



The New York Public Library
New York Public Library Archives

Guide to the

Catalog Preservation Project Records

1942-1983

MssArc 5446

Compiled by Mary Faucher; machine readable finding aid created by Mary Faucher.

Summary

Creator: New York Public Library. Research Libraries. Preparation Services Division

Title: Catalog Preservation Project Records

Date: 1942-1983

Size: 4.5 linear feet (11 boxes)

Source: Transferred from New York Public Library, The Research Libraries, Technical Services Division.

Abstract: The Catalog Preservation Project Records pertain to the rehabilitation and preservation of the Public Card Catalog of The Research Libraries of The New York Public Library. The collection documents institutional investigation of this matter, as well as the resulting decisions to close the catalog at the end of 1971, to rehabilitate the cards, to publish the catalog retrospectively, and to create, maintain and periodically publish prospectively a machine readable catalog of post-1971 acquisitions.

Access: Advance notice required.

Conditions Governing Access:

New York Public Library Archives.

Conditions Governing Use: All rights reserved. Permission to quote must be obtained in writing from the New York Public Library

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Processing note: Compiled by Mary Faucher; machine readable finding aid created by Mary Faucher.

Creator History

The Public Card Catalog of the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library (NYPL), which was closed in 1971, is a dictionary catalog of author, title, and subject entries. It contains entries dating back to 1895, and represents most of the Research Libraries' book and microfilm holdings. (Excluded are non-book materials, holdings of the Arents and Berg collections and the collections in the non-Roman alphabets.) At the time this catalog was closed, it differed from all other major library catalogs that had been issued (Library of Congress, British Museum, Bibliotheque Nationale) because it contained entries under subjects as well as under author and title. It also contained many references to articles in journals and periodicals not usually found in a library catalog.

By the 1960's, the Public Catalog contained approximately 8 million cards, many of which were in terrible condition from heavy handling by staff and readers. Maintaining and adding to this catalog was a great expense, in no small part because the NYPL subject headings and catalog rules varied from those of the Library of Congress. Therefore, virtually all new NYPL cataloging required at least some original cataloging work.

A focused effort to study the possibilities for rehabilitating and preserving the Public Catalog (the Catalog Preservation Project) began in earnest in 1963. Among other things, the NYPL sponsored the work of Seoud M. Matta, who, in 1965, submitted as his doctoral dissertation a study titled *The Card Catalog in a Large Research Library: Present Conditions and Future Possibilities in The New York Public Library*. Matta's report was followed by studies in 1966-67 by consultant Theodore Stein of Data Processing Methods regarding computer systems for library catalog maintenance. In 1968, using a grant from the Council on Library Resources, the NYPL produced a detailed study edited by James W. Henderson and Joseph A. Rosenthal, then the Chiefs of the Reference Department and Preparation Services, respectively, titled *Library Catalogs; their preservation and maintenance by photographic and automated techniques* (M.I.T. Report No. 14, Cambridge, MA, M.I.T. Press, 1968).

These various investigations precipitated the NYPL's decision: (1) to close the card catalog, replace or refurbish the deteriorated cards and publish the rehabilitated card catalog photographically in book form (the retrospective catalog), and (2) to produce future catalogs in book form from a store of machine-readable data (the prospective catalog). Creation of a catalog in machine-readable form finally enabled the NYPL to utilize Library of Congress cataloging data to the fullest extent. Moreover, the prospective catalog would include non-book materials, holdings of the Arents and Berg collections and the collections in the non-Roman alphabets.

Creation of the prospective catalog involved a coordinated effort between the Preparation Services department and the Systems Analysis & Data Processing Office (SADPO). The development work for the automated system was completed in October, 1971, when a preliminary edition of the computer-produced, photo-composed dictionary book catalog was issued. The new catalog system was officially introduced in January 1972.

The creation of the retrospective catalog was referred to as Project RETRO. Work on rehabilitation of the cards began in earnest in 1977. James W. Henderson, the Chief of the NYPL Reference Department from 1963-1972 and the Andrew W. Mellon Director of The Research Libraries from 1972-1977, came out of retirement to become the Director of Project RETRO in 1978 and oversaw the project through its completion in 1983.

