C1. Cataloging Priorities and Levels of Cataloging

C1.1. Introduction

These guidelines incorporate changes made to the cataloging priority system in recent years in two stages: the first and most extensive set of changes being made in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the second set being made in 1998.

C1.1.1. First Stage Of Changes (1990-)

C1.1.1.1. Sources of review

Utilizing the efforts of a Library-wide committee, the Library in 1990 completed a review of its internal system for assigning priorities to newly acquired monographs, serials, and microforms. This was the first major revision of the scheme since 1981. At the same time it made a major change in its approach to minimal-level cataloging (MLC) by enhancing access through the use of uncontrolled subject words.

Both endeavors were outgrowths of an ongoing review of many technical service functions and activities that had taken place during the last several years in the then Collections Services (and the former Processing Services).

The Library was fortunate to receive valued assistance, including critical review of draft documents, suggestions for changes, and helpful comments on content, from several organizations. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) distributed copies of the cataloging priorities drafts to its membership for its consideration and response. ARL also helped the Library develop a survey on MLC. Seventy-nine libraries responded to the draft recommendations on cataloging priorities and the MLC survey. In addition, two ARL committees, the Bibliographic Control and the Collection Development Committees, participated in a joint meeting with Library of Congress officials at ARL's 1989 Fall Meeting to review draft documents and provide input. The Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries Discussion Group of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), American Library Association (ALA), took part in two reporting sessions with Library staff. Several members offered comments and suggestions. The Cataloging Needs of Public Libraries Committee of the Public Library Association (PLA) met with Library officials at the ALA 1990 Midwinter Meeting in Chicago. The committee provided its comments and gave the Library added insight into the needs of public libraries as well.

The Library also received gracious permission and cooperation from three authors to build on their MLC surveys. Michael Gorman conducted a survey in 1984 that involved the technical

services directors of large research libraries. His "Report on the Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries Survey of Minimal-Level Cataloging," appeared in the December 1984 issue of *Information Technology and Libraries*. Nancy E. Douglas and Shirley Leung conducted a 1983 survey on cataloging policies in ARL libraries as well as ten institutions and bibliographic utilities that participated in the Online Public Access Catalog Research Project sponsored by the Council on Library Resources. Their findings, "Use of the Full MARC Record: Myth and Reality," were published in 1984 in *Academic Libraries: Myth and Realities: Proceedings of the Third National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries*. Lastly, a large number of Library of Congress staff, through individual and committee endeavors, and many individuals from outside the Library provided their time and effort in helping to revise the Library's cataloging priorities and levels of cataloging.

C1.1.1.2. Emphasis of priorities

The revised set of priorities continues to put primary emphasis on the content of, or the need for, a particular work, that is, its need and/or research value rather than its source, its language, or the Library's internal procedural or processing requirements. Among the changes from the old scheme are

1) the emphasis on English language titles has been eliminated;
2) definitions are provided for "major publication," "substantial publication *of topical interest*," and "substantial publication" to guide the selecting/recommending officers in their work.

Research value is one of the basic and underlying concepts of these priorities. It is a broad term, however, and no two individuals will ever evaluate the same material quite the same way. Nevertheless, for the present purpose, the Library defines a publication of research value as one that presents primary documentation otherwise unavailable, interprets a field in the context of current concepts, presents the point of view of prominent or influential practitioners of a discipline, or organizes existing literature in a field into coherent bibliographies. In sum, a publication of research value in the humanities, social sciences, law, or natural and physical sciences is one that might be consulted by any current specialist in that field.

C1.1.1.3. Premises and assumptions

In examining the revised priority scheme, certain premises and assumptions need to be made. Publications required for photoduplication requests, for examination by Library staff, and for special bibliographic projects such as the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* will continue to be made available within the Library immediately following preliminary control but before final cataloging. If a title needs to be recataloged it will be processed according to the needs of the Library.

The cataloging priority guidelines must meet a great variety of different and often contradictory needs and are, of necessity, a compromise in responding to an exceedingly complex problem. In assigning cataloging priorities 2-4, selecting officials will have to weigh several elements or combinations of elements, e.g., importance to research of the material's contents; seriousness of treatment; currency of information; nature of bibliographic apparatus: footnotes, bibliographies, indexes, etc.; importance of the personal or corporate author; reputation of the publisher; and appraisal of the publication, based on the expertise and professional knowledge of the individuals assigning the priorities. As an example, belles lettres cannot be found under any specific priority. Individuals performing the selection/recommendation function will have to assess an item's need/research value and assign the appropriate priority to the item.

C1.1.1.4. Figures on throughput

Once the revised priority assignment procedures have been operational for a reasonable time, the Library will periodically provide specific figures on how long items in each priority category take to go through the series of required processing steps. Adjustments will be applied as necessary to ensure the adequacy of the system.

