most likely wanted by our patrons
Need for analytical entries (collections of plays, for example)
Author and title cards for mysteries, westerns, and science fiction
   not used by public
Student body does not think in LC terms
Requirements of a divided catalog

(2) *Criticisms of cataloging by centers:*

More detailed cataloging needed
Mistakes (clerical and typing errors); mismarkings on spine
Need to be vaguely consistent. Too frequently_____has been in-
   consistent and it is necessary to go back to change number given
   to copy of same title received last year
Disagreement with_____cataloger's interpretation of Dewey 17
No consistent policy followed by_____
Verification necessary because of many errors; center frequently
   does not follow LC or Sears or itself in headings, etc.

Perhaps it was total ennui that prompted the decision of one mem-
ber "to adjust to the new because we found it a losing battle to keep
changing [the] new to [the] old system."

Receiving materials from centers. In thirty-three member libraries,
books are made available to the public as soon as they are received
from centers. Forty-six have a delay, however, caused by one or
more of the following procedures:

Checking order file and/or invoice
Making shelf list cards
Adding symbols
Adding accession numbers (by one member, in five places)
Indicating ownership by use of property stamp (by one member,
   in three places)
Comparing book with card
Adding Cutter numbers; re-labeling
Changing position of book pocket
Completing the physical processing (members receiving sets of
   cards only)
Making changes in Dewey numbers (adapting or shortening)

Labeling fiction
Adding price on book card
Taping on stickers for various shelving categories
Typing book card
Embossing; opening books properly
Comparing occasionally with a previous edition.

Two causes for delay merit special attention: "Examination, by professional staff, of books for content to increase their knowledge of the collection" and writing "annotations for newspaper."

The filing of cards is delayed by any procedure involving a change on the card itself, such as changing author entry to agree with a form already being used and making additions or subtractions from descriptive data, classification numbers and subject headings.

Filing may be delayed for periods ranging from several hours to several days; however, the actual time spent per title in making changes was estimated to be:

1 to 10 minutes: 10 members
10 to 15 minutes: 8 members
15 to 30 minutes: 2 members

Seventeen members kept no time records; nine did not answer the question.

Reporting changes to centers. Of the members responding, eleven reported that they informed their centers of changes being made locally; forty-four members indicated that they did not do so. Few members noted receipt of suggestions from the centers; however, the somewhat caustic tone in several responses implies a need for more attention to personal relations. Some of the comments were:

We find that they (the center) are not interested. They feel that
"errors are to be expected."
The view of the center is "take it or leave it."
We are free to make any changes we like.
None of the changes are of such a nature to allow help from the
_____.
Mistakes must be corrected locally because they are not caught
until books are distributed to_____member libraries.
We report no change unless it might affect other libraries.
If a set of cards is incorrect we return them.

Cataloging within member libraries. It is evident that many of the member libraries retain some cataloging responsibilities. The time al-

located weekly for such responsibilities, among those reporting, ranged as follows:

1¼ hours to 40 hours for professional staff
1¼ hours to 90 hours for staff other than professional

The time was allocated not only for the local variations and changes noted earlier but also to process certain types of materials outside the scope of the centers' services or which member libraries preferred to catalog. Comprehensive references to these types of materials included:

All materials purchased directly or through a jobber
All materials purchased with local funds
Uncataloged materials acquired before 1960
Anything ordered from a source not on the center's list
All materials except those on "coordinated orders" or when not ordered by specified dates.

The materials may be further identified as being:

Annuals
Art prints
Continuations
Documents
Encyclopedias
Ephemeral materials
Fiction (light)
Films; filmstrips
Gift books; memorial books
Microfilms
Out-of-print titles
Pamphlets
Paperbacks
Periodicals
Phonorecords
Replacement copies
Rush items
Reference books (sometimes)
Subscription/standing orders.

As the centers differed with regard to the scope of their cataloging services, the member libraries assumed the cataloging of some of the types listed, but not necessarily of all of them.

Fifty-three libraries reported using the cataloging policies adopted

by the center. Of the fifteen who indicated that they did not, the variations included:

Continuation of former policies
Use of less descriptive information
Use of more descriptive information and subject headings
Full cataloging as opposed to abbreviated cataloging from center
Adjustments made in some areas to go with past policies.

