

Cataloging Division Is Sixty Years Old

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Librarian of Congress Luther Evans issued General Order 1264 on August 17, 1945, creating in the Copyright Office a Cataloging Division “for the cataloging of all categories of material deposited for copyright after December 31, 1945, ... in the interest of the total program of the Library of Congress, and particularly in the interest of the persons served by the Copyright Office.”

Register of Copyrights Sam Bass Warner reorganized the Office to establish the new division effective January 1, 1946. Warner took the Catalog, the Index and Record, and the Certificate sections to make Cataloging’s three founding sections: the Book, the Music, and the Cumulative and Miscellaneous sections. The division today comprises the Arts, the Documents Recordation, the Literary, and the Serials sections. Since its establishment, the division has created millions of records for registrations, 643,735 in Fiscal Year 2005 alone.

At the time of the division’s establishment, cataloging records were handwritten on individual cards that were filed in the Copyright Card Catalog. An important issue was the line of authority over cataloging in the Copyright Office, that is, whether the Register or the Library’s Processing Department would control the Office’s cataloging.

From 1946 to 1956, the Books and Music sections cataloged for the Library, appending the copyright facts to the Library’s printed card. Until 1957, the Cataloging Division published printed catalogs and sold catalog cards to clients.

In 1976, cataloging records began to be created solely online using COPICS I and went to full automated retrieval in 1978 with COPICS II.

On the division’s 40th anniversary, its concerns included issues related to records automation, Northern Telecom terminals, and cataloging rules revision. Today, the division grapples with amended cataloging rules, relocation of its offices, and the combining of the cataloging and examining functions.



TOP: *Cataloging’s Book and Music sections as they appeared about 1950.*
 CENTER: *The Cataloging Division in 1969.* BOTTOM: *In the mid 1980s, a division SWAT team assembles with chart to show that their focused work on a backlog is effective. Present are (standing, left to right) Cindy Lisec, Lyle Smythers, Joan Easton, Sylvia McKinley, Tom Felt, and Jean Woods. Seated are John Eustis, Richard Webb, David Green, and Brent Kendrick.*