Oh, No, It’s a Serial! or, Cataloging 19th-Century Serials

ELIZABETH L. JOHNSON

Volumes have been written on the literary, historical, and cultural significance of 19th-century serials. Special collections are regularly offered materials by booksellers which, upon closer examination, bear the marks, however carefully hidden, of being a serial. These materials may be literary works included in issues of periodicals, U.S. government documents, or periodicals reissued by the publisher with a new title page. We are regularly presented with challenges to identify citations without a clue that what is cited is not a monograph but actually in an uncited serial.

Two examples typify the kinds of situations we encounter when dealing with serials. A recent dealer’s catalog offers John Fremont’s *Report of the Exploring Expedition of the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842*. The dealer’s description includes the author’s name, title of the report, place and date of publication, number of pages, binding description, and physical condition of the copy. The only clue given that the Fremont report has a serial quality to it is the phrase: “The Senate issue of the Fremont report.” There is cataloging in OCLC for the Fremont report as a monograph. That record contains an added entry giving information about the series in which it is published: the serial some of us know as “The Sheep Set.” The bibliographic record found in OCLC for the entire Sheep Set gives the title proper as the United States Congressional Serial Set and notes that the set has also been known variously as: Serial number set, Congressional edition, Congressional set, Congressional series, Congressional series of United States public documents, Congressional document series, Sheep set, Sheep bound set (owing to its distinctive sheepskin binding), and Serial set. Libraries considering the purchase of the Fremont report might wish to check to see if they already have it in their Sheep set.

At Indiana University’s Lilly Library we recently moved an odd volume of a 19th-century serial into the vault for safer keeping. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s “A Study in Scarlet” was published in *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* in 1887. Lilly Library cataloged “A Study in Scarlet” separately as an analytic, with an added entry for the name of the serial. Cataloging available in OCLC for the single 1887 issue of *Beeton’s Christmas Annual*.

Elizabeth L. Johnson is Head of Technical Services, Lilly Library, Indiana University.
Annual has no added entry for the name of the serial. Serial cataloging for the annual in OCLC provides no access to Conan Doyle's story.

When I was presented with the opportunity to treat special collections cataloging of 19th-century serials, my first reaction was: "Oh, no, not serials!" Of all the materials I have cataloged, serials are my least favorite. Serials cataloging is, without question, a highly developed art—an art which has evolved over decades with formulas addressing the special needs of serials and the staff whose responsibility they are. Serials cataloging requires a confusing vocabulary of numerous names, titles, and acronyms: AACR2, LCRI, CSB, CONSER, CEG, DCRB, MARC, MARBI, USMARC Format for Holdings Data, and USMARC Format Integration. Definitions for most of these terms are included in the appendix. The list is by no means exhaustive, but rather illustrative of the bilingual nature of rare serials cataloging. If the terms were listed by rank of importance instead of alphabetically, CONSER would be first. This cooperative program has set the standard for serials cataloging.

As of January 1992 the CONSER database included 577,865 records. By comparison, as of April 1992, the OCLC databases included 1,317,282 serial records. I do not know how many of these are 19th-century titles. However, as a sample, I searched in OCLC every tenth title in Neal Edgar's A History and Bibliography of American Magazines, 1810-1820. Of the 24 titles in the sample, I found three with records for the paper copy only. Another three had cataloging copy for the microform version only. There were thirteen titles with records for the original and for a microform version. Five of these thirteen had locked CONSER records. Five titles did not have records. If we accept this sample, almost 80 percent of the titles had some kind of copy available in OCLC. This may be too high a percentage to project for all 19th-century American magazines, and it is certainly a higher percentage than I had expected. My search revealed not a single record that reflected rare book and special collections cataloging standards. What I should have seen were records that described the copies of the serials in the same terms used to describe copies of rare books. We need serial records that do not leave out so much and, at least at the local level, provide copy-specific information: binding descriptions, provenance information (often complicated by the fact that different volumes of a serial were acquired from different sources), and access points that emphasize why the serial is in our collection.

