Blended Cataloging Records in the Central Catalog

Database Improvement and Discoverability Policy Team
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This policy concerns the use of single (blended) bibliographic records for both physical and electronic formats. For bibliographic records shared to the OhioLINK Central Catalog, DIAD recommends:

•Separate records for each format

OR

•Not contributing blended records

Dating back several decades, cataloging guidelines such as CONSER, BIBCO, AACR2, and RDA have permitted the use of the single record approach, which allows holdings for different formats of the same item to be on one record. This is also known as a blended record. Alternatively, libraries who decide to put different formats on different records are using the separate record approach. Some libraries may have records using both approaches in their catalogs.

Many libraries originally preferred the single record approach because they believed that it made it easier for users to find materials. Users would not have to wade through multiple records to find the content they were looking for, and the format would be obvious from the item record. Additionally, it was believed to save cataloging time.

However, as the integrated library system and cataloging practices have evolved, so has the need for separate records. ILSs and discovery layers now rely more heavily on coding in the bibliographic record for limiting searches by format as well as other criteria. This coding generally applies only to one format. Thus, users limiting by format may not find what they are looking for due to the nature of blended records. At the same time, users can now more easily narrow their searches by limiting other criteria, such as publication date or subject, reducing confusion if a search returns a large number of results. In this regard, separate records are better suited for this type of searching.

In addition, librarians have long advocated that ILSs make better use of some of the more granular data that is in the MARC record, including the 3XX and 007 fields. Again, often this coding can only apply to one format, which is why the separate record approach is even more important.

In another policy document, DIAD has asked that members not contribute records for electronic items that are not available to the entire consortium to the Central Catalog. In cases where such items have been represented by blended records, converting them to separate records allows continued contribution of the record for the shareable physical format.

It is for these reasons that DIAD recommends that libraries do not contribute blended records to the OhioLINK Central Catalog. Libraries are encouraged to recatalog the items using the separate record approach, following DIAD standards by format as applicable. Alternatively, DIAD recommends suppressing blended records (BCODE3=z) from Central.

For libraries with many blended records in various categories, DIAD recommends the following priority for addressing these records:

1. Records that represent shareable physical resources as well as locally-licensed electronic resources;
2. Records that represent shareable physical resources and non-shareable resources in other physical formats;
3. Print and microform items regardless of shareable status.