CODOC: a Canadian Cooperative Computerized Scheme for Published Government Documents

CODOC: système automatisé coopératif canadien pour les publications officielles

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The objective of a union file of government documents has been achieved in Ontario. A recent CODOC meeting established a new organizational structure that will ensure the future of the union system, while allowing individual members maximum flexibility in their own operations.

L'objectif d'un fichier collectif des publications officielles a été atteint dans l'Ontario. Une assemblée récente de CODOC a établi une nouvelle structure pour assurer le succès d'un système collectif tout en permettant aux membres une flexibilité maximum quant à leurs opérations individuelles.

The objective of a union file of government documents has been achieved in Ontario. Under the acronym CODOC, it has become one of the chief cooperative projects administered through the Office of Library Coordination (OLC) for the Ontario University Libraries Cooperative System (OULCS). CODOC now has a membership of fifteen institutions in Ontario and Quebec. Booths at various library conventions explaining the system have evoked a great deal of interest, and many other library groups throughout North America are joining or purchasing the system for their various library needs.

The University of Guelph has been a leader in the field, introducing this computerized system to process and control government documents. The procedure, originated by Guelph, uses title page information as the basis for description and headings. Coders then assign a unique shelf location number, and key all of this information into a machine readable file. The machine file, sorted by shelf location number, corporate entry, keyword, and series, produces a document listing that is much cheaper and more efficient than full cataloguing (Beckman, Henderson, Pearson, 1973).

This economy is recognized and used to advantage by all but three Ontario universities. Many government publications are ephemeral, and demand for them is transitory. The use of title page headings and the shelving by agency, along with the four kinds of automatically produced indexes, give quick and satisfactory access to the documents. For York University, the advantages of

speed and economy in processing are outweighed by the usefulness of subject analysis and full classification. Hence York is committed to full cataloguing. Brock and Trent Universities are in an emerging condition that does not yet make it possible for them to realize all of the economic and other advantages of a union system, although they have future participation under consideration.

The success of the scheme at Guelph persuaded the other Ontario university libraries to adopt the system. It was generously and freely made available to them in that spirit of cooperation that marks the university libraries of Ontario.

CODOC has been adopted by the Library of the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa, and has spilled over the border into Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey as well as into the sister province of Quebec, with many more potential customers throughout North America, including both libraries and businesses. As the use of the CODOC system develops beyond Ontario, additional benefits as well as system modifications to support continued flexibility will ensue. However, the goal of a joint listing remains paramount.

At a recent meeting (March 2, 1978), the Chief Librarians of those libraries that have accepted CODOC, along with their Documents Librarians, established a new organizational structure for CODOC. A Members' Assembly of working level representatives from all CODOC libraries elects from among its members an Executive Committee. This committee is responsible to the membership, and to the Chief Librarians for the operation of CODOC. Matters of overall policy, finance and membership are reviewed by two representatives of the Chief Librarians, and the Chairman of the CODOC Executive Committee.

The membership fee ($3,500 p.a.) permits the employment of a Systems Analyst who merges the tapes from the submitting institutions and develops from these a master file, with document numbers and location symbols, that provides the basic benefit of the whole cooperative venture. The union list allows participating libraries to extract coding information already input by libraries responsible for specific jurisdictional areas, a reflection, but less ambitious, of the brave Farmington Plan of the recent past (Williams, 1961). This benefit will be further enhanced as on-line use of CODOC develops. The reduction of duplicate coding has resulted in Documents staff being able to spend more time in public service tc the benefit of users who are, after all, our *raison d'être.* In addition, the union file has already proved its worth in the areas of interlibrary loan and collection rationalization.

