

**MARC - Maps: The History of Its Development and a Current Assessment.**

HUGO LEENDERT PHILIP STIBBE. 's-Gravenhage : Nederlands Orgaan voor de Bevordering van de Informatieverzorging; Utrecht : Geografisch Instituut van de Rijksuniversiteit, 1976. xiv, 292 p. (Bulletin van de Vakgroep Kartografie, no. 3) ISBN 90 70118 04 1 thesis; ISBN 90 70118 05 X trade ed. Dfl. 30.—(Available from Geographical Institute, Transitorium II, Heidelberglaan 2, Utrechts, The Netherlands).

Dr. H. Stibbe's definition of the function of "keepers of the maps" places them clearly within the archival community. His book deals with one of their functions—the creation of effective descriptive (bibliographic) control which is one of the universal but unmet challenges for the archival profession. One has only to examine the efforts to bridge the information gap between librarians' holdings and their users during the past forty years to realize how negligent archivists have been.

The book, a near-print publication of Stibbe's doctoral dissertation, is a history and evaluation of the application of automated techniques to meet the requirements of cartographic description (carto-bibliography). More specifically, this is a history of the Machine Readable Cataloguing (MARC) format for maps, first developed by the Library of Congress and subsequently modified by the Netherlands and Canada. Although not formally stated, this book also traces a second key development in cartographic archives—the history of the development of cataloguing standards for carto-bibliography. The development of these standards was indispensable for the application of automated techniques in support of bibliographic control.

Stibbe brings to his subject an expertise in cartographic archives, and, although he might not classify himself as an expert, a considerable appreciation of library techniques and associated computer systems. The book, however, fails to communicate with an audience far less sophisticated. Basic library and computer terminology are foreign to most archival readers. One is virtually required to become familiar with thirty new library or computer-related terms in the appendixes before some of the concepts presented are understandable. The heavy emphasis on the cataloguing detail in the MARC formats is unwarranted and contributes little to conclusions drawn; many sections of the book approach being an instruction manual for cataloguers using the MARC format. Potential users will be more interested in the explanations of what the MARC format can do rather than how it can be done. In short, the book is too long, too technical, and makes too many demands on its readers.

For this major weakness one should place the blame not with Stibbe, but rather with the Geografisch Instituut in Utrecht which follows an ill-conceived European custom of printing a doctoral dissertation as part of the granting of a degree. A good editor would have deleted what was necessary for the work as a thesis but superfluous in a published work, and would have produced a volume of perhaps one-half the length.

The cartographic sector is the most advanced in the archival community both in Canada and in the world in the area of bibliographic control techniques and the use of computer technology. The other sectors of the archival community could use this knowledge to consider comparable developments. This book, however, will only add to the knowledge of the initiated; the balance of the archival community has been denied the opportunity of understanding new and existing perspectives.

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