C1.1.1.5. Nonbook materials

Separate guidelines will be issued for centrally cataloged nonbook materials (scores, music sound recordings, non-music sound recordings, and computer files). The Library's special collections divisions will have responsibility for maintaining their own individual processing and cataloging priority systems for materials that are processed and cataloged within the divisions, such as maps, manuscripts, motion pictures, and prints and photographs. The Library believes that the special collections divisions can best service the unique materials processed and cataloged within their own collections and respond to the needs of their users.

C1.1.2. Second Stage Of Changes (1998-)

A Task Group on Cataloging Priorities, appointed in December 1994, was charged with making recommended modifications to the Library's policy regarding priorities in light of the changed cataloging environment. The Task Group essentially reviewed the "descriptions of cataloging priorities" currently being used and the "levels of cataloging" as they related to priorities (several levels of cataloging had been developed since the first stage changes of the priority system). The Task Group issued a report in 1995; most of the recommendations were accepted by the Cataloging Management Team (CMT), with some changes, to be implemented with the introduction of core level cataloging (fall 1998).

With respect to the first aspect of its assignment, the Task Group recommended that the existing priority system be retained, given the then impending reorganization of the Acquisitions

and Support Services Directorate. With the pool of staff members authorized to assign priorities about to expand as the result of that reorganization, the Task Group thought it prudent to defer substantial changes until there had been some opportunity to observe the application of the system in the new environment.

With respect to levels of cataloging related to priorities, the recommendations of the Task Group, as modified by the CMT, have now been incorporated into the current guidelines relating to priorities.

C1.2. Cataloging Priorities for Monographs, Serials, and Microforms

This section lists the Library's cataloging priorities and also indicates the cataloging modes appropriate to the priorities. Whenever the terms "title(s)" or "material(s)" appear, they denote titles and materials in all languages. Whenever appropriate, serials and microforms are included on the same basis as monographs. The cataloging modes in general use are:

Full Level Cataloging (sometimes referred to as "LC Original Cataloging")

(A mode in which the cataloging reflects all the conventions specified in the LC documentation with respect both to the content of the record (data elements) and the conventions applicable to transcribing/supplying them.)

Copy Cataloging

(A mode that uses catalog records prepared by another agency with limited changes made by LC that relate to accuracy, substance, or retrievability, not style. This mode may be either "regular" (i.e., other than core level) or "core level" (see next category). The term "full level equivalent" means copy cataloging, whether originally regular or core level, that has been adjusted to reflect the conventions of full level cataloging.)

Core Level Cataloging

(A mode developed under the aegis of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) to be used in its cataloging program. Records done in this mode contain a complement of data elements less than that for full level cataloging but more than that for minimal level cataloging. The term "LC core level" means a core bibliographic record created internally that reflects additional characteristics beyond those defined for the basic core record and that are provided by LC to meet LC's specific needs. The term "LC core level equivalent" means a core record of external origin adjusted to reflect the conventions of an LC core level record.)

Minimal Level Cataloging (MLC)

(A mode that reflects limitations in the descriptive, subject, and classification aspects and also in the amount of authority work done. "Regular" MLC contains an MLC shelf number and lacks any aspect of controlled subject access. "Enhanced" MLC contains limited subject/classification aspects, at a minimum an LC classification/call number or at least one subject heading derived from *Library of Congress Subject Headings*.)

Collection Level Cataloging

(A mode used to control materials that are unrelated bibliographically but that can be gathered together because of some other unifying factor, such as personal author, issuing body, subject, language, or genre.)

C1.2.1. Priority 1

C1.2.1.1. Titles covered

Titles requested by Members of Congress or their staffs, by agency heads or higher officers of the Executive Branch, by Supreme Court Justices, or by division chiefs or higher officers of the Library of Congress

Pre- and Post-Publication CIP titles

C1.2.1.2. Cataloging mode

Titles in this priority receive at least LC core level cataloging. Teams may exercise judgment and apply full level cataloging in those cases deemed appropriate.

C1.2.2. Priority 2

C1.2.2.1. Titles covered

Titles for reference assignment

First number or volume received of a numbered monographic series, and serials issued annually or less frequently, as well as the first and subsequent volumes of a multipart monograph that are published over a period of time

All titles destined for the Rare Book and Special Collections Division or rare titles destined for other custodial units

High-need and/or research value titles

U.S. Congressional publications

Major publications[1] in the humanities, social sciences, law, and the physical, natural, and behavioral sciences, both primary and secondary sources

Substantial publications *of topical interest*[2] (official and nonofficial) in the following categories (in case of foreign publications, preferably those relating to the country of origin as a whole):

All genealogies and compilations of local records of genealogical value

Dictionaries: English or English—foreign language and foreign language—English

U.S. Federal, State, and local materials, that are primary sources, and their search tools (government and privately printed): search tools include encyclopedias, manuals, guides, digests, indexes, citators, and looseleaf services

Official publications of foreign countries and major subdivisions (states, provinces, capitals, etc.), that are primary sources, and their search tools (government and privately printed)

C1.2.2.2. Cataloging mode

Titles for reference assignment receive full level cataloging or full level equivalent copy cataloging. Other titles receive at least LC core level cataloging or copy cataloging at least to the level specified in the LC *Copy Cataloging Manual* (DCM B13). Teams may apply full level cataloging as deemed appropriate to materials in this priority.

