NASIGuide: Serial Holdings

876-878, ITEM INFORMATION FIELDS

876 - ITEM FIELDS FOR BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHIC ITEMS [*Repeatable*]
877 - ITEM FIELDS FOR SUPPLEMENTS [*Repeatable*]
878 - ITEM FIELDS FOR INDEXES [*Repeatable*]

Item fields are a belated addition to the MARC Format for Holdings Data, entering with the 1994 update. They are beginning to be seen in a few systems as links between the holdings fields just described and the item record.

The item record is a longstanding component of current systems, and its use pre-dates the MARC holdings format. Even when a MARC holdings record exists, the item record is usually a non-MARC, proprietary segment of the data, linked to the MARC record by a related control number. Item records contain information needed by the user, including availability information which displays in an OPAC. The Format states, "These fields contain item level information about the pieces of the item specified in the holdings record. They contain various data elements that it may be desirable to record for specific items for use in acquisition or circulation applications, among others."

It should be stated that even with MARC item fields in place, until the standard is expanded to encompass local item data, there will continue to be a non-MARC item record in the local OPAC. MARC item fields do not include the temporary and transaction-level data that is needed for the tracking and day-to-day management of library holdings. Instead, the new fields are limited to the kind of data that is permanent or relatively permanent. This excludes some of the crucial data needed by staff and users-- particularly that circulation transaction data that will tell the searcher whether the volume is on the shelf, out on loan, being bound or repaired. Other data which describe a more permanent status, such as "non-circulating," "withdrawn" and "lost," are accounted for in the new item fields. In the few (two) applications that I have seen, MARC item data is system-created, generated from the non-MARC item record as a link to the MARC fields, and not designed for editing by staff.

The exclusion of temporary transaction data from the MARC item fields means that remote search engines will have to interface to many proprietary database designs in locating and combining availability status data with MARC holdings data for display in Z39.50 applications.

Once again, these fields come in a set of three:

- 876 for Basic bibliographic item
- 877 for Supplements

- 878 for Indexes

The indicators of the item fields are undefined (blank).

Conversion/migration issues

According to the Format, fields 863-865 for which item information is recorded must be itemized (expressed in terms of individual physical pieces). Currently, this rule is routinely violated as new item fields are generated out of existing coded information during migration to new systems.

The rationale for this rule is not explained, so it must be assumed that the prescribed linking mechanism (subfield $8) imposes those limitations. If your coded 863 records volumes 1 through 3 in a range (indicators 40), only one link and sequence number is assigned (e.g., $8 1.1). If the individual items in that range are volumes 1, 2, and 3, the rules for configuring the subfield $8 can not make further distinctions among the volumes; there would have to be duplicate subfields $8. To avoid this duplication, an ILS vendor may avoid using the prescribed linking mechanism by substituting another (such as the one described in the succeeding paragraph). The substituted field may not serve as a machine link. In this case, it may not do the job of uniting holdings and item data automatically for display nor enable simultaneous updating of the linked fields. Be aware of the display and maintenance issues when you evaluate a system offering these fields. Find out what data may be changed, and what fields are updated when a change is made; test the display. See whether item data and holdings data can display together for individual units or at least be interlinked for easy access.

The textual holdings fields 866-868, being designed for summaries, are normally less likely to contain piece- or item- level information than coded paired fields 853/863-855/865. Only one physical piece in the summarized holdings may be represented by each item field. That piece is enumerated in subfield $3 of the associated 87X field, containing a textual designation "Materials specified" of the physical item to which the item information applies. If the Textual Holdings field information is not equivalent to a physical piece, the $3 subfield must contain only the information pertaining to a single piece; and it is not repeatable (each piece needs a separate item field). The link is not a coded machine link, since there can be multiple 87X fields to one 866. This mechanism is also being applied to the linking of paired fields where $8 is not used. Be aware of the difference in the potential of the two linking mechanisms if the free-text $3 is the only one offered.

SUBFIELDS – DETAIL

Here is the list of subfields for 876-878 (Item fields). As previously stated, in current practice these fields are system-generated but could conceivably be added to if the library desires to communicate some of the types of optional data represented here.

