

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose and Scope of UNIMARC

The primary purpose of UNIMARC is to facilitate the international exchange of bibliographic data in machine-readable form between national bibliographic agencies. UNIMARC may also be used as a model for the development of new machine-readable bibliographic formats.

The scope of UNIMARC is to specify the content designators (tags, indicators and subfield codes) to be assigned to bibliographic records in machine-readable form and to specify the logical and physical format of the records. It covers monographs, continuing resources, cartographic materials, music, sound recordings, graphics, projected and video materials, rare books and archival materials and electronic resources.

UNIMARC is intended to be a carrier format for exchange purposes. It does not stipulate the form, content, or record structure of the data within individual systems. UNIMARC does provide recommendations on the form and content of data when it is to be exchanged. Records are usually structured in exchange tape format as the last stage in any conversion process, after form, content, and content designation have been converted to the UNIMARC standard. Those organizations intending to use UNIMARC for data interchange will find it useful to co-ordinate their internal format content designators and field and subfield definitions with those in UNIMARC to reduce the complexity of data conversion when the records are converted into the UNIMARC exchange tape structure.

References are made where applicable to other UNIMARC formats, e.g. *UNIMARC/Authorities*; but no details are given. For that, users of the bibliographic format are referred to the documentation for those formats.

This Manual is both a definitive statement of the bibliographic format and a guide to its use.

### 1.2 Format Maintenance

UNIMARC is maintained by an IFLA committee, the Permanent UNIMARC Committee (PUC), for which the secretariat is the IFLA UNIMARC Core Activity. Future changes to the format will be primarily defining additional fields, subfields and coded values where needed. Proposals for change usually originate with those creating UNIMARC records or those using UNIMARC records. Changes are made only through the Permanent UNIMARC Committee. UNIMARC will not be modified to accommodate non-ISBD descriptive cataloguing practices or other practices contrary to the international standards on which it is based.

### 1.3 Definitions

The terms defined below are those used in a special sense in this Manual; terms used in their usual bibliographic sense are not defined. Definitions of ISBD data elements can be found in the ISBD documents.

**Access Point** – A name, term, code, etc. that is specially intended for searching for and retrieving a bibliographic record.

**Content Designator** – Codes identifying data elements and/or providing additional information about a data element. Content designators consist of tags, indicators and subfield identifiers.

**Data Element** – The smallest unit of information that is explicitly identified. Within a variable field, a data element is identified by a subfield identifier and it forms a subfield. Within the record label, directory, and fixed-length subfields, the data elements consisting of codes are identified by their character positions.

**Data Element Identifier** – *See Subfield Identifier.*

**End of Record Mark** – A control character used at the end of each record to separate it from the next. Also known as the Record Terminator.

**Field** – A defined character string, identified by a tag, which contains one or more subfields.

**Field Separator** – A control character used at the end of each variable field to separate it from the next, and also used at the end of the directory.

**Fill Character** – A character used in specified character positions to indicate that no data is available to supply the appropriate value in that position, although that character position is applicable. For details of its use see Section 4, 4.5.

**Fixed Length Subfield** – A subfield whose length is invariant, being determined for all occurrences by provision of this format. A fixed-length subfield may be defined to contain one or more data elements. Fixed-length subfields may occur in both fixed fields, e.g. field 100, subfield \$a, and in variable fields, e.g. field 200, subfield \$z.

**Former Titles** – All titles of continuing resources earlier than the one by which the resource is currently known.

**Hierarchical Level** – A value assigned to the primary bibliographic entity (i.e. the item described in the 200 field) in a logical record which indicates the placement of that entity in a predefined hierarchical structure (*see* Hierarchical Level codes in the Record Label). For example the bibliographic description of the individual volumes of a multi-volume set and the bibliographic description of the multi-volume set itself, could be considered at two different hierarchical levels related to each other in that one is a component of the other. Hierarchical levels are used only when bibliographic records have been produced for entire bibliographic entities as well as for bibliographically distinct portions of the entire entity, e.g. articles in a journal, chapters of a monograph, sub-series of a series, and monographs in a series.

**Indicator** – A character (numeric or alphabetic) associated with a variable field which supplies additional information about the contents of the field, about the relationship between the field and other fields in the record, or about the action required in certain data manipulation processes.

**ISBD Data Elements** – Those data elements in the description which should be formulated according to the provisions of the International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions.

**Preceding Title** – For continuing resources which have changed titles, the title immediately preceding the title being catalogued.

**Record Terminator** – A control character used at the end of each record to separate it from the next, also known as the End of Record Mark.

**Source Format** – The data format in which a machine-readable record already existed before being converted into UNIMARC.

**Subfield** – A defined unit of information within a field (*see also* **Data Element**).

**Subfield Identifier** – A code consisting of two characters identifying individual subfields within a variable field. The first character, the delimiter, is always the same unique character specified in ISO 2709 and the second character, the subfield code, is either numeric or alphabetic.

**Tag** – A series of three numeric characters used as a label of its associated fields.

**Textual Data** – Data which is intended to be displayed in a catalogue entry as opposed to coded data.

**Variable Field** – A field in which the length may vary from one occurrence to the next. A variable field may contain one or more data elements or subfields. The length of the fields in characters includes the number of characters required for the textual data, indicators, subfield identifiers and the field separator.

## 1.4 Superseded documentation

The UNIMARC format was first published in 1977 under the title *UNIMARC Universal MARC Format*. It was recommended by the IFLA Working Group on Content Designators set up by the IFLA Section on Cataloguing and the IFLA Section on Information Technology. It contained specifications for book and printed serial material and provisional fields for various non-book materials such as music, motion pictures, phonodiscs etc. A second edition *UNIMARC: Universal MARC Format* was published in 1980. This edition added data fields required for cartographic materials and updated several fields relating to continuing resources and monographs. Provisional fields for additional cartographic attributes and for non-book materials were edited and revised.

In 1983, citing the need for the format documentation to be expanded to provide more interpretative guidance, the document was revised and expanded and reissued as the *UNIMARC Handbook*. Following a major UNIMARC maintenance meeting in 1986, a revised document, *UNIMARC Manual*, was issued in 1987. This edition of the format removed the provisional status from and revised fields that were specific to sound recordings, visual projections, video recordings, motion pictures, graphics, printed music, and microforms, in addition to the remaining provisional cartographic fields. Fields for electronic resources were added as provisional.

This edition supersedes the previous ones, the later of which, the second edition, was looseleaf. Since June 1990, additions and changes have been agreed upon by the Permanent UNIMARC Committee. Fields added and changed since the fifth update of the second edition are listed in Appendix O. This new bound manual is intended for the time being to be updated on the internet as changes are needed. The editor for the Third Edition is Alan Hopkinson. Previous editions were edited by Brian P. Holt, British Library, and Sally H. McCallum, Library of Congress.