Virtual AskQC Office Hours

OCLC Encoding Levels

OCLC Metadata Quality
June 2020
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After the session, you will be directed to a brief, optional survey
Cataloging Community online session

Expanding on the Expert Cataloging Community Sharing session held at ALA Annual and Midwinter, this session provides a forum for catalogers to share information with catalogers from member libraries and OCLC staff.

17 June 2020
OCLC Cataloging Community Virtual Meeting
2:00 PM–4:30 PM Eastern Daylight Time, North America (UTC -4)

Registration at oc.lc/cat-community
On the call today

Shanna Griffith  
Database Specialist II

Cynthia Whitacre  
Senior Metadata Operations Manager

Jay Weitz  
Senior Consulting Database Specialist

Robert Bremer  
Senior Consulting Database Specialist

Laura Ramsey  
Senior Metadata Operations Manager
OCLC Encoding Levels

Cynthia Whitacre
Senior Metadata Operations Manager

Robert Bremer
Senior Consulting Database Specialist

OCLC Encoding Levels

Record Type | ELvl: Encoding Level
--- | ---
| Type | ELvl: Leader/IT
| Format | ALL: Mandatory, One-character code. Default: 3
| Definition | Code that indicates the fullness of the bibliographic information of the MARC record
| Notes | ALL: Full-level records (ELvl = 0) and partial-level records (ELvl = 1) are still supported by the libraries participating in the Program for Cooperative Cataloging. All other OCLC participants may now create records using code 0 for full level and code 3 for partial-level.

For more information on creation of full-level, and partial-level cataloging, see the ProCoCo Cataloging Manual or the Program for Cooperative Cataloging. For information on upgrading records, see section 5.2, Number Close.
Here is what we plan to cover today. I’ll talk about the definition and history of OCLC Encoding levels, talk about what our goals, and will being talking about what we have done to this point. Then I’ll turn it over to Robert Bremer to finish the discussion of what we have done, what you can do now, and future plans in regard to encoding levels. And, we’ll have plenty of time to take questions.
What is an encoding level? MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data defines Encoding Level, which is Leader/17 in the bibliographic record, as a “One-character alphanumeric code that indicates the fullness of the bibliographic information and/or content designation of the MARC record” (http://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bdleader.html).

This element appears in the LDR field (which stands for Leader) in both Connexion and Record Manager.
If you use Connexion, you likely know this element as “ELvl”. In the fixed field in Record Manager it is spelled out as Encoding level in the labelled display of the Leader element.
Background on OCLC-MARC Encoding Levels

- Only LC was authorized to create records using MARC-defined Encoding Levels.
- OCLC members had to use OCLC-created Encoding Levels.
- LC loosened its control over many MARC-defined Encoding Levels.
- OCLC Encoding Levels have become redundant and out of sync with MARC21.
## Encoding Level values

### MARC21 Encoding Levels

- blank – Full level
- 1 – Full level, material not examined
- 2 – Less-than-full level, material not examined
- 3 – Abbreviated level
- 4 – Core level
- 5 – Partial (preliminary) level
- 7 – Minimal level
- 8 – Prepublication level

### OCLC-MARC Encoding Levels

- I – Full-level input by OCLC participants
- K – Minimal-level input by OCLC participants
- M – Added from a batch process
- J – Deleted record
Goal: Eliminate OCLC defined codes

For encoding levels that means:

- Allow use of standard MARC 21 numeric encoding levels by all member libraries within WorldCat
- Convert existing alphabetic encoding levels within WorldCat to standard MARC21 values
- No longer allow use of OCLC alphabetic encoding levels within WorldCat bibliographic records

For several years at OCLC we have been working to bring OCLC-MARC into line with MARC21. In other words, we want to eliminate, as much as possible, exceptions between MARC21 and OCLC-MARC. The fewer exceptions, the better interoperability of MARC records between different library systems.

Encoding level values is one of those exceptions between MARC 21 and OCLC-MARC. For encoding levels, our specific goal is to eliminate OCLC defined codes and implement standard MARC 21 codes.

Right now, we are at the first bullet on this slide in working toward this goal. Later in this presentation, Robert will talk more about what that means and the future steps we have in mind.
How did we get here?

