

In many institutions, board and tabletop games are a growing part of a library's collection. They come in a wide variety of forms and are collected for historical, pedagogical or recreational value. This article will demonstrate how cataloguers and metadata staff can include these games in their library's catalogue, by creating machine-readable cataloguing (MARC) records using particular fields and terminologies.

This article assumes a basic understanding of MARC fields, such as those for authors, titles, publishers etc. I am therefore focussing on aspects of tabletop game cataloguing that differ from more common items in library collections, such as books, serials and online resources.

This article is based on a post on my blog *Cataloguing the Universe*, '[Cataloguing tabletop games: an introduction](#)' (McCulloch, 2017). The example MARC fields in this article describe the classic 1980s tabletop game *Settlers of Catan*.

Literature review

As it turns out, there is very little literature, scholarly or otherwise, on the topic of board and tabletop game cataloguing specifically. Most of the literature on games cataloguing relates to video games. OLAC (2015) has produced [an excellent guide to video game cataloguing](#), which I highly recommend if you're in need of guidance.

Slobuski et al. (2017) review the slim pickings in their [EBLIP article](#). They note that the paucity of records in union catalogues such as OCLC, along with the high levels of original cataloguing required to process such items, together mean that board games are underrepresented in library catalogues.

Of particular interest is Moore's (2014) OLAC-MOUG [conference presentation](#) on cataloguing realia and 2D graphics ('the fun, touchable stuff!'), which includes aspects of games cataloguing.

Fixed fields and code fields

Generally speaking, each game will require its own record. *Leader/06 Type of Record* is 'r' for realia (or, to use its formal name, 'Three-dimensional artifact or naturally occurring object') and *Leader/07 Bibliographic Level* is 'm' for monograph/item.

The 008 fixed field uses the Visual Materials specifications. The important field here is *008/33 Type of Visual Material*, which is 'g' for game. Code the date, government publication, etc fields as appropriate. Most other fields will either be blank or 'n' for not applicable, though you may wish to code *008/22 Target Audience* as appropriate.

Most games will not have an ISBN, but if they do, record it in the usual *020 International Standard Book Number* field. If the game publisher has a specific internal catalogue number for the game, record it in *028 Publisher or Distributor Number*, along with a designator.

```
020 ## $a 9781569052013
```

```
028 50 $a 3061 $b Mayfair Games
```



Access points and titles

Unusually for a board game, *Settlers of Catan* has a main entry in addition to the title: the game's creator, Klaus Teuber (here entered under *100 Main Entry--Personal Name*). Most games will be entered directly under title. This game is widely known simply as *Catan*, and I believe the game itself is now marketed under this title, so a *246 Varying Form of Title* is needed.

```
100 1# $a Teuber, Klaus, $d 1952- $e designer.  
245 14 $a The settlers of Catan / $c Klaus Teuber.  
246 30 $a Catan
```

I would also recommend adding a *710 Added Entry--Corporate Name* for the game's publisher. Within the games industry (tabletop and computer games alike), many games are known by their publisher, and this is an index term your users are likely to search for.

```
710 2# $a Mayfair Games Inc., $e publisher.
```

Descriptive cataloguing

As well as an added entry, the publisher is entered in *264 Production, Publication [etc.]*, as you would a book.

```
264 #1 $a Skokie, IL : $b Mayfair Games, $c [2012]
```

In the *300 Physical Description* field, you'll do a piece inventory, much like a kit or book with a few extras. Be as detailed as possible, because when you inevitably lose one of these pieces you will thank your past self for having compiled an exhaustive inventory. Where possible, elaborate on what kinds of cards or pieces are included. If you are not familiar with the game, doing inventory on smaller, more specific items is faster and easier than simply '126 cards'.

```
300 ## $a 1 game (19 terrain hexes, 6 sea frame pieces, 9 harbor pieces, 18 circular number tokens, 95 resource cards, 25 development cards, 4 building cost cards, 2 special cards, 16 cities, 20 settlements, 60 roads, 2 dice, 1 robber), 1 game rules and almanac booklet : $b cardboard, wood ; $c box 24 x 30 x 8 cm.
```

It is helpful to include a summary of the game in a *520 Summary, Etc.* note, as this may help users decide whether or not they wish to play it. A game's box or container usually includes a summary, which you can simply transcribe.

```
500 ## $a Detailed description of contents on box.  
520 ## $a Summary: "In The Settlers of Catan you control a group of settlers trying to tame the wilds on the remote but rich island of Catan. Start by revealing Catan's many harbors and regions: plains, meadows, mountains, hills, forests & desert. The random mix creates a different board for virtually every game"--Container.
```

Record the game's intended audience in a *521 Target Audience* note (in as much detail as necessary), as well as in *008/22 Target Audience* if you haven't already.

```
521 ## $a Ages 10 and up.
```

Key pieces of board game metadata, such as the number of players and duration of play, are sadly resigned to a *500 General Note*.

```
500 ## $a For 3-4 players.  
500 ## $a Duration of play: 60 minutes.
```

A 500 note really isn't ideal for our purposes, as having this kind of data in uncontrolled fields and with uncontrolled vocabulary limits the ability of an ILS developer to create facet searches based on that data. If a user wants to search for games that can be played by only 2 people, or are of a certain duration, they may find this difficult because neither the fields nor the vocabulary are standardised.

