

1966: Publication of *Union List of Serials in Libraries of the United States and Canada*

In 1966, with support from a \$244,651 grant—CLR's largest to date—the massive third edition of the *Union List of Serials in Libraries and the United States and Canada* was published. The last previous edition had been published in 1943, with supplements issued periodically.

“Serials” comprise continuing publications such as magazines, bulletins, reports or other publications appearing in periodic succession. In 1959, when the grant funds were committed to the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials, Inc., new serials were being born at the rate of 8,000 per year and comprised some three-quarters of all published work. Since no library could own more than a fraction of the published titles, the cooperative use of serials through interlibrary loan was a necessity, as was a guide to their location.

The *Union List of Serials in Libraries and the United States and Canada*, third edition, comprised five folio-size volumes totaling 4,649 pages. It listed entries for 156,499 serial titles held among 956 North American libraries.

The description at right and on the following page is taken from the 10th annual report of the Council on Library Resources, Inc., for the period ending June 30, 1966, pp. 35–37.

I. BIBLIOGRAPHIC APPARATUS AND TECHNIQUES

(The ultimate objective of library work is to put into the hands of a reader a book or other suitable record meeting his need. The devices and techniques by which an appropriate book is identified and its location is made known are those of bibliography.)

Projects Completed

Union List of Serials in Libraries of the United States and Canada. The need for a new edition of the *Union List of Serials* was alluded to in the Council's first annual report. The *List* has been mentioned a number of times since the Council began its support of the new edition, beginning with a grant for a meeting of the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials held in the Library of Congress November 3-4, 1958.¹ This year the project was completed; the work and a final report were published.

The first edition of the *Union List of Serials* was published in 1927 by the H. W. Wilson Company in cooperation with the American Library Association. (So important was the work regarded by the library world that 41 libraries each subscribed \$900 toward its cost—a very large sum for those days.) In the book's 1,580 pages were title entries for 75,000 magazines, bulletins and other publications (excluding newspapers) published in successive issues, and holdings of these publications were listed for 225 major North American libraries. A second edition, again published by the H. W. Wilson Company, followed in 1943. Its 3,065 pages listed 115,000 serial titles and the holdings of these in 650 libraries. Each edition was followed by two supplements, the last of which appeared in 1953.

The end of World War II found the library world already planning for a third edition of the *Union List*, and the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials, which eventually came to represent 13 libraries and other learned bodies, was formed at that time. The infeasibility of a succession of editions, each almost double the size of its predecessor, was

¹I: 8; III: 21-23; V: 11; VIII: 12-13.

recognized, What was the alternative? With assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation the Committee projected in 1957 *A Permanent Program for the Union List of Serials*, employing a punched card technique. This program, requiring an estimated \$2.7 million for initial implementation, was presented to the Council, but when funds were not found for it, a new plan was developed. This proposed that a third edition of the *Union List* should bring the record down through 1949, but that dependence for information regarding publications commenced after that date should be placed upon the monthly publication, *New Serial Titles*, established by the Library of Congress in 1951 and already constituting in effect a current supplement to the *Union List*. The new proposal was presented to the Council in March 1959 and was underwritten two months later by a grant for the preparation of a third edition.

The compilation of the new work was carried out under a contract between the Joint Committee and the Library of Congress.² In order to take advantage of the variable-aperture camera developed for the reproduction of the British Museum's catalog, copy preparation and printing were performed in England, and because the book must expect long years of hard usage, an especially manufactured paper with very low acidity and good folding and tear resistance was used. Again the H. W. Wilson Company is the publisher.

The new edition of the *Union List of Serials* comprises five folio-size volumes and totals 4,649 pages, containing entries for 156,499 serial titles held among 956 North American libraries.³ The increase in the number of titles reflects the active efforts on the part of research libraries to acquire older publications, the increased coverage of the new edition, and the proliferation of publication. Some half million serial titles have appeared since the early 18th century. Some 8,000 new titles, it is estimated, appear each year. As no library

² Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials, Inc.: *Final report . . . on the project . . . for the publication of a third edition of the Union List of Serials in Libraries of the United States and Canada*. Submitted by Howard Rowelstad, Chairman. Washington: Council on Library Resources, Inc., 1966. 52 p.

³ *Union list of serials in libraries of the United States of America and Canada*. Third edition. Edited by Edna Titus Brown under the sponsorship of the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials with the cooperation of the Library of Congress. Funded by a grant from the Council on Library Resources, Inc. New York. The H. W. Wilson Company, 1965. 5 vols., 4,649 p.

has ever been able to assemble even half of the titles in existence, the *Union List of Serials* with its record of library holdings is a finding aid indispensable to even the largest library.

Having now effected the first part of its plan for putting the record of serial holdings in American libraries on a permanent footing, the Joint Committee has moved to the second. In the closing days of the last fiscal year the Council authorized a new grant to enable the Committee to review the suitability of *New Serial Titles* as the continuing supplement to the third edition of the *Union List of Serials*.

Pre-1965 Files of the National Union Catalog. Some 500 American research libraries currently report their holdings of books to the National Union Catalog at the Library of Congress. The record for imprints of 1956 and later is published but the pre-1956 record remains in card form, available to the inquirer only at the Library of Congress or upon application for specific information. The Subcommittee on the National Union Catalog of the American Library Association's Committee on Resources is understandably eager to get this unique record into print to increase its availability, and has for some time been exploring methods for accomplishing this. Were the Catalog available in a machine-readable form, this would not only facilitate publication (by permitting automatic preparation of printer's copy) but might serve other purposes as well. Consequently at the Subcommittee's request the Council commissioned the International Business Machines Corporation to undertake a pilot project for converting the Catalog's 12.5 million cards to a machine record suitable for computer processing.⁴

The study has been completed and a report rendered.⁵ This describes, step-by-step, a procedure for converting the contents of the Catalog to machine-readable form and estimates the cost at from 35.31 to 41.7 cents per title or from \$4.4 to \$5.2 million for the entire Catalog.

The expenditure of sums of this magnitude could not be justified by the sole use of the machine record in the publi-

⁴ IX: 25-26.

⁵ International Business Machines Corporation. Federal Systems Division: *Report of a pilot project for converting the pre-1952 National Union Catalog to a machine readable record; a study sponsored by the Council on Library Resources, Inc.* Rockville, Md., 1965. 52, [15] p.