

An online network for Tasmanian colleges

SINCE 1981, the Division of Further Education in conjunction with the Elizabeth Computer Centre and Library Services Branch has been planning a statewide bibliographic service for the Education Department of Tasmania colleges and schools.

The initiative was prompted by two colleges of further education in Burnie, North West Tasmania. The librarians formally requested assistance to produce a master microfiche catalogue. Copies of the fiche were to be located in the several decentralised library locations on the college campuses.

Initial investigations revealed that the only economic means of producing a microfiche catalogue was to use records entered onto a computer. The college libraries were already linked to the TASNET system (The Tasmanian Education Department's statewide network) thus facilitating access to common computer storage. Early investigations also showed that it was not cost effective to originally enter the records if they could be purchased using the Australian MARC Record Service. The decision to purchase the

MARC records determined a number of other long-term data base design factors. In particular it raised the possibility of providing colleges with on-line catalogues as the data would already be available in machine readable form.

The project commenced with funds being provided by Commonwealth Particular Purpose Grants (TAFEC). The initial task was to enter in bulk all the ISBNs, BNB or LC card numbers for each of the resources owned by the colleges. The AMRS Request tapes were regularly forwarded by the Elizabeth Computer Centre (the Education Department's computer centre) to Canberra for processing. The successful records were returned, stripped and reformatted before being mounted into the data base. The individual college librarians access the MARC records by logging into the data base and are currently editing each record. This task involves adding institution specific data, such as a Dewey number or shelf number, additional subject headings (additional to those already allocated), audience level (e.g. apprentice, technician etc.), additional notes to

the 500 fields and a range of information to the 995 Tag.

If a record is unobtainable from the AMRS Service the college librarians are required to catalogue the record on-line. In creating a new MARC record cataloguers are prompted through the entry of each field. It should be noted that cataloguers are automatically prevented from cataloguing a record which already exists. Also a locally produced record will be automatically 'dumped' if an AMRS record is acquired later.

The system has now been operating successfully for three months. Full documentation of the programs exists and Procedure Manuals are stored on the word processor. The system has been written in BASIC PLUS II and is presently mounted on a VAX 11/780. The final design stage requires programming to enable students to access the resources by using the terminals located in their college libraries.

The full potential of the programs has not yet been realised. There are definite plans to integrate the college MARC data base with an existing data base called TASCIS. TASCIS obtains MARC data from SAERIS and currently produces catalogue cards for primary and secondary schools. The new integrated data base will be entitled TBIS - the Tasmanian Bibliographic Information Service. This means that by utilising the Education Department's computer network a single bibliographic record will be available for potential use by the 250 terminal users in the State's schools and colleges. Daily planning and input from the operators of TASCIS ensure that the programs developed match this ultimate requirement. The TBIS system will also incorporate the existing on-line circulation package (CIRSYS) operating in two colleges and four schools. Colleges and schools in the future may request the installation of an on-line catalogue with or without the circulation module.

TBIS has been designed to meet the specific requirements of educational institutions. Criteria such as user friendliness, ease of operation by students, and specific reporting functions to meet the educational needs of teachers were of paramount importance. So too was the design of a system that would operate effectively across a network. The early part of 1984 should see the first on-line catalogue operating at the Bernie Technical College with the accompanying microfiche and hard copy products.

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