CURRENT STANDARD FOR SERIALS CATALOGING IN U.S. LIBRARIES
Serials cataloging in U.S. libraries today is dominated by CONSER, although only 21 libraries are members of CONSER. CONSER records are created according to the provisions in chapter twelve of AACR2 with the corresponding LCRI (Library of Congress Rule Interpretations) and the CONSER Editing Guide. These records are "authenticated" and locked. The presence of an 042 field in a serial record indicates that it is a locked CONSER record.
Sheila Intner has described AACR2 chapter twelve as "focusing on making one record that will stand for all the individual issues of a serial title, with little ongoing maintenance. Dates are left open, and the skeletal physical description does not indicate the total number of pieces. Efforts are made to include in the description solely those elements that apply to all parts of the serial."

In another article she states that these records are achieved by "eliminating all information likely to change over time, including the names of editors and authors, titles of articles, columns, and features, numbers of volumes, etc., as well as subject headings and other representations of contents." It is my experience, however, that serials cataloging does include a few of these elements. For example, the number of volumes is included when a bibliographic record is closed off, as is the case when a serial has ceased or experienced a title change. CONSER participants are instructed to monitor subject headings carefully for current serials and to add additional ones if a change in scope of the serial is evident.

Library of Congress Rule Interpretations (LCRI) place limits on the application of the rules in chapter twelve, providing for a level "one plus" description. Compare this with the "three plus" level of description that rare book catalogers often choose for monographs in their collection, and it is easy to identify the main source of the rare book cataloger's frustration in dealing with serials.

Most of the following points concerning the rules in chapter twelve of AACR2 and the LCRI apply to cataloging serials for special collections in general, but certain specific problems are particularly sticky for 19th-century periodicals. Further complications are added by applying the USMARC format for serials to the descriptions and when displaying and searching these machine-readable records in our bibliographic utilities and local catalogs. Since the challenges presented by automation are often specific to a particular library or group of libraries, I will not address them here.

Since the adoption of AACR2, descriptive cataloging begins with identifying the chief source of information for the various areas of the description. The chief source of information for the title is the title page of the first issue of a serial or the first available issue if the first issue is not present in the collection. This is often the case for older materials for which the holdings are incomplete. Determining the title is particularly difficult when the serial has been reissued by the publisher with a new title page. The Illuminated Magazine is a 19th-century periodical illustrated by "Phiz" and others which included contributions from the writers of Punch. It is an example of this situation, having been reissued by the publisher with a new title page. This practice of reissuing serials was common among 19th-century publishers.

Title changes seem to be a defining property of serials. "Successive entry" won out over "latest entry" in the struggle over what to do with title changes in the catalog. Each time the title changes a new bibliographic record must be created. As might be expected, the Library of Congress has issued a long list of "Changes Not to Be Considered Title Changes of Serials" in its Cataloging Service Bulletin (CSB).
Nonetheless, the array of linking entries required when a title changes is confusing to all but the most seasoned catalog searcher.

Serials have a disconcerting habit of showing up with identical titles. In order to distinguish between (or, too often among) serials with the same title, *LCRI 25.5B* instructs us in the art of “conflict resolution.” The cataloger is told to create a uniform title made up of the title proper plus a parenthetical qualifier. The choice of qualifying term is generally the place of publication. This rule has caused much unhappiness in libraries. Many of the identical titles are generic such as “bulletin,” “newsletter,” “monograph,” and “journal” and are published by organizations, government bodies, corporations, etc. Carolyn Havens has made the suggestion that generic titles be included as a subcategory of corporate authorship in *AACR2* Rule 21.1B2.\(^5\) Searchers of the catalog are more likely to know the body responsible for the serial than they are to know where the serial is published. The corporate body should be included as an added entry.

Lengthy titles are commonplace among 19th-century materials, including serials. Other title information is covered in *LCRI 12.1E1*. The instruction is: “generally do not give other title information for serials. However, other title information must be given in the following circumstances:

1. when it includes a statement of responsibility and the statement is an integral part of the other title information;
2. when it is the form rejected as the title proper in the full form vs. acronym or initialism question;
3. when it is supplied to explain the title proper.

Other title information may be given whenever the cataloger determines that this information is useful to the description of the serial. This sentence must surely have another ending for LC catalogers which reads, “but don’t do this very often!” LC also insists that other title information can no longer be given in a quoted note.

It is often a puzzle to determine the extent or how many volumes there were of a serial. *LCRI 12.5B* covers this problem. Post-publication details in the formulation of volume and illustration statement in the physical description and notes areas are to be based on the item as issued by the publisher rather than as bound after publication. This area is again a problem for those serials reissued by the publisher in publisher’s binding and not in the volumes as originally issued.