• Internal discussions within Metadata Quality for several years
• Discussions with a few outside groups like the PCC Operations Committee in May 2018 and with Expert Community Sharing Session at ALA Midwinter in January 2019
• Focus groups with member libraries in December 2018
• Discussions internally with OCLC staff in multiple product areas in 2019

We knew we couldn’t rush into a big change like this. So, there have been extensive discussions surrounding this. We’ve had lots of conversations both with internal OCLC staff in various areas and with catalogers from member libraries. In those discussions with member libraries, we wanted to know how such a change would affect workflows and what concerns member libraries have as they think about such a change.
Focus Groups in December 2018

Public call for volunteers

4 groups
  - Large academic libraries
  - Medium/small academic libraries
  - Public libraries
  - Special libraries

We put out a public call on the OCLC- CAT list for volunteers to participate in the focus groups. We had planned two, but we got such a great response from volunteers that we ended up holding four focus groups divided up by library type.
What we learned

Surprise: Workflow concerns did not arise

Concerns that did arise
- Training about the standard encoding levels and how to apply them
- Documentation
- Identification of records added by means of batch process

What we learned from the focus groups was surprisingly consistent across all 4 of the focus groups and library types.
The participants in the focus groups were not concerned about making the switch and were confident they and their staff members could learn to use the numeric encoding levels.

What they were concerned about was training. They were also concerned that we update all OCLC documentation. And, likely most important, they wanted to make sure they would still be able to identify which records had been added to WorldCat by means of a batch process, such as the previous batchload process and the current Data Sync process. Right now one knows that when the encoding level value of “M” is present in the record. However, since M doesn’t give one any indication of the completeness of the record, we know that the information that the record has been added to WorldCat via a batch process needs to reside elsewhere in the record. Now I’ll turn things over to Robert to discuss in more detail the changes recently made and future plans.
First Steps

Connexion/Record Manager encoding level changes implemented in April

• All institutions can create records with blank and numeric codes
• All institutions can upgrade records using blank and numeric codes
• Use of blank and numeric codes is now preferred
• Codes I and K can still be used if needed
BFAS Documentation Changes

- Eliminated last references to I-level and K-level input standards
- Those standards now referred to as full-level and minimal-level input standards
- Updated input standards captions to clearly indicate full and minimal
- Added links from subfields in the input standards to the body of the page
- Added text on ELvl page encouraging use of codes blank/7 rather than I/K
BFAS Documentation Changes

Input Standards
Field (Full/Minimal)
Required if applicable/Required if applicable
1st Indicator Undefined
2nd Indicator Undefined
Subfields (R=Repeateable NR=Nonrepeatable)

- #a: Extent (R)
- #b: Other physical details (NR)
- #c: Dimensions (R)
- #e: Accompanying material (NR)
- #f: Type of unit (R)
- #g: Size of unit (R)
- #3: Materials specified (NR)
- #6: Location (NR)
- #8: Field link and sequence number (R)
Next Steps

- Change to DataSync / batchload processing:
  - Retain encoding levels rather than resetting to codes J or M
  - Store indication that record arrived via automated process in another field – where is yet to be determined
  - Add a routine to globally fix incoming invalid encoding levels
  - Convert existing records in WorldCat
Conversion of Existing Records

- Change ELvl I to blank
- Change ELvl K to 7
- Assess completeness of the record for ELvl J and M and change to blank, 7, or 3
- Some specifications drafted, but not finalized and tested
- Will provide advance notice before widespread conversion
The Numbers

• I – 39 million
• K – 26 million
• J – 98 thousand
• M – 325 million
• Level M is the fastest growing category and represents a loss of encoding level information
Looking Toward the Future

- Develop further training on use of numeric encoding levels
- Remove encoding levels I, J, K, and M from validation
- Eliminate encoding levels I, J, K, and M from documentation
- Timeline – likely to spread out over several years
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- Reviewing LCSH Tentative Monthly Lists
  - Brian Steams, Cataloging Librarian, University of Alberta and Chair of the ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee
  - Candy Riley, Manager of Metadata Services, MARCOVE, INC., and Intern of the ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee
- Using the WorldCat Metadata API
  - Kealley McGrath, Metadata Management Librarian, University of Oregon
- OCLC Member Merge Program
  - Laura Ramsey, Senior Metadata Operations Manager, Metadata Quality, OCLC
  - Andrea Morrison, Head, Monographic Taxi Cataloging, Indiana University
  - Marcus Jun, Alma Network Zone Manager, Washington Research Library Consortium
- OCLC cataloging news & updates, OCLC staff
  - An update on OCLC’s shared entity management infrastructure with John Chapman, Senior Product Manager, Metadata Services
  - OCLC cataloging news with Jay Weitz, Senior Consulting Database Specialist, Metadata Quality
  - Other updates from OCLC staff
- Questions from the audience

24 June 2020
Thank you!

Next Virtual AskQC Office Hours
Time & topic: TBD

Session links available at oc.lc/askqc

Send cataloging policy questions at any time to askqc@oclc.org

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