By the time the public card catalog was closed in 1971, it contained approximately 10 million cards. Twenty NYPL staff members, working over six years, updated and restored the cards so that they could be photographed and microfilmed, at a cost of \$3.3 million. The card catalog was then published in

book form, in 800 volumes, under the title, *Dictionary Catalog of the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library - 1911-1971*. The first volumes were published in 1979, and the last appeared in 1983.

Scope and Content Note

The Catalog Preservation Project Records pertain to the rehabilitation and preservation of the Public Card Catalog of The Research Libraries of The New York Public Library. The collection documents institutional investigation of this matter, as well as the resulting decisions to close the catalog at the end of 1971, to rehabilitate the cards, to publish the catalog retrospectively, and to create, maintain and periodically publish prospectively a machine readable catalog of post-1971 acquisitions.

The records span the years 1942 to 1983, with a concentration on the period in the 1960's when the issue of rehabilitating and preserving the card catalog was studied in depth, as well as the period in the 1970's and early 1980's when the retrospective and prospective catalogs were created. The collection measures 4.16 linear feet and consists of reports, minutes, memoranda (both typed and handwritten), correspondence, publicity material and photocopies of newspapers clippings, together with some actual examples of cards from the catalog.

This material illuminates the process by which the decision to rehabilitate and preserve the card catalog was made, and shows how that decision was implemented. The records also reveal institutional thinking on questions ranging from cataloging theory (particularly the problem of conforming NYPL subject headings to those of the Library of Congress) to the use of outside consultants and ways to obtain outside funding. There is also documentation of interaction and coordination among the several Library departments and divisions that worked together to achieve a common institutional goal.

Arrangement: The Catalog Preservation Project Records are arranged into four series: 1. James W. Henderson; 2. Genesis of Catalog Preservation Project; 3. Prospective Catalog; 4. Retrospective Catalog. Series 1 contains files created by James W. Henderson during his tenure as Director of Project RETRO, from 1978-1983. The other three series comprise files maintained by various other NYPL personnel who participated in devising and implementing the project. These included: Elizabeth F. Beder, Assistant Chief, Preparation Services and Acting Chairman of the Committee/Subcommittee on Cataloging and Catalogs (aka Reference Department Advisory Committee/Subcommittee on Cataloging and Catalogs); Lyle Brummer, Chief Cataloger (during the 1960s); Joseph Rosenthal and Paul Fasana, successive Chfs of Preparation Services; and Allan J. Hogen, Chief, Processing Division of Preparation Services. In 1979 all the files in these latter three series were forwarded to Mr. Henderson and maintained in his office.

Key Terms

Subjects

Book catalogs
Card catalogs
Catalogs, Divided
Dictionary catalogs
Libraries -- New York (State) -- New York
Library catalog management
Library catalogs
Library catalogs -- Automation
Library catalogs on microfilm

Names

New York Public Library. Research Libraries. Preparation Services Division

Henderson, James W. (James Wood), 1917-

New York Public Library. Central Administration. Systems Analysis & Data Processing Office

New York Public Library. Research Libraries. Preparation Services

Container List

Series 1. James W. Henderson, 1942-1983

Series 1 contains the files relating to the Catalog Preservation Project maintained by James W. Henderson. Mr. Henderson, who began his employment with the NYPL in 1947, was the Chief of the Reference Department from 1963-1972, the Andrew W. Mellon Director of The Research Libraries from 1972-1977 and the Director of Project RETRO from 1978 until the last volumes of the retrospective catalog were published in 1983.

Series consists of memoranda, correspondence and reports created or received by Mr. Henderson regarding the impetus for the Catalog Preservation Project generally, and the implementation of Project RETRO specifically.