It is bibliographically significant in cataloging monographs for special collections if the place of publication varies in two otherwise identical volumes. *LCRI 12.7B9* instructs the cataloger to note specifically any important change in the place of publication. Important changes are defined as those that 1) involve a change in country or region, or 2) involve a change in the place when the place has been used as a qualifier for the uniform title and/or key title. Other specific changes may be noted at the discretion of the cataloger.

Determining the library’s holdings for a serial title is no longer part of the bibliographic description of the serial. Previously the “numeric and/or alphabetic,
chronological, and/or other designation area” used to be called “holdings.” In the card catalog era, library personnel often penciled over the printed information on the card to indicate what the library held if it differed from the information. As Jean Decker notes, “Today, this area identifies what was published or is being published, not what is available in the collection.” The MARC format requires that local holdings information appear elsewhere. A separate holdings record has been defined: the USMARC Format for Holdings Data.

In other chapters in AACR2, the notes section (x.7) specifies that the cataloger may include information about the copy being described. In the serials chapter, this note is co-opted to record the issue upon which the description is based if it is not the first issue of the serial.7

Chapter thirteen of AACR2 offers analysis as a tool available to the cataloger to provide more effective access to parts of the collection. LCRI 13.5 concerning “in” analytics instructs catalogers not to employ the technique of “in” analytics except in very special cases. Multilevel description is another form of analysis taken out of the cataloger’s tool box by an LCRI. LCRI 13.6 instructs: “Do not employ the technique of multilevel description in any case.”

**DCRB “APPENDIX C: RARE SERIALS”**

The publication of Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books (DCRB) in 1991 included “Appendix C: Rare Serials.” This appendix is a revised version of the guidelines for treatment of rare serials published in the Library of Congress Cataloging Service Bulletin (CSB), no. 26, Fall 1984. The CONSER Operations Committee and CONSER Operations Coordinator cooperated in making some necessary CONSER changes. A companion appendix, Appendix L, now appears in the CONSER Editing Guide. Using these guidelines, rare book catalogers are better able to satisfy their longings for a uniform approach to bibliographic description and access for the two most common forms of printed material in rare book libraries: monographs and serials.

Section 1.1 of Appendix C in DCRB instructs the cataloger to apply the rules to serials published before 1801 and to later ones for which a more detailed level of description is desired than is provided by AACR2. This section goes on to give a clear statement to catalogers as to the prominence of the guidelines. It states: “When AACR2 and LCRI differ from DCRB, prefer DCRB, except as noted below.” This exception is in Section 1.2. “Do not apply the provision of DCRB in 1B1 that allows for including within the title proper any other titles or statements about the chief title when they appear before the chief title on the title page. Instead, follow the approach to the selection of the title proper found in AACR2. This will ensure that the national serials database shows consistency in choice of title for serials.”
Under the rules, catalogers are encouraged to provide references to published descriptions, and to apply liberally the provisions for making notes especially to bring out specific points, e.g., certain contributors, illustrators, editors, etc.

The option of redefining the appropriate bibliographic unit for description is provided in sections 1.8, 2.8 and 3 “individual issues of serials.” This option allows “detailed bibliographic description of single issues of rare and early serials, together with subject analysis pertinent to each issue separately cataloged, which is particularly important in the case of rare serials for which extant issues are sparse.”

The MARC content designators familiar to rare book catalogers are explicitly defined for use in serial records in section 2 of the rules. These include:

1. Use of subfield “e” dcrb in the 040 field
2. Subfield “5” in 5xx and 7xx fields for copy-specific information
3. 510 field - bibliographic references field
4. 655 field - genre terms
5. 752 field - hierarchical place names
6. 755 field - physical aspects of the serial
7. 772 field - optionally links an individual issue of a serial back to the collective record
8. Subfields “4” and “e” in relevant 7xx fields for relator codes or terms

The use of the 570 field has been eliminated since the publication of DCRB. Inclusion of information regarding editors, compilers, illustrators, or translators now goes into an undifferentiated 500 field.

One thing is clear. Use of these rules will produce longer serial records. It does not necessarily mean, however, that the records will take longer to prepare than those which follow chapter twelve as modified by the LCRI. Trying to decide what to leave out is often more time-consuming than including the same information.

