EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
for
SECTION F. INDEXING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR
BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORDS

“Indexing Standards and Guidelines for Bibliographic Records,” Section F of the Standards & Guidelines for Automated Library Systems, approved in September 1998, was developed to specify requirements for three aspects of automated library systems:

- Types of searches;
- MARC data elements indexed;
- System features for accessing indexed data.

This revision of these guidelines prepared by the Indexing Standards Working Group in 2004 and completed in 2005 continues to concentrate on these three areas. The impetus for the revision arises from several factors:

- Implementation of the MnLINK Gateway and Integrated Library System;
- Release of the U.S. National Z39.50 Profile for Library Applications, approved October 2003;
- Evolution of automated library systems;
- Deepening experience and understanding of indexing goals and standards.

The revised document retains much from the 1998 guidelines, but differs from them in several significant respects:

The tables of searches now make a clearer distinction between “keyword” or “keyword phrase” searches and “scan” or “browse” searches. This distinction is included in the NISO Z39.50 standard and in the U.S. National Profile, but the specifications for the latter kind of searches are minimally discussed in those sources. Scan/browse searches are not yet widely available in terms of standardized, cross-system functionality. However, scan/browse searching is a significant component of local automated library systems. The Working Group has, therefore, divided the Tables section to allow separate specifications for these two kinds of searching.

The tables of search qualifiers have been expanded to reflect more clearly U.S. National Profile recommendations regarding qualifiers for limiting by format. The need for format qualifiers has been expressed clearly by the MnLINK user community. The standard mechanism for deriving and specifying these qualifiers from MARC21 data is complex. Therefore, the review group has worked to make the content and explanation of this section of the tables more explicit.

The recommendations can be implemented at varying levels of complexity. Only some of the indexing guidelines are essential for ensuring basic interoperability for searches in the MnLINK environment. This revision makes distinctions between recommendations that are required for basic compliance and those that are recommended to enhance search performance beyond basic needs. These distinctions are indicated by abbreviations (R=required, D=desirable, O=optional) in tables listing types of searches and by the use of boldface in enumerations of fields and subfields.
In addition to these three areas of special attention, many smaller changes have been made to the document to update terminology and references to relevant standards and to expand and clarify technical explanations.

Like the 1998 guidelines, the 2005 revision is divided into four sections. The opening textual sections (Sections 1-3: Introduction, Background Information, Standards and Guidelines) provide background information about searching, indexing, and automated system functionality. They are followed by a Tables section (Section 4), which details the kinds of searches that systems should be able to provide as well as the fields and subfields that should be included in response to each kind of search. Users new to these issues or seeking a better understanding of the reasoning behind the tables’ specifications should begin with the opening sections. Issues dealt with by these guidelines continue to be highly complex.

Although the goal of the guidelines is to provide simpler and more reliable search options for library users, anyone charged with implementing these guidelines should be aware that simplicity for users is often achieved by mastering and managing a significant degree of complexity.

This document will be reviewed and approved by the MINITEX/Minnesota State Library Standards Review Task Force, the State Library Advisory Council, and the MINITEX Policy Advisory Council. In conjunction with that approval process, the Indexing Working Group further recommends that additional steps be taken to ensure a successful implementation of the guidelines:

• Charge a new group to review Section G of the Standards & Guidelines for Automated Library Systems, “Z39.50 Attribute Set Recommendations,” which is closely related to Section F.
• Explore methods of providing technical assistance to librarians and systems staff charged with making indexing and system configuration decisions and with implementing these decisions.
• Develop means of measuring the success of the effort to establish an interoperable searching environment in the region and to maximize the searching functionality of regional library systems.
• Recognizing that the systems, standards, and environments in which these guidelines operate are constantly evolving, establish a process for renewed review of the guidelines in the future.

As co-chair of the Indexing Standards Working Group, I would like to thank the members of the group for their thoughtful, patient, and determined efforts to work through a difficult maze of technical issues and options. Their dedication, hard work, and good spirits throughout the group’s work have been much appreciated. Members of the Indexing Standards Working Group are:

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