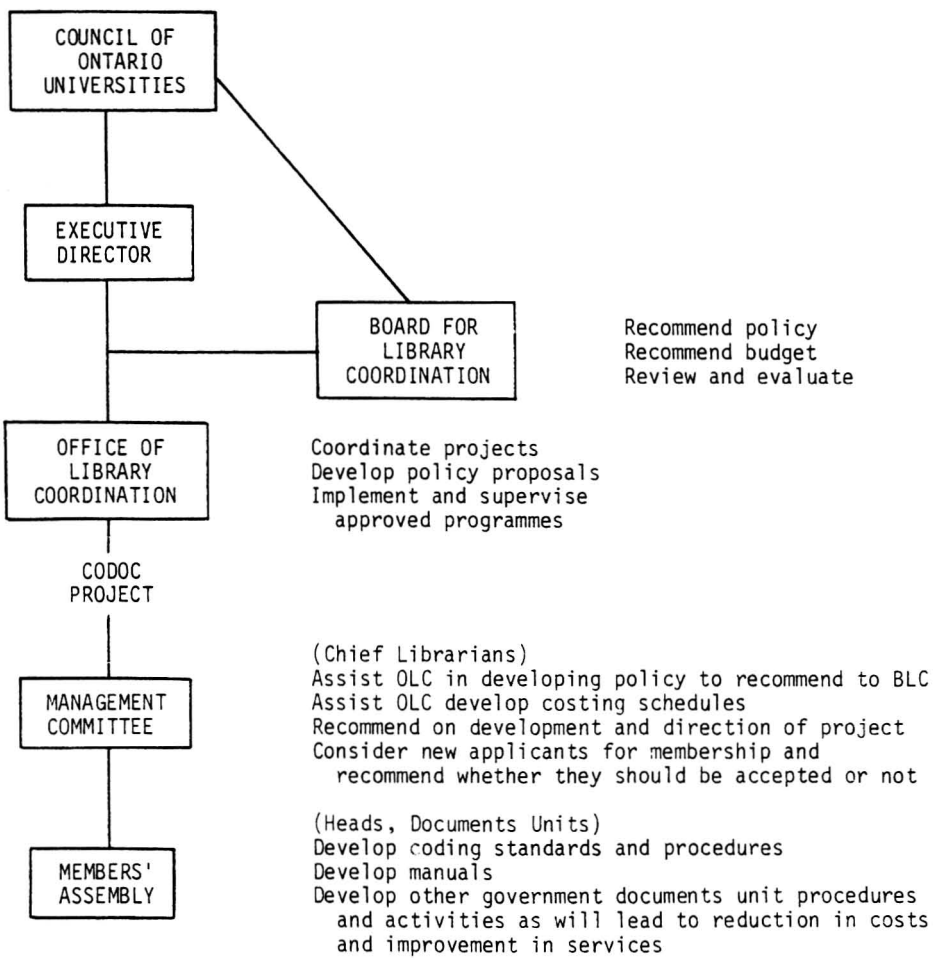
Naturally enough, as is the case with all such schemes, it is a venture, and the increased cost and communications that result have given rise to the opinion among some that the game is not worth the candle, that a "quick and dirty" method of serving their own users without any recourse to a central union code is more realistic and saves the participation fee. (Hodson, 1977). As library budgets become straitened, this has a short term appeal, and only the undoubted success of the Guelph system in its union form has kept CODOC on course.

As the sale and sharing of the system continue to grow, the cost of

operation will diminish. CODOC may well become part of the whole union catalogue idea that forms the substance of the project that has received such generous support from the Province in the past, and is at present partly underwritten by the Council of Ontario Universities.

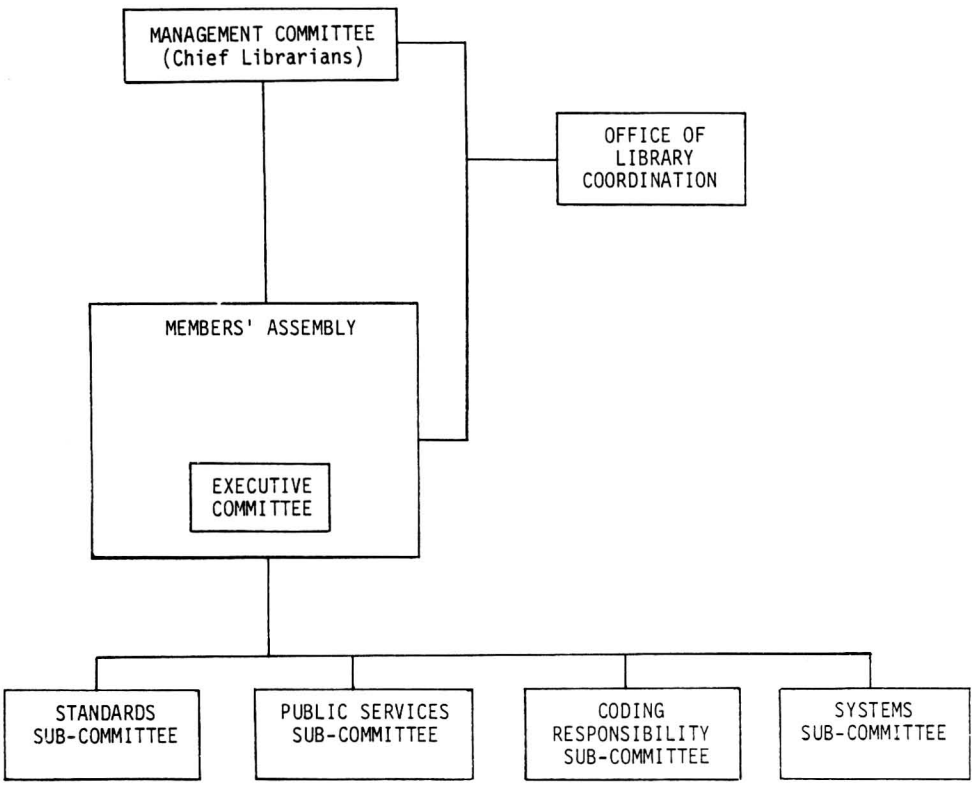
Those who have participated in the project, praise its amended format which is under constant review. Eventually, CODOC will become a node in a Canadian network because of its compatibility with other cooperative files such as the UNICAT/TELECAT data base (Hajnal, 1977). It already represents a significant contribution on the part of Ontario toward the development of a bibliographic file for libraries and other groups in North America.

Organization for Management of the CODOC Project



Prepared for March 2, 1978 CODOC Management Committee meeting by the Office of Library Coordination.

CODOC Detailed Organizational Chart



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