**PRESERVATION MICROFILMING**

Another issue relevant to cataloging 19th-century serials is bibliographic access both to the preservation microfilm and the original. The accepted approach to preservation microfilming includes cataloging the microfilm master. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) issued Guidelines for Bibliographic Records for Preservation Microfilm Masters in 1990, “which allowed a record for the original publication to be ‘cloned’ to form the basis of the microform record.” Each microfilm version gets its own bibliographic record. The Library of Congress uses the term “multiple versions” (MULVER) to encompass all publications that are identical in content, but different in physical format. There is action pending which would use the US MARC Format for Holdings Data to link multiple versions’ records. At the American Library Association meeting in San Francisco in June 1992, the Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access approved the Multiple Versions Task Force report which advocates linking the holdings record of a microform to the bibliographic record of the paper serial. The report will now
move through a variety of groups for discussion and approval. The report specifically recommends that multiple versions of serials be treated as an exception to AACR2.

**COMPARISON WITH WATERLOO DIRECTORY PROJECTS**

In order to assess current serials cataloging practices in U.S. libraries, a comparison with the bibliographic description and access for 19th-century serials in another system is helpful. The *Waterloo Directory* projects provide us with just such an alternative approach. The *Waterloo Directory of Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900, Phase I* was published in 1976; 930,000 titles were listed in that original volume. The preface and introductory materials in the directory constitute a valuable review of the problems encountered in trying to bring 19th-century periodicals under bibliographic control.

Four principles were adopted for the project:

1. As many titles as possible were included, in alphabetical order, without regard to subject or frequency.

2. Elaborate cross-referencing was provided, e.g., earliest title from all subsequent titles; the issuing body whether a city, institution, or organization; and from one publication to the various periodicals which merged with, were absorbed by, or established by it.

3. Classification of descriptive material according to categories for each publication established a method for incorporating sufficient detail for accurate identification of any periodical.

4. Recording of conflicts between different authorities over the description of any single publication was provided.

For number three above there were eighteen descriptive categories: title; subtitle; numbering of series, volume, issue; publication dates; editor and dates; place of publication and dates; publisher and dates; printer and dates; price and dates; size; frequency; illustrations; circulation and dates; issuing body and dates; indexing; notes; mergers and dates; subsidiary and alternative titles (with all the above information repeated where appropriate).

The “Readers Guide” portion of the Directory’s introduction includes careful explanations of many of the descriptive categories. Three columns are needed to explain main entry. “The Directory is arranged in alphabetical order of titles . . . all periodicals which do not have a specific individual title are listed under the name of the issuing organization.”

Since the 1976 *Phase I* directory, more directories have been published. *The Waterloo Directory of Irish Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800–1900* was published in 1986 and *The Waterloo Directory of Scottish Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800–1900* in 1989. The publisher’s brochure for the third directory, *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800–1900*, is available. The directories are edited by professor J. N. North of the University of Waterloo. The size
of the project has grown to proportions even CONSER could envy. The English directory is a 50-volume alphabetical listing containing 100,000 titles, appearing in five annual ten-volume increments of 20,000 titles. It provides the location for each issue of every title in British libraries. It contains indexes to subjects, persons, and places. The descriptive categories have increased from 18 to 27 and if that is not enough, title page facsimiles are included for most entries. An average of six issues per title is read in order to collect the information. And, it is available in multiple versions: on microfiche and in bound form.

It all sounds very familiar. The resulting descriptions are more complex than CONSER records prepared according to AACR2 and relevant LCRI, but still fall short of meeting the needs of special collections catalogers in much the same way as a CONSER record for the same title would. Some of the elements in the DCRB "Rare Serials Appendix" are included, but the entries lack copy-specific information. Title page facsimiles are the most interesting addition. A picture is still worth more than at least 27 descriptive categories!

