

Virtual AskQC Office Hours

OCLC Encoding Levels

OCLC Metadata Quality
June 2020



Housekeeping

This session is being recorded



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All session recordings, slides, and notes are available at oc.lc/askqc

The screenshot shows the OCLC AskQC website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the OCLC logo, a search bar, and links for Release Notes, System Status Dashboard, and Contact OCLC Support. Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the text "How can we help you?". The main content area is titled "Previous AskQC office hours" and includes a sub-header "Find past AskQC office hour recordings and supporting materials." The page lists three office hours sessions:

- January 2020 :: Best practices for editing WorldCat bibliographic records**
 - [WebEx recording - January 7](#)
 - [Presentation slides](#)
 - [Summary and member questions](#)
- November 13, 2019 :: Comparisons of searching in Connexion and Record Manager**
 - [WebEx recording](#)
 - [Presentation slides](#)
- October 2019 :: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: Everything you wanted to know about stats but were afraid to ask**

On the right side of the page, there is a "Table of contents" section with a list of 11 items, each corresponding to an office hour session:

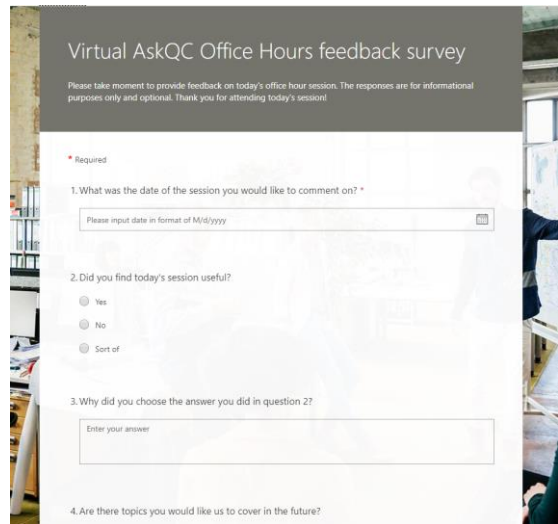
1. January 2020 :: Best practices for editing WorldCat bibliographic records
2. November 13, 2019 :: Comparisons of searching in Connexion and Record Manager
3. October 2019 :: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: Everything you wanted to know about stats but were afraid to ask
4. September 11, 2019 :: WorldCat knowledge base quality: Connections between the KB and bib records
5. August 14, 2019 :: OCLC cataloging policies: An overview of Bibliographic Formats and Standards
6. June 12, 2019 :: Merging duplicate bib records and the Member Merge Project
7. May 8, 2019 :: Small errors with big consequences
8. April 10, 2019 :: An overview of OCLC training resources
9. March 13, 2019 :: Intro to the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF)
10. February 13, 2019 :: Provider neutral cataloging
11. January 9, 2019 :: When to input a new record

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After the session, you will be directed to a brief, optional survey



The screenshot shows a feedback survey interface. At the top, it says "Virtual AskQC Office Hours feedback survey" and includes a note: "Please take moment to provide feedback on today's office hour session. The responses are for informational purposes only and optional. Thank you for attending today's session!". Below this, there is a "Required" section with four questions:

1. What was the date of the session you would like to comment on? *
Please input date in format of M/S/yyyy
2. Did you find today's session useful?
 Yes
 No
 Sort of
3. Why did you choose the answer you did in question 2?
Enter your answer
4. Are there topics you would like us to cover in the future?

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

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2:00 PM–4:30 PM Eastern Daylight Time, North America [UTC -4]

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On the call today



Shanna Griffith
Database Specialist II



Cynthia Whitacre
Senior Metadata
Operations Manager



Robert Bremer
Senior Consulting Database
Specialist



Jay Weitz
Senior Consulting Database
Specialist



Laura Ramsey
Senior Metadata
Operations Manager

ELvl: Encoding Level

Record Type BIB

Bytes ALL: Leader17

Input Standards ALL: Mandatory One-character code Default: ■

Definition Code that indicates the fullness of the bibliographic information of the MARC record.

Codes Prior to 2020, the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, the Library and Archives Canada, the British Library, the National Library of Australia, the National Library of New Zealand, and the National Science Foundation used OCLC-defined encoding levels: **F** for full level, **K** for minimal level, and **3** for abbreviated level. OCLC participants may now create records using code blank for full level and code 7 for minimal level.

OCLC Encoding Levels

The following list identifies and defines the types of codes found in WorldCat records that are entered through online input or through a batch process.

Cynthia Whitacre
Senior Metadata
Operations Manager

Robert Bremer
Senior Consulting
Database Specialist

Outline

- Definition and history of OCLC Encoding Levels
- Goal to Use Standard MARC21 Encoding Levels
- What we have accomplished to date
- What you can do now
- Future plans
- Questions



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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 be 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.

Encoding Level = Leader/17 Bibliographic Format

- Defines fullness of the record content
- In the field display you'll see this in the LDR (field) in both Connexion and WorldShare Record Manager
- You may know it as "ELvl:" in Connexion in the fixed field OR "Encoding Level" in WorldShare Record Manager in the labelled display of the Leader (LDR)

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



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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



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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



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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

↳ Undefined

2nd Indicator Undefined

↳ Undefined

Subfields (R=Repeatable 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 [Linkage \(NR\)](#)
- #8 [Field link and sequence number \(R\)](#)

Input Standards (Full/Minimal)

Required if applicable/Required if applicable

Required if applicable/Optional

Required if applicable/Optional

Required if applicable/Required if applicable

Optional/Optional (Archival and rare materials only)

Optional/Optional (Archival and rare materials only)

Optional/Optional

System supplied/System supplied

Optional/Optional

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



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Conversion of Existing Records

- Change ELvI I to blank
- Change ELvI K to 7
- Assess completeness of the record for ELvI 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



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The Numbers

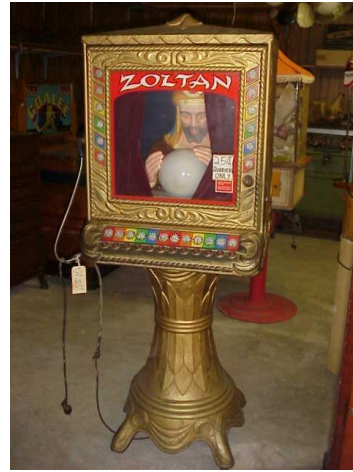
- I – 39 million
- K – 26 million
- J – 98 thousand
- M – 325 million
- Level M is the fastest growing category and represents a loss of encoding level information



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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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Thank you!

Next Virtual AskQC Office Hours

Time & topic: TBD

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



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