The following are required for serials (Encoding level 3 or 4):

- $a Internal item number (the item, or piece-level, record ID) **PLUS EITHER:**
- $8 Link and sequence no. **OR**
- $3 Materials specified

The following are optional subfields:

$p - Piece designation (the piece's barcode or accession)

$t - Copy number

$c - Cost

$d - Date acquired

Example

> *863   41 $8 1.2 $a 1993/1994*
> *876 $8 1.2 $a AAH8128-1-1 $t 2 $ c $4 1.00 $d 19940622 $p A14802137389*

$e Source of acquisition

$h Use restrictions

Example

> *854   10 $8 1 $a v. $b suppl. $i (year)*
> *864   41 $8 1.1 $a 10 $b 1 $o EU Alumni register $i 1997*
> *877 $8 1.1 $a ADX-8900-3 $e Alumni Assoc. anniversary gift $h Building use*

$j - Item status (relatively permanent changes in status, like loss or withdrawal from a collection)

$l - Temporary location

Example

> *866   41 $a v.4-8(1937-1941)*

| 876 | | $3 v.4 $a 0045-1 $j Lost |
| 876 | | $3 v.5 $a 0045-2 $l Social Studies alcove |

$z,x - public/nonpublic notes

Example

| 863 | 20 | $8 1.56 $a 2001 |
| 876 | | $8 1.56 $a 2870958a $t 1 $z Pocket diskettes (4) $x Transfer to Reference |

$8 - Linking subfields (when linking to 863-865 fields must be itemized, linked by identical $8 subfields)

Example

| 868 | 41 | $8 1.5 $a 101/150 $i 1980/2004 $z Author index |
| 878 | | $8 1.5 $a AAA-1334 $j Lost $p A0043456788 |

$3 - Linking subfields (when linking to 866-868)

Example

866	31	$8 1 $a v.55-56 $z lack v.55:no.4, 56:no.1,4
876		$3 v.55:no.1-3 $a ACC1322 $p 00014361655 $c $6.00
876		$3 v.56:no.2-3 $a ACC1323 $p 00014346345

Would item fields be more useful if they included transaction-level data? The inability to consolidate catalog display of piece-level data, notes, and circulation status for both local and remote users is a frequent failing of today's ILS. Surely consolidation of that data in one place would help. Maintaining holdings in more than one place for different purposes is a frequent chore even in an updated ILS. Now that integrated library systems are beginning to be able to store check-in data indefinitely, it is possible to speculate that archived check-in data could be the basis of compressed displays that worked as "overlays" on it, which would be a particularly powerful use of today's graphical interfaces. Expansions of the standard might give us the power to express groupings representing our binding or bibliographic units, to which further item data could be attached. Summaries could continue to be built as they are today, using the power of compression already built into the specifications of the MFHD. Further improvements are certain!

Though progress started slowly, it has been swift for the last five years. Customers have already greatly influenced the development of functionality in today's ILS. They will continue to have power, particularly

when they work together. MFHD compliance was brought to the fore because customers demanded it. Now customers must ask that it work properly, be flexible and customizable, and work with both legacy and future data to the fullest degree possible.

At the same time, while we are improving the ILS, we need to focus on the dual task of improving our own data and improving the holdings standard that supports it. Conceptual flaws and insufficiencies in the standard will make it necessary for the vendors' programmers to find non-standard solutions. Non-standard library holdings data will consume programming time and money, and will inspire more "work-arounds" to accommodate it.

If you are interested in holdings, here are some ideas. Read all you can. Join your vendor user group and talk to your fellow members. Join in library standards work by signing up for NASIG, ALA, or regional committees. Join the CONSER Publication Patterns Initiative. Share your ideas in library publications. Speak to fellow serialists one on one and via discussion groups like SERIALST. Take advantage of any opportunity to do "comparison shopping" not only for hardware and software, but for procedures, displays, data sharing ideas, management ideas, and technical know-how. Be aware of what's new and what still has value. Good luck.