Marginal Punched Charge Card Form Facilitates Sending Overdue Notices

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IBM CARDS and marginal punched cards were introduced as charge records in the 1930's because these punched cards made possible the reduction of costs in academic and special libraries by combining the chronological record with the book record. One of the next major reductions in staff time required to administer circulation records will come from simplifying the sending of overdue notices. Although the recently published *Study of Circulation Control Systems* mentions that the Bookamatic charging system can supply overdue notices mechanically[1], the *Study* does not describe in detail a system which dispenses with writing overdues aside from those systems producing photographic or other image reproductions.

However, descriptions of systems, including Bookamatic, that make writing notices unnecessary have appeared in the literature. In 1955 the *Annual Report* of the Yale Medical Library gave a brief account of a system installed in December 1954[2]. The new charge card was a triplicate marginal punched form with one-time carbons inserted. In the same year, Helen T. Geer briefly described the Bookamatic system which the Addressograph-Multigraph Company was then developing[3], and in 1956 she again reported on Bookamatic stating that a pilot project had been installed in the Midland Public Library, Midland, Michigan, during the summer of 1956.[4] In the next several years, there

were published upwards of a half dozen articles reporting on Bookamatic systems, including the project at Midland. More recently, William H. Richardson has published a paper on three IBM circulation systems which write and address overdue notices mechanically.[5]

This paper describes the operation of the present system at the Yale Medical Library and a new triplicate form, slightly different from the 1955 version. The basic element of the system is a triplicate marginal punched card printed on National Cash Register chemical carbon paper and card stock. New England Business Forms, Inc., of New Haven, Connecticut, manufactures the forms. Figure 1 shows the top or first slip of the form that constitutes the charge. The second slip is a second overdue notice, and Figure 2 is the third part of the form which serves as the first overdue notice. The first two slips are paper, but the third qualifies as post card stock. Dimensions are 6¼ by 3½ inches. The Harvard Medical Library has adapted this form so that the first part is the first overdue notice, the second part is the second notice, while the third, on card stock, is the charge record, remaining in the file until the borrower has returned the volume. Also, the Harvard form is smaller, measuring 3¼ by 5 inches.

When a borrower fills out one of the Yale charge slips, he automatically makes out a first and second overdue notice.

[1] George Fry & Associates, Inc. *Study of Circulation Control Systems.* (Chicago: *ALA*, 1961).
[2] Yale Medical Library. *Annual Report 1954/1955.* pp. 8-11.
[3] Helen T. Geer. *Charging Systems.* (Chicago: *ALA*, 1955), p. 153.
[4] Helen T. Geer. "Charging Machines," *Library Trends,* V (1956), 244-55, 251.
[5] William H. Richardson. "Circulation Control," *Special Libraries,* LI (1960), 494-96.

AUTHOR, OR TITLE IF A PERIODICAL	
VOLUME AND DATE	PLEASE WRITE FIRMLY AND CLEARLY WITH BALL POINT PEN
TITLE	
	SIGNATURE
	MEDICAL SCHOOL OR STREET ADDRESS
CALL NUMBER	CITY OR TOWN
	STATE
YALE MEDICAL LIBRARY 333 Cedar St., New Haven, Conn.	

FIGURE 1

Before filing the charge form, the circulation desk attendant notches the hole corresponding to the date on which the volume will be due. If the borrower does not return the volume on or before the date due, the form drops out when the attendant sorts the file. She then removes the post card on the back of the form, mails it to the borrower, renotches the form to drop out one week later if the borrower does not return the book, and refiles it. The second overdue notice goes out in a window envelope, and the third is a form statement on a card. Except to say that the forms are filed by author or by journal title and that there are no fines, details of the routines followed in a marginal punched card charging system are not given here, for Helen T. Geer has described them extensively.[6]

As pointed out in 1955, these Yale charge forms are wide, thick, and expensive. Their size makes them impractical for a library with a big circulation record file, but Harvard has shown a smaller version to be effective. In recent years the Yale Medical Library has been lending nearly thirty thousand volumes annually, and the charge file has not exceeded four tub trays with outside dimensions of $6\frac{7}{8}$ by $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The

[6] Op. cit. pp. 110-127.

forms cost $16.54 per one thousand in an order of fifty thousand whereas 3×5 paper charge slips used prior to December 1954 would now cost $2.14 per one thousand in considerably larger orders. Since the new forms are used at the rate of 37,500 per year, the increase in cost over a system using plain, untabbed charge slips is $540.

During January through June 1961, the library charged out 15,605 volumes for one and two weeks. Overdue notices approximately corresponding to these loans were those sent in February through July 1960, when 3,592 first overdues and 1,631 second notices went out. The number of first overdue notices as proportion of total circulation is 23 per cent. This percentage is far higher than the mode of 2.9 per cent and high of "14.9-15.6" per cent which George Fry & Associates found in thirty-two college and university libraries.[7]

This charging system provides two principal benefits over the former, plain charge card record which called for so much staff time in hand sorting and in writing overdues that notices could be sent out only during academic recesses. First, for $540 a year, a date-due record and over 10,000 filled-out overdue no-

[7] Op. cit. p. 42.

FIGURE 2

tices that actually go into the mail are obtained. The second benefit is increased availability of books and periodicals, for in the first six months of 1955 (following the installation of the original system in December 1954) the recorded circulation increased 18 per cent, excluding renewals, over the first six months of the previous year, despite the fact that in each month of the last six of 1954, circulation had been lower than the corresponding month of 1953. During the six months following the installation, there was no other variation to affect the amount of circulation such as more borrowers or new educational or research programs. Here, then, is a nearly one-fifth increase in service achieved at relatively low cost.

Readers' Services . . .

not particularly novel, bear repetition) a point of view regarding reference service is implicit which has been expressed before but acceptance of which is not always implicit in library plans. Reference service should be pervasive. Library activities can scarcely survive inadequate acquisition, catalog, and circulation service; but they can—and do—survive inadequate reference service. Why is reference service so often inadequate? Because for thing, it is, unlike Mount Everest, so often simply not *there*. In too many libraries, reference service is available in the sense that it is on call (if you know how to call it) but is not present at various points, e.g., front doors, catalogs, stack entrances, where it is needed. One solution is to station non-professional help at such points and to train it to call on professional help when uncertain how to answer inquiries: surely a rather roundabout approach—and hardly foolproof, as so often it is just the thing one is least correct about that he is most certain about. A second solution is to hire more professional librarians, but this may result in a waste of professional skill (as one sits and waits for people to wait on); and, in any case, who has that much money? Still another solution is the one offered in this paper: to plan buildings so as to make arrangements of rooms, services, and collections easy to apprehend and so as to enable reference service, however small the reference staffs, to be as nearly as possible ubiquitous.