One member stated: *"We do not use the 17th ed. of Dewey. Much of our cataloging and changes [from the Center policy] involve con-sistency."*
Personal views of members. Despite the medley of variations al-ready delineated as to scope of services, division of cataloging re-sponsibilities, and acceptance or rejection of center policies, 80 out of 85 member libraries responding believed that their library services had been improved as a result of the cataloging and classification services received from a center. The reasons offered by the five who felt that there had been no improvement were:

We have always tried to give excellent service to our patrons.
It takes as much time to check and to correct as to do it ourselves. More time is expended than formerly in checking invoices when books are received. Only saving is that some books are O.K. *but* we are paying for it in $.
Improvement not due to this service but having [it] means staff has not had to be increased for technical service but could be increased for direct service to the public.
Books with same title but different editions are not in same place and this goes double when our original policy differed from that used.
Consistency is vital to efficient operation. . . . We must check *each* set of cards and then make the necessary changes.

Fifty-seven of seventy-eight members felt that the card catalog itself had been improved by the centralized services. Among the rea-sons offered by those not acknowledging an improvement were:

We think annotated cards are almost indispensable. Changing from Sears to LC is confusing. Number of subject headings inadequate.
The cataloging is basically the same. In some cases where changes have been made the cards are less neat.
We are a bookmobile library solely and scarcely monkey with the card catalog. Not applicable, I suppose.

Type-face and stock used on new cards produced through automa-
tion are sub-standard. Change from Sears to LC makes catalog
more confusing during transition period.

We have—perhaps without justification—been satisfied with our
catalog.

We maintained a very good catalog prior to joining . . . and our
membership has done little or nothing to improve it.

Our standards were just as high before; now we receive fewer
subject headings and occasionally they are inconsistent with ex-
isting headings.

The responses varied considerably regarding the use of time form-
erly allocated to cataloging and classification. Among the activities
which had expanded were:

Spending more time evaluating orders and building up weak spots
in collection

Absorbing greater volume of reference questions; becoming a larger
operation

Operating with a larger book budget but with no additional staff

Participating in more workshops with co-workers outside the library

Devoting more time to professional reading, public relations, more
systematic weeding and evaluation of collection

Making school visits; supervising pages better

Planning service programs; preparing talks

Planning and developing resources

Working with individuals and groups; planning and promoting new
services; furnishing newspaper publicity; preparing exhibits

Supervising and training staff; in-service training; working with
trustees

Planning building expansion program

Routinizing procedures; adhering to routine administrative duties;
revising old cataloging

Assisting and advising library patrons; developing reader services.

Few references were made to catalogers even though it was noted
earlier that in the small libraries, prior to joining a center, one or
more professional staff members had included cataloging as one of
their many duties. The fate of some catalogers, however, was re-
vealed as:

One cataloger was made regional coordinator of branches, one in-
terlibrary loan librarian, one [was] left in library.

Our cataloger is no longer with us. She is administrator of the
Center.

One library position converted to public service but 10 to 12 hours of public service now used for cataloging.

One member library dolefully admitted:

No more time. We could use less time but our cataloger insists on detailed checking. We are also currently adding more books than we did before we joined.

Personal views of former members. At least two centers gamely forwarded the questionnaire to three of their former members. These, like the continuing members, had been attracted to centralized services by various inducements. The center's potential as a "time-saver"; "our own lack of space and of an experienced cataloger"; and "the possibility of joint purchasing of supplies (which never materialized) in addition to releasing our employees to other responsibilities. (This never materialized either.)"

Two participated as members for two years, and another for nine months, before withdrawing. The factors which contributed to their decisions to withdraw illustrate the difficulties which can beset a new program which instantly changes the old but cannot with equal instancy implement its goals. The following factors were cited:

Time involved in changes; delay in shipment; discrepancies in classification
Time lag was more than a year after some books were ordered
Cost was too much for service performed
Necessity of handling the books to make adjustments
Errors in cataloging; carelessness in processing (torn jackets, etc.)
We could not accept the decisions of the new director of_____
    as to the cataloging and classifications and processing of books.
Books were late in arriving and cards contained numerous errors.

In response to a question concerning advising other similar libraries to accept the services which were received (the *services*, not the quality) one said "Yes, with reservations"; one expressed no opinion; and one replied negatively because of the feeling "that it is a waste of money for small libraries [while] there are too many errors in cataloging for medium-size library." One of the three offered the following suggestions for the improvement of a center: cutting down on the time lag; avoiding errors in classification; and making some variations for individual libraries.

