

MERGING PAST AND FUTURE: TRANSFERRING OLD CATALOGUE RECORDS INTO AUTOMATED SYSTEMS (SLOVENIAN EXAMPLE)

Zlata Dimec

Maja Žumer

Izvirni znanstveni članek

UDC 027.54(497.4 Ljubljana):025.354:004.3

Abstract

Retrospective conversion as a conversion of data from an old to a newer format is usually realized as a transfer of card catalogue into a computer form in a fast and simple way. The National and University Library in Ljubljana, Slovenia, started its first retro-conversion project in 1997 with the oldest, partly handwritten catalogue, covering the period 1774-1947. The description of the catalogue is given, taking into account both cards' characteristics (size, handwritten/penwritten, scripts used etc.) and different cataloguing rules applied at that period (Austrian Library Instruction, Prussian Instruction etc.). The whole process was divided into separate phases according to technologies and human resources available, and specific procedures were designed (transcription, manual and automatic structuring, control etc.). The results are ca. 70,000 records in MARC format, which were included into existing library catalogue. Records for items published until 1830 were contributed to Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL) Hand Press Books database hosted by Research Libraries Group (RLG). NUL is currently working on retroconversion of remaining catalogues (ca. 300,000 records) where different procedures have to be designed due to different characteristics. The experience gained during these projects may be found useful by other libraries that are either starting or considering retrospective conversion.

Key words: National and university library Ljubljana, card catalogues, retrospective conversion

* *Prispevek je bil objavljen v publikaciji »Libraries and associations in the transient world: New technologies and new forms of cooperation : Conference proceedings.« Sudak, Ukraine, June 5-13, 1999 (str. 156-162). Simferopol' : Tavrida, 1999.*

DIMEC, Zlata; MAJA ŽUMER: Merging past and future: transferring old catalogue records into automated systems (Slovenian example). *Knjižnica*, Ljubljana, 46(2002)3, 119-127

1. Introduction

Each library planning its retrospective conversion should consider carefully the reasons for and goals of such an expensive project, and then analyze the existing resources: printed bibliographies, inventory lists, and most often, the card catalogues. The National and University Library in Ljubljana, Slovenia, chose to start the project with its oldest card catalogue. The reasons were twofold: this catalogue itself represents a cultural heritage as the cards date in the early 19th century, and many of them are identified as a handwriting of distinguished scholars who ran the Library. The cards are deteriorating and it was necessary to remove the catalogue from even the restricted use, but make it available for historical research. The second reason was the extent of the catalogue, of which both the size and the concept were considered a closed entity.

2. Description of the catalogue

The old card catalogue covers the period 1774-1947, i.e. from the establishment of the Library until a couple of years after the end of the World War II, when new cataloguing rules were introduced. The catalogue holds ca. 95,000 cards for monographs and serials in different languages, from which Latin, German and Slovenian are most heavily represented, followed by other Slavic languages, Italian and English, not excluding Greek and Hebrew.

Ca. 60 % of these cards are handwritten, many of them in black letter. An example is in Fig. 1. The scripts are often very difficult to read. Most of these cards have a form of a template, divided into eight fields, each designed for a set of data: shelfmark, subject term, format, heading, bibliographic data, imprint, key to the subject catalogue, and the old shelfmark. Bibliographic data in the biggest field may consist of the title proper, statement of responsibility, edition statement, physical description (except format), series, and notes which may be very extensive. These templates however show us a well considered structure, easily comparable with the structure of modern bibliographic records. Newer cards, some still handwritten and later typed, lack the template form, the subject term, and have in general less elements of bibliographic description (Fig. 2).

For historical reasons, the language of cataloguing in older cards (templates) is German, and in others Slovenian. For the same reasons, the concept of the cata-

logue followed the Austrian Library Instruction¹. The cataloguing rules applied in this catalogue vary from the Schrettinger's rules² to the famous Prussian Instructions³, both of which were widely adapted to the needs of the Library and to the librarians' judgments – which, if not recorded, may prevent a successful and adequate retroconversion – a very topical lesson for modern librarians, being aware of future changes.

271.	<i>Librar. clas. Roman. Poetis</i>	4 ^o
<i>Horatius Q. Flaccus.</i>	<i>Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera, interp. tatione et notis illustravit Ludovicus Tappier, juris Christianissimi Regis, et usum Universitatis Delphicae, ac Universi- tatis Principum Burgundiae, Andinæ, Biturigenæ.</i>	<i>Massani, 1777. lib. presbiteri opud Remondini</i>
<i>II 127</i> 10714	<i>opus latinum</i>	<i>1 cont. 11</i> I. A. C. 11

Fig. 1

- 1 *Instruction vorgeschrieben für alle Universitäts- und Lycealbibliotheken mit Hofdecrete vom 30. April 1778, and the later edition entitled Instruction für die k.k. Universitäts- und Studienbibliotheken, provisorisch erlassen mit Stud. Hof.-Comm.-Decrete vom 23. Juli 1825*
- 2 *Schrettinger, M: Versuch eines vollständiges Lehrbuchs der Bibliothek-Wissenschaft. München, 1829*
- 3 *Instruktionen für die alphabetischen Kataloge der preussischen Bibliotheken vom 10. Mai 1899. 2. Ausg. 1909*



Fig. 2

3. Retroconversion process

Funding for the project was received from the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia and Regional Library Programmes of Open Society Institute in equal parts and the work began in 1996.

