The Répertoire de Vedettes-matière de l'Université Laval Library, 1946–92

Francophone Subject Access in North America and Europe

Robert P. Holley

In 1946, the Université Laval in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, started using Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) *in French by creating an authority list,* Répertoire de Vedettes-matière (RVM), *whose first published edition appeared in 1962. In the 1970s, the most important libraries in Canada with an interest in French-language cataloging—the Université de Montréal, the Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada, and the Bibliothèque Nationale du Quebec— forged partnerships with the Université Laval to support* RVM. *In 1974, the Bibliothèque Publique d'Information, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France became the first library in Europe to adopt* RVM. *During the 1980s, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) created an authority list,* RAMEAU, *based upon* RVM, *which is used by numerous French libraries of all types. The major libraries in Luxembourg adopted* RVM *in 1985. Individual libraries in Belgium also use* RVM, *often in combination with LCSH.*

The spread of RVM *in the francophone world reflects the increasing importance of the pragmatic North American tradition of shared cataloging and library cooperation.* RVM *and its European versions are based upon literary warrant and make changes to LCSH to reflect the specific cultural and linguistic needs of their user communities. While the users of* RVM *seek to harmonize the various versions, differences in terminology and probably syntax are inevitable.*

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In 1946, the Université Laval in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, started using *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH) in French. To do so, the librarians created an authority list in French, *Répertoire de Vedettes-matière (RVM)*, whose first published edition appeared in 1962 (the first edition appeared with the title *Répertoire des Vedettes-matière*). Since then, *RVM* has had increasing importance in providing support for subject access in francophone countries around the world as other libraries, first in Canada and then in Europe, either adopted *RVM*, often with some modification, for subject access or used it as a resource for creating French subject terms.

The following article will examine why and how the Université Laval adopted *LCSH* as a means to provide subject access at an acceptable cost for its own library. The next step included partnerships with the most important libraries in Canada with an interest in French-language cataloging—the

Université de Montréal, the Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada (BNC) (the National Library of Canada), and the Bibliothèque Nationale du Quebec (BNQ).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, European libraries became increasingly interested in North American library practice in the areas of cataloging and subject access. This interest sprang in part from the wish to improve subject access based upon the long-standing North American model. In addition, cooperative-cataloging resources such as OCLC, RLG, and WLN, coupled with the growth of library networks, showed that shared cataloging led to reduced costs in providing acceptable bibliographic records. Within the francophone countries, libraries turned to *RVM* as an obvious model to be considered in implementing their own subject access systems.

The spread of *RVM*'s influence began when the Bibliothèque Publique d'Information (BPI) in the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, decided to implement *RVM* for subject access in 1974. In a similar fashion during the 1980s, *RVM* served as the basis for the system *RAMEAU*, which had widespread use in French academic and public libraries under the leadership of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF). The highpoint for cooperation occurred in the early 1990s, when the Université Laval and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France signed a cooperative agreement with the goal of coordinating their efforts. In addition, on June 1–2, 1992, 170 representatives from Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Quebec, and Switzerland attended the Principles and Practices of Subject Indexing in French-Speaking Countries of the Northern Hemisphere conference in Fribourg, Switzerland. The published proceedings of this conference provided much of the information for this article on *RVM* use outside of Canada and France in Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland.

This article concludes with the 1992 conference as published material on *RVM*, *RAMEAU*, and subject access in other francophone countries is sparse during recent years. Thus, while the author is aware of some