**Testing Use of Limited ISBD Punctuation in Bibliographic Records**

February 6, 2018

The Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC), OCLC, and SkyRiver will begin testing a possible transition to using limited ISBD punctuation in MARC 21 bibliographic records. The test period will run through July 1, 2018, followed by an evaluation period that will culminate in a decision on whether to move forward.

**Rationale:**

Creating MARC 21 records without punctuation that duplicates MARC 21 coding is expected to save time for catalogers, make it easier to map data to and from other formats, and allow for an easier transition to linked data. Creating records with limited ISBD punctuation simplifies data entry and allows catalogers to focus solely on coding to better identify parts of the bibliographic description. OCLC analysis of changes that catalogers make to existing bibliographic data indicates that edits to ISBD punctuation and associated spacing have little to no impact on retrieval and use. In addition, this change would allow for flexibility in the design of online displays without the need for suppressing punctuation.

Please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](https://goo.gl/rcpCx2) for additional information about the test.

**Purpose of the test:**

The test will enable the PCC to make decisions about the feasibility of a policy change regarding limited use of ISBD punctuation in records. The test will gather feedback about how records with limited ISBD punctuation function in library management and discovery systems and in other applications that make use of MARC data. The outcome is expected to be a clearer understanding of the pros and cons of this approach, the impact of working with a mix of records (some with complete ISBD punctuation and some with a limited amount), and the implications for retrospective processing of records.

This test is not intended to evaluate the impact on individual catalogers creating or editing MARC records. It is specifically intended to test the impact of such a change on library systems and applications that make use of MARC data, including MARC transformation services and linked data.

**Scope of the test:**

The test **is limited to** the following two recommendations of the PCC ISBD and MARC Task Group report at [https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/documents/isbdmarc2016.pdf](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.loc.gov_aba_pcc_documents_isbdmarc2016.pdf&d=DwMF-g&c=-dg2m7zWuuDZ0MUcV7Sdqw&r=PudRsQkHWRWMNNx4cj7Ft-je-e-TvOmAT19C_mVLIkM&m=bOAoRKqIM1V1QuqkETdQ06M8yVq50TzSzfXQ-7DyTi8&s=Fk_CZLvKvWjTM9bft9i7a6_UW2-TbFAGNX0sEwXI6R4&e=), page 1:

1. Cease use of terminal periods
2. Cease use of separating punctuation corresponding to MARC 21 coding

The test **does not include**:

1. Authority records
2. Access points in bibliographic records
3. Proposed MARC coding described in the PCC ISBD and MARC Task Group report

**Test records:**

The Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, and OCLC have each compiled a set of test bibliographic records, which are [freely available on the PCC website](http://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/documents/test-records-punctuation.html). The records may be used by institutions and vendors for testing. Institutions and vendors are welcome to develop additional test record sets.

**Evaluation process:**

The PCC Standing Committee on Applications (SCA) will gather and analyze the feedback from libraries, system vendors, and others experimenting with the record sets. The SCA will also act as a point of contact for questions about the test.

After testing the records, please provide feedback in this [survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STSLYZT). For questions, please contact [Ben Abrahamse](mailto:babraham@mit.edu), SCA chair.

**Possible policy change at utility level**

If a decision is reached to limit ISBD punctuation provided in records, the new policy will permit catalogers at any institution to save new bibliographic records to their utility with all the punctuation intact, if desired. Once records in the shared environment have some of their punctuation removed by the utility to conform with the new policy, that punctuation should not be added back to the records.

Institutions will be able to follow punctuation practices required at their local level. The bibliographic utilities will attempt to make tools available to easily add or remove punctuation prior to the end of the testing period.