Views on centralization from former and continuing members. Appraisals on centralization itself were made by both former and con-

tinuing members. Two former members expressed themselves as follows:

> Libraries can do their own ordering and cataloging more accurately and for less cost than the processing center.
>
> We are not opposed to centralized processing; it is only unfortunate that our own_____pioneered in this area and got off to a bad start. One of the problems in being a member . . . is that certain sacrifices must be made by the member. Also, unfortunately, _____cataloging has been very inadequate for our needs.

Because these views are in striking contrast to those of a continuing member of the same center, the latter's views are also presented:

> Librarians who feel that they cannot accept standard authorities (LC, Dewey without major modifications) are usually creating a confusing situation which their successors will find very costly to unravel. Centralized cataloging, by catalogers of high professional qualifications, is invariably superior to local cataloging. Librarians who think they can catalog their own books more cheaply simply haven't taken *all* cost factors into consideration. Library users in *small* communities do not have *small* minds (necessarily). They do *not* need or benefit from abridgements of Dewey numbers, use of Sears rather than LC subject headings, or the maze of other "local modifications" so often made for them.

Views, straightforward and thoughtful, have thus been expressed. In them, both continuing members and centers may find semblances of themselves. From a continuing member in another center the following sage and experienced counsel is offered:

> The initial years of any processing center are filled with delays, snags, mistakes. If the membership does not recognize this and "ride out the storm," it precludes the possibility of developing a successful operation.

Toward the Future

The following responses to three key questions relating to compromises made, to advising others to participate, and to the possibility of withdrawal should costs be increased, are perhaps more indicative of the perspicacity of member libraries than are many other views expressed.

Evaluation of Centers: the Views of Members

Questions	Yes	No	No response
(1) In retrospect, do you feel that you made compromises which you now regret?*	7	69	14
(2) Would you advise a library similar to yours to accept the services which you receive? (Or did receive?)	81	1	8
(3) If the costs of your cataloging and classification services were to be increased, would you be inclined to withdraw and resume a full cataloging program within your library?	8	54	28

Even though some of the responses were qualified, the thrust toward acceptance of centralized cataloging and classification has survived deterrent and deflective criticisms, some thoroughly merited, some less consequential. Its total impact, however, is yet to be grasped; perhaps its potential could be more smoothly achieved if central agencies would weigh some of the following suggestions for improvement, paraphrased from the many offered by the members:

Recognize that centralization should provide a *superior*, not just an adequate, quality of cataloging services.

Catalog and classify *all* materials whatever the format, whatever the source.

Review policies and procedures continuously to obtain maximum efficiency and accuracy. Pursue speedier processing and delivery with stress on quality control.

Review and improve concepts of individualized and coordinated ordering (if such responsibility has been assumed). Broaden acquisitional scope by acquiring the unusual as well as the current and the popular. Function as a bibliographical resource center.

Lessen the acceptability gap between members and center through excellence of policies and consistency in implementation.

Initiate and encourage dialogue with member libraries through recognition of joint involvement in the continuing and ever-expanding scope of centralized cataloging and classification programs.

* The responses are somewhat inconsistent with action, however, since forty-eight libraries indicated also that they did not accept the center's data on catalog cards without change (see above).

Keep abreast of developments in technology, especially mechanized
    equipment, with a willingness to accept or reject with discern-
    ment.
Prefer guidance of a professional cataloger rather than of a busi-
    ness manager. Employ qualified personnel throughout a center.
Re-evaluate responsibility for the catalog structures of member li-
    braries; explore the book catalog format as a possible solution to
    complexities of integrating the new with the old and as an in-
    centive for escape from the thralldom to local policies.

The suggestions, however vital, are not for the centers alone. The
responsibility for the full achievement of centralization, and the
standardization which it implies, is equally that of members. From
one continuing member to all members, current and potential, the
following practical message is offered as an enduring precept: "When-
ever a change is made, time and money must be spent to 're-tool' your
old procedures for the on-going process."

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10. Nelson Associates, Inc., *op. cit.,* "Appendix B," pp. 21-30.
11. *Ibid.,* "Appendix B," p. 10.

12. *Ibid.,* "Appendix B," p. 11.
13. *Ibid.,* "Appendix B," p. 12.
14. Pennsylvania. State Library, *op. cit.,* p. xi.
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16. *Ibid.,* pp. 3, 82.
17. *Ibid.,* p. 94.
18. *Ibid.,* pp. 94-99.
19. *Ibid.,* pp. 183-186.
20. "Processing Centers for Public Libraries: A Tentative List," *Library Resources & Technical Services,* 10:489-492, Fall 1966.