- b. 1 f. 1 Copyright 1978-1980
- b. 1 f. 2-15 Correspondence & Memoranda 1942, 1952, 1956, 1962
Financial Support 1972-1983
 - b. 1 f. 16 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation 1977-1982
 - b. 1 f. 17 Booth Ferris Foundation 1973-1977
 - b. 2 f. 1 Carnegie Corporation 1977-1983
 - b. 2 f. 2 Ford Foundation 1977-1983
 - b. 2 f. 3 Hearst Foundation 1977-1981, 1983
 - b. 2 f. 4 Mellon Foundation 1976-1983
 - b. 2 f. 5-6 National Endowment for the Humanities 1977-1983
 - b. 2 f. 7 Rockefeller Foundation 1972-1983
 - b. 2 f. 8-9 G.K. Hall 1977-1983
 - b. 2 f. 10 Matta Report: "The Card Catalog in a Large Research Library: Present Conditions and Future Possibilities in the New York Public Library," 1965 (bound, autographed)
 - b. 2 f. 11 Procedures 1977-1983
- b. 3 f. 1-2 Public Catalog Measurements (Statistical Records)
 - b. 3 f. 3 Reports 1977-1983

Series 2. Genesis of Catalog Preservation Project 1952-1972

Series 2. Genesis of Catalog Preservation Project assembles the memoranda, committee minutes and reports from the 1960's and early 1970's which address and resolve the issue of how to rehabilitate and preserve the Public Catalog.

- b. 3 f. 4 California State Library Automation Study n.d.
- b. 3 f. 5 Catalog Study Reports No. 1-15 1965-1966
Committee on Cataloging and the Catalogs (aka, Reference Department Advisory Committee/Subcommittee on Cataloging and the Catalogs)
- b. 3 f. 6 Cataloging Rules 1966-1967
- b. 3 f. 7 Computer Catalog Maintenance 1967-1968
- b. 3 f. 8 History of the Catalogs n.d.
- b. 3 f. 9 Memoranda 1966
- b. 3 f. 10-12 Minutes 1963-1966

Series 2. Genesis of Catalog Preservation Project (cont.)

Committee on Cataloging and the Catalogs (aka, Reference Department Advisory
Committee/Subcommittee on Cataloging and the Catalogs (cont.)

b. 4 f. 1-2 Minutes 1967, 1970-1972

Subject Headings

b. 4 f. 3 Comments by Divisions 1952, 1967

b. 4 f. 4 Photorecords 1966, n.d.

b. 4 f. 5 Recommendations 1967

b. 4 f. 6 Theater 1967

Matta Report

b. 4 f. 7 "The Card Catalog in a Large Reseach Library: Present Conditions and
Future Possibilities in the New York Public Library," 1965

b. 4 f. 8 "The Card Catalog in a Large Reseach Library: Present Conditions and
Future Possibilities in the New York Public Library," Summary of Findings
and Recommendations 1964

b. 4 f. 9 Comments on Matta Report 1965-1966

b. 4 f. 10 Program for Catalog Preservation and Maintenance 1966-1967

b. 4 f. 11 Space Memorandum

Stein Surveys and Specifications 1966-1968

b. 5 f. 1 Comments re: Stein Specifications 1966-1968

b. 5 f. 2 "Specifications for Computer System for Library Catalog Maintenance,"
Drafts 1966

b. 5 f. 3 "Specifications for Computer System for Library Catalog Maintenance,"
Final Report 1967

b. 5 f. 1 "Survey of Investigations Related to Automation, Computerization and
Installation of New Systems at the New York Public Library," 1966

b. 5 f. 5 Technical Orders re. Classification Changes 1967-1968

Series 3. Prospective Catalog 1945-1972

Series 3. Prospective Catalog collects memoranda and reports relating to the development, in
the late 1960's to 1972, of the machine readable catalog to be published in book form for
acquisitions made after the card catalog was closed in 1971.

b. 5 f. 6 Automation of Acquisition & Serial Control 1969-1970

b. 5 f. 7 IBM Report re: staged computer automation program 1968

b. 5 f. 8 Joint Committee on Automated Technical Services (JCATS) 1968-1969

b. 5 f. 9 Machine-Aided Card Filing 1967

b. 5 f. 10-12 Memoranda 1966-1969

b. 6 f. 1-3 Memoranda 1970-1972

Procedures 1965-1971, n.d.

b. 6 f. 4 Arents 1966-1967, n.d.

b. 6 f. 5 Authority File 1968-1969

Catalog Worksheet 1966-1969

b. 6 f. 6 Dance 1968-1969

b. 6 f. 7 General 1966, 1969, n.d

b. 6 f. 8 Indexing 1969

b. 6 f. 9 Samples n.d.