THE FUTURE
What can we look forward to in the future for improved description and access to 19th-century serials? Change in the bibliographic record is inevitable. A small change has already occurred since the publication of DCRB "Appendix C: Rare Serials." As noted earlier, the 570 field previously defined for noting editors has been declared obsolete. Much larger changes will come with MARC format integration. The most recent ALCTS Newsletter (vol. 3, no. 4) published "A Format Integration Primer." The primer explains that the purpose of format integration as contained in MARBI Proposal 88-1 is "to identify the inconsistencies among the various existing formats and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of eliminating these inconsistencies. Where the advantages predominate, the inconsistencies will be removed. Any inconsistencies that remain will be clearly labeled in the format documentation." The primer goes on to explain that the process of format integration involves "the elimination, insofar as possible, of restrictions on data elements that currently make them valid only for specific forms of materials." The serials format contains many such restricted data elements. In addition, seriality, rather than being a separate format, is becoming recognized as a property that can describe all forms of materials.

More change will occur with the resolution of the multiple versions question. Using the USMARC Format for Holdings Data to record these multiple versions, linking the multiple versions to a parent record for the original, is one possible solution. The many 19th-century serials already in microform will be affected as well as those yet to be copied.

Future improvements in indexing would increase access to 19th-century serials. Machine-readable versions of existing indexes and new, comprehensive indexes are needed. As Neal Edgar noted in the introduction to his A History and Bibliography of
American Magazines 1810–1820, “the value of such publications is severely limited where no indexing exists.” These separate files would be welcome as stand-alone reference tools or could be included as search options in super-OPACs.

As more of our book collections are retrospectively converted, the cataloging of 19th-century serials remains a bibliographic challenge for most of us. Guidelines exist for the preparation of bibliographic records for rare serials which parallel the bibliographic records for rare books. Choosing the option of providing “in” analytics for certain materials could further increase access to our collections. Special collections librarians will have to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of going beyond the national standard as represented by CONSER in describing these materials.

But, with enough practice and exposure, even devoted rare book catalogers might be able to learn to say the bibliographically correct thing: “Oh, good, it’s a serial!”

APPENDIX: SELECTIONS FROM A SERIALS CATALOGER’S IDIOLECT


CONSER—CONSER is a cooperative program for online serials cataloging. It began in the early 1970s as the CONSER (CONversion of SERial s) Project and has become the CONSER (COoperative ON-line SERials) Program. The Project was initiated to convert manual serial cataloging into machine-readable records. The full CONSER database resides on the OCLC online system. In addition to retrospective conversion, the project also is active in the areas of current cataloging, database maintenance, and “value added” data, as exemplified by a special project which enhanced the CONSER records with information about where serial titles are abstracted and indexed.


MARBI (Machine-Readable Bibliographic Information)—Interdivisional committee of ALA with members from ALCTS, LITA, and RASD. Its purpose is to encourage the creation of needed standards for the representation in machine-readable form of bibliographic information; to review and evaluate proposed standards; to recommend approval of standards in conformity with ALA policy (especially the ALA Standards Committee); to establish a mechanism for continuing review of standards (including the monitoring of further development); to provide commentary on the content of various implementations of standards to concerned agencies; and to
maintain liaison with concerned units within ALA and relevant outside agencies.

USMARC Format for Holdings Data—This MARC format defines the codes and conventions (tags, indicators, subfield codes, and coded values) that identify the data elements in USMARC holdings records, based on two American National Standards Institute/National Information Standards Organization (ANSI/NISO) standards for holdings: Serials Holdings Statements (Z39.44) and Holdings Statements for Non-Serial Items (Z39.57).

NOTES

10. Ibid., p. xii.
11. Ibid., p. xvii.
15. Ibid.
Now available: a one-time facsimile edition of 500 copies of the artist’s 1917 book, *The Jewel, a Romance of Fairyland*

- This book has never before been published. It contains seven original pen-and-ink drawings, of which the title-page illustration appears above.
- Only a single hand-lettered original was made for Hildegarde Hirsch of New York, Kent’s beautiful companion of that period.
- It is the earliest complete book written and illustrated by Rockwell Kent, predating *Wilderness* by three years.
- To best protect the integrity of the original, the preface and essay are in a companion booklet with color illustrations, forming a slipcased set with *The Jewel*. This true facsimile will provide its reader the virtual experience of holding the original book.
- Winner of the 1991 Maine Graphic Arts Association’s Printing Excellence Award. Printed by The Stinehour Press, hand bound in boards w/slipcase.
- Publication price: $200; deluxe copy signed by Sally Kent Gorton: $275.
- Libraries and institutions billed at 10% discount. Prospectus on request.

Baxter Society Publications Fund
P.O. Box 1822, Portland, Maine 04104
(207) 892-7900