As we all know, MARC was patently not designed with board games in mind. However, a dedicated metadata schema for board games could be very useful. A possibility could be to build upon the *UW/SIMM Video Game Metadata Schema*, with elements not already accounted for in the MARC standard potentially mapped to unused slots in the 5XX set. There is plenty of room for innovation in this area!

Content, media, carrier type

Use the 336 *Content Type* / 337 *Media Type* / 338 *Carrier Type* combo of 'three-dimensional form' / 'unmediated' / 'object', respectively.

```
336 ## $a tactile three-dimensional form
337 ## $a unmediated
338 ## $a object
```

Alternatively, McGrath suggests using the content type `$a tactile three-dimensional form` solely for objects intended exclusively to be perceived through touch, and items with some visual content. Moore suggests using the carrier types 'card' and 'sheet', but I feel this is not useful for large game boxes, for which the term 'object' suggests a need for greater shelving space.

In addition to these fields, I have seen some records use the 380 *Form of Work* note `$a Board games`. Considering board games are reasonably well-catered for in the LCGFT, I would only use this in limited circumstances, where an appropriate genre/form index term doesn't exist.

Subject indexing

A crucial part of any board game MARC record is the 655 *Index Term--Genre* field. Suggested terms from the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT) for your games collection include:

```
655 #7 $a Board games
655 #7 $a Puzzles and games
655 #7 $a Jigsaw puzzles
```

For *Catan*, we could use either `$a Board games` or `$a Puzzles and games`. You might use these to differentiate board games from puzzles and card games, if this distinction is meaningful for your users. If it is not, feel free to choose one or the other.

If a game is based on a franchise or well-known intellectual property (such as *Monopoly: Star Wars edition*) use that franchise as an index term.

```
630 00 $a Star Wars (motion picture)
```

In the near future I'm hoping to submit a proposal for the form subdivision `$v Games`, because it's clearly needed (although I have no objection to someone else proposing it first!). The existing topical subdivision `$x Games` is not a valid heading for tabletop games, and the existing form subdivision `$v Computer games` is obviously not applicable to physical games. In the interim, you could elect to assign headings without form subdivisions.

```
650 #0 $a Competition.
650 #0 $a Natural resources.
650 #0 $a Colonists.
```

Classification

If your games are intended to be played and enjoyed by patrons, you may find it more useful to classify them separately from your main collection, e.g. in a section titled 'Board games' and thereafter alphabetically by title.

If your games are part of a closed stack, or you otherwise wish to interfile them, then you can classify your games just like anything else. DDC includes games under 794 ('Indoor games of skill'), which sadly it does not further subdivide (unless you wish to do so geographically).

```
082 04 $a 794 $2 23
```

LCC presents three options within GV ('Recreation'), based on the kind of game: card games at GV1232-1299, board games at 1312-1469 and puzzles at 1491-1507, with an option to cutter by title. Catan is classed under 'Games and amusements > Indoor games and amusements > Board games. Move games > Other board games, A-Z'.

```
050 #4 $a GV1469 $b .C38
```

Conclusion

With libraries diversifying their collections to appeal to a broader cross-section of their user base, non-traditional items like board games may become more integral to a library service. Board games can be complex works to catalogue, but the result – making games discoverable and accessible to patrons – is hugely rewarding.

As with most other aspects of MARC record creation, I encourage cataloguers to familiarise themselves with the capabilities of their ILS and how their records will be indexed and displayed. Ensure your records work for you, not just for OCLC or your union catalogue.

Sample record: Settlers of Catan

```
000 01765cr m a2200397 i 4500
008 121024s2012 ilu||| g gneng d
020 ## $a 9781569052013
028 50 $a 3061 $b Mayfair Games
040 ## $b eng $e rda
050 #4 $a GV1469 $b .C38
082 04 $a 794 $2 23
100 1# $a Teuber, Klaus, $d 1952- $e designer.
245 14 $a The settlers of Catan / $c Klaus Teuber.
246 30 $a Catan
264 #1 $a Skokie, IL : $b Mayfair Games, $c [2012]
300 ## $a 1 game (19 terrain hexes, 6 sea frame pieces, 9 harbor pieces, 18 circular number tokens, 95 resource cards, 25 development cards, 4 building cost cards, 2 special cards, 16 cities, 20 settlements, 60 roads, 2 dice, 1 robber), 1 game rules and almanac booklet : $b cardboard, wood ; $c box 24 x 30 x 8 cm.
336 ## $a three-dimensional form $b tdf $2 rdacontent
337 ## $a unmediated $b n $2 rdamedia
338 ## $a object $b nr $2 rdacarrier
500 ## $a For 3-4 players.
500 ## $a Duration of play: 60 minutes.
500 ## $a Detailed description of contents on box.
520 ## $a Summary: "In The Settlers of Catan you control a group of settlers trying to tame the wilds on the remote but rich island of Catan. Start by revealing Catan's many harbors and regions: plains, meadows, mountains, hills, forests & desert. The random mix creates a different board for virtually every game"--Container.
521 ## $a Ages 10 and up.
650 #0 $a Competition.
650 #0 $a Natural resources.
650 #0 $a Colonists.
655 #7 $a Board games. $2 lcgft
710 2# $a Mayfair Games Inc., $e publisher.
```

References

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