Series 3. Prospective Catalog (cont.)

Procedures (cont.)

Catalog Worksheet (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 10 Serials 1969, n.d.
- b. 6 f. 11-12 Character Set 1965, 1968-1971, n.d
- b. 6 f. 13 Classmarks 1967, 1969, n.d
- b. 6 f. 14 Divisional Designations 1969
- b. 7 f. 1 Filing 1945, 1955, 1960, 1966-1967, n.d
- b. 7 f. 2 Keyboarding Instructions 1970
- b. 7 f. 3 MARC II 1967-1968, n.d.
- b. 7 f. 4 Non-Roman Alphabet 1965-1967, 1969
- b. 7 f. 5 Page Format n.d.
- b. 7 f. 6 Social Science - Fixed Order 1969, n.d.
- Subject Headings 1966-1968, n.d.
- b. 7 f. 7-8 General 1967-1968, n.d.
- b. 7 f. 9 Jewish Division 1966
- b. 7 f. 10 Music 1966-1967, n.d.
- b. 7 f. 11 Periodicals 1967, n.d.
- SADPO (Systems Analysis & Data Processing Office) 1968-1970
- b. 7 f. 12-13 Memoranda 1969-1970
- b. 7 f. 14-15 Reports 1968-1969
- b. 7 f. 16 Subscription Order Form 1971-1972
- b. 8 f. 1 System Development Corporation (SDC) Proposal 1971-1972

Series 4. Retrospective Catalog 1968-1983

Series 4. Retrospective Catalog assembles the correspondence, memoranda, reports and publicity materials relating to the creation and publication of the retrospective catalog, titled *Dictionary Catalog of the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library - 1911-1971*.

- b. 8 f. 2 Budget 1977-1981, n.d.
- b. 8 f. 3 Central Serial Record (CSR) Conversion 1967, 1970, 1977, n.d
- b. 8 f. 4 Cost Estimates 1969-19178, n.d
- b. 8 f. 5 Divisional catalogs 1969-1982
- b. 8 f. 6 Errors 1983
- b. 8 f. 7 Funding 1971, 1976-1979, n.d
- b. 8 f. 8 Funding 1976-1982, n.d.
- b. 8 f. 9 G.K. Hall (Publisher) 1967, 1970, 1972, 1979-1983
- b. 8 f. 10-14 Memoranda 1968-1970
- b. 9 f. 1-4 Memoranda 1972-1983, n.d.
- b. 9 f. 5 Microfilm Copies 1977-1978
- b. 9 f. 6-7 Potential Publishers 1967-1971
- Procedures 1968-1983, n.d.
- b. 9 f. 8 Basic Entries 1976, n.d.
- b. 9 f. 9 Classmarks n.d.
- b. 9 f. 10 Condensed Entries 1979, n.d.

Series 4. Retrospective Catalog (cont.)
Procedures (cont.)

- b. 9 f. 11 Filing/Catalog Trays 1970, n.d.
- b. 9 f. 12 Filming 1976-1977
- b. 9 f. 13 Indexing n.d.
- b. 10 f. 1-2 Instructions for Card Examiners 1969-1970, 1976-1978, n.d
- b. 10 f. 3 Interim Catalog 1967, 1969-1970, n.d
- b. 10 f. 4 Space 1977
- b. 10 f. 5-6 Staffing 1969-1983, n.d.
- b. 10 f. 7 Subject Headings 1969-1979 1969-1979, n.d.
- b. 10 f. 8 Technical Orders 1977
- b. 10 f. 9 Voluminous and Popular Authors 1975, n.d.
- b. 10 f. 10 Progress Reports 1976-1979
- b. 10 f. 11 Publicity 1968, 1972, 1977-1983
- b. 11 f. 1 Questionnaire to Divisions 1970
- b. 11 f. 2 Sample pages n.d.
- b. 11 f. 3 Sampling - Mathematica 1970
- b. 11 f. 4 Sampling - PST 1972