C1.2.3. Priority 3

C1.2.3.1. Titles covered

Medium-need and/or research value titles

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[1] A major publication is defined as a definitive work, or a presentation of extensive, new material, or a significant revision or reassessment of a subject/field.

[2] A substantial publication of topical interest is defined as a publication that refers to contemporary topics, provides current information relevant to contemporary topics, or provides current information on "older" topics (e.g., Dead Sea Scrolls) that are of contemporary import and interest and one that is likely to be used for research purposes by a specialist and does not meet the definition of a "major publication."

Substantial publications[3] in the humanities, social sciences, law, and the physical, natural, and behavioral sciences, both primary and secondary sources, not given higher priority

Encyclopedias, almanacs, and other works of general reference not selected for reference assignment or given higher priority

Dictionaries (foreign language only)

Substantial[4] travel guides

All U.S. local histories and substantial[5] foreign local histories

U.S. Federal documents not given higher priority

U.S. state documents, except primary sources, generally dealing with subjects of national interest

Official publications of foreign countries and their major subdivisions (states, provinces, capitals, etc.), except primary sources, generally dealing with subjects of broad interests

C1.2.3.2. Cataloging mode

Titles in this priority receive at least LC core level cataloging.

C1.2.4. Priority 4

C1.2.4.1. Title covered

Low-need and/or research value titles

Other materials selected for addition to the collections, *but not given higher priority* (priorities 1-3) including

Children's books

College level textbooks

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[3] A substantial publication is one that is defined as likely to be used for research purposes by a specialist and that does not meet the definition of a "major publication" or the definition of a "substantial publication of topical interest."
[4] A substantial publication is one that is defined as likely to be used for research purposes by a specialist and that does not meet the definition of a "major publication" or the definition of a "substantial publication of topical interest."
[5] A substantial publication is one that is defined as likely to be used for research purposes by a specialist and that does not meet the definition of a "major publication" or the definition of a "substantial publication of topical interest."

Official publications of foreign countries

Privately printed works (however, foreign works, especially for developing countries, may, in some cases, require higher priority)

State and local government publications

The following types of materials are rarely given higher priority:

Anthologies

Applied arts and crafts

Secondary level textbooks

Popular instructional and devotional publications

Popularizations in all subject fields

Sports and recreation

Unrevised reprints

C1.2.4.2. Cataloging mode

Titles in this priority or that have been in the arrearages for three or more years receive at least minimal level cataloging but preferably LC core level cataloging. When cataloging copy is available, the cataloging level depends upon the nature of the copy. It is edited to at least LC core level, but can be done at a higher level if the data elements are already there or if the level can be raised under the discretion allowed teams in these priority guidelines. If a full level LC record is available for another edition, it is used as the base and is edited to reflect the edition in hand (full). Otherwise, if cataloging copy is available, it is used and edited as described immediately above.

C1.3. Special Guidelines

C1.3.1. Copy Cataloging

For items represented by LC-created Initial Bibliographic Control (IBC) records, teams may, at their discretion, import records for copy cataloging, provided that the copy cataloging is done at the equivalent level or higher level appropriate to the priority assigned the item as stated above.

C1.3.2. Collection Level Cataloging

Collection level cataloging is a mode that may be applied to special projects or conditions such as lesser-known languages, collections of ephemera chosen for topical collection level treatment, collections of pamphlets on various topics. Material designated for collection level cataloging may come from several sources: Selection Officers, divisions of Area Studies Collections and Public Service Collections Directorates, or overseas centers. Catalogers and others who handle books early in the processing stream may also refer material to a Selection Officer if the material appears to belong to an existing collection or if it appears appropriate for collection level treatment.

C1.3.3. Multiple categories with different priorities

If a given publication falls into more than one category with different priorities, the publication will receive the highest priority that is applicable.

C1.3.4. Hand Carry

For special requests, Priority 1 titles will be hand-carried from one station to the next.

C1.3.5. Former Priority 4 Collection

The partially cataloged and partially classified items processed in accordance with former Priority 4 (P-4) cataloging rules (ceased in 1968) will remain in the custody of the Collections Management Division and the other custodial divisions to which they are now assigned for service for reader use within the Library. After service, however, they will be transmitted to the Binding and Collections Care Division, for labeling, book-plating, and, when necessary, forwarding for binding. They will then be returned to the Priority 4 (P-4) collection. Materials for loan outside the Library will be bound, book-plated, and labeled on a priority basis before lending and will be returned to the Priority 4 (P-4) collection after such use. In cases of demonstrated need and with the approval of a Selection Officer, particular titles may be withdrawn from this collection for regular cataloging at the request of officers who are authorized to assign material to categories having higher priority.

C1.3.6. Changing a Priority

Selecting officers or other designated officials may, for good and sufficient reason, upgrade or downgrade the priority of a particular title(s) or change the level of cataloging for the title(s).