As the first phase all catalogue cards were scanned. Colour scanning was chosen because we wanted to keep an exact digital copy of the catalog for preservation and archiving purposes. The process took place in the library to ensure both the security of the cards and minimal interference with the everyday use of the catalog. At the same time additional data were added to the scanned images: shelf-mark and an indication of the type of each card (pre-1900 handwritten form or typed).

The whole process for each type was different. The oldest cards are well structured and could be transcribed and structured at the same time even by non-librarians. A group of students with good knowledge of German (including black letter) and Latin transcribed the data from each scanned image using a special utility program. The interface is shown in Figure 3.

4. Results of the retroconversion

As already mentioned, the electronic copy of the catalogue was one of the goals of this project. The electronic catalogue (Fig. 4-5) is a faithful copy as it keeps the original number of drawers, including the number and arrangement of cards in them. The cards can be rotated (to accommodate reading the notes written perpendicularly), and even their backs can be viewed if written. Additional benefit is the option of enlargement which makes reading easier. The catalogue is now available via the Library server, ready for scholars who wish to do any historical research.

After achieving the uniform structure of records, the conversion into UNIMARC format (Fig. 6) was prepared for records covering books printed in the hand-press period in Europe (until 1830). 17,000 records were contributed to the Hand Press Books database established by the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL) and available via RLIN system. All the records derived from the retroconversion (ca 65,000) were then converted into the Slovenian COMARC format (based on UNIMARC - Fig. 7) and included into the Library local database. After deduplication procedure, they were loaded into the Slovenian shared cataloguing system COBISS (COoperative Bibliographic Systems and Services), available to other Slovenian libraries for downloading and use.

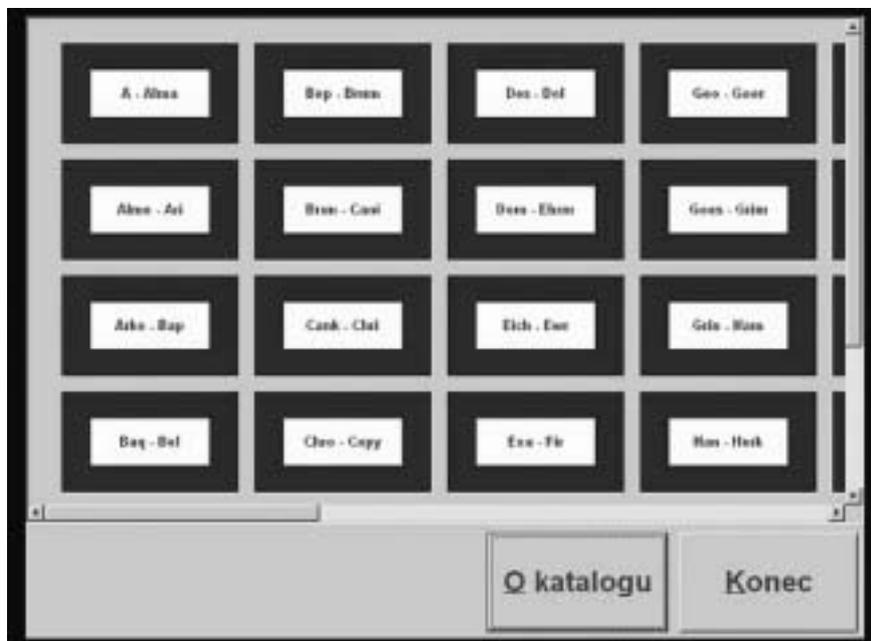


Fig. 4

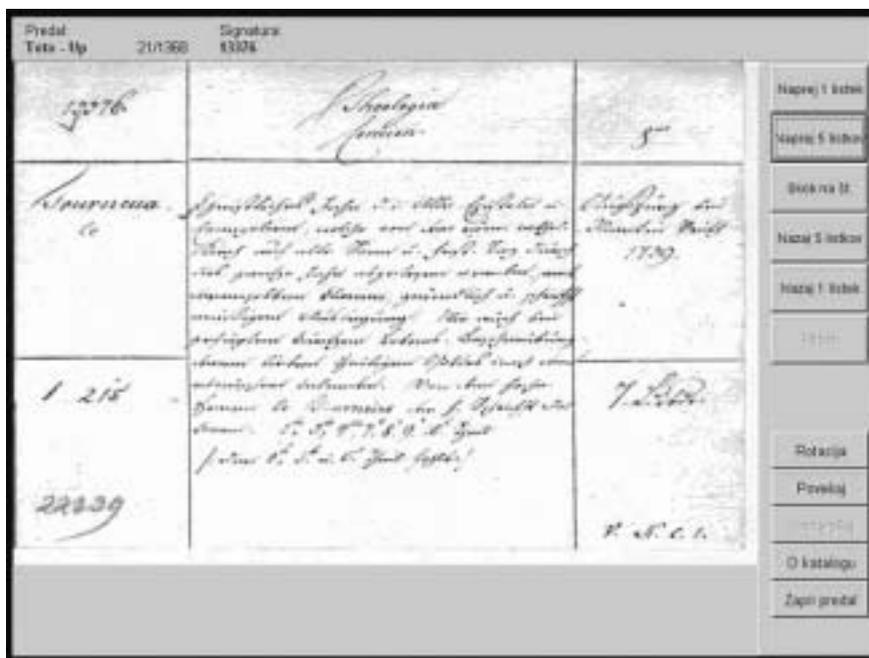


Fig. 5

Label: 00753nam0#22002051n#450
 #001SI\NUK\RK\007287
 #00519980716143511.0
 100##\$a19971018d1777#### || || 0gery0103####ba
 101 | # \$alat
 2000#\$aQuinti Horatii Flacci Opera, interpretatione et notis illustravit
 Ludovicus Desprez. jussu Christianissimi Regis, in usum Serenissimi
 Delphini, ac Serenissimorum Principum Burgundiae, Andium, Biturigum
 210##\$aBassani\$cSed Prostant Venetiis Apud Remondini\$d1777
 215##\$d4°
 300##\$aSehr brauchbar
 6100#\$alateinische Literatur
 675##\$a821.124.09
 700#1\$aHoratius Flaccus\$bQuintus\$4070
 801#0\$aSI\$bNUK
 801#1\$aSI\$bNUK\$c19971018
 801#2\$aSI\$bNUK\$c19980716\$2unimarc
 899#\$aSI\NUK\$j971

Fig. 6

```

ID=92073216 LN=0000444238 M V1 10.10.1997 NUK::RETRORK
001 <a>n - novi zapis <b>a - tekstovno gradivo - tiskano <c>m - zaključena
na
    publikacija <d>0 - ni hierarhičnega odnosa <g>1 - podnivo 1 (podatki,
    prevzeti s kataložnega listka) <h>n - zapis ni v ISBD obliki
100 <b>d - monografska publikacija, zaključena <c>1934 <g>0 - nemod-
ificiran
    stavek <h>slv - slovenski <l>ba - latinica
101 | <a>ita - italijanski
2000 <a>Sulla tubercolosi miliare del polmone. Osservazioni Cliniche
210 <a>Foligno <c><s.n.> <d>1934
215 <d>4o
300 <a>Estr. da: Rinnovamento Medico, Il Giornale di Tisiologia, 1934.
    adligat k 66031
700 1<a>Leproni <b>Federico <4>070 - avtor
996 1<d>n66054

```

Fig. 7

5. Conclusions

The results of the first phase of the retroconversion are encouraging. The concept of old cataloguing rules has showed an admirable consistency. It's been proved that the rules in past 200 years have not changed dramatically, keeping to a certain extent effectiveness in the modern environment of MARC formats. This fact also indicates that the experiences gained in any library or environment may be valuable to others, taking into account that the methods of the whole process may differ, depending on the starting points, reasons and goals of the project.

6. Future plans

The retrospective conversion of the old catalogue was the first step. During its final stages the next part, the conversion of the catalogues for the period 1948-1988 was planned. There are several catalogues covering this period, and after a careful analysis the systematic (UDC) catalogue was chosen as the basis. This was the only way to ensure at least a broad subject access to the converted records. We are estimating that the final result will be about 350,000 bibliographic records.

All the catalogue cards have already been scanned. Shelfmarks, subject headings and UDC notations were entered at the same time. By the fall 1999, all cards will be transcribed using OCR as much as possible. At that time the records will be publicly available as a full text (unstructured) database enabling searching on shelfmark, subject heading, UDC, and keyword.

Funding for that part was also received from Ministry of Culture and Open Society Institute. Upon approval of the funding for the final stage, the full text records will be structured automatically, controlled and converted into MARC format.

Although this is not strictly a part of the retrospective conversion project, some future plans for further processing of the resulting records have to be mentioned as well. All the records which belong to the national bibliography will be identified and enhanced, most of the respective items will be recatalogued. National and University Library will thus fulfill its duty as the national bibliographic agency.

7. Literature

Kodrič-Dačić, Eva: Matija Čop in njegov prispevek k slovenskemu bibliotekarstvu. *Knjižnica* 41: 2/3 (1997) 17-31

Pirjevec, Avgust: *Knjižnice in knjižničarsko delo*. V Celju: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1940

Žumer, Maja: Retrospektivna konverzija starih katalogov Narodne in univerzitetne knjižnice. In: *Zbornik razprav: 10 let Oddelka za bibliotekarstvo (1987-1997)*. Ljubljana: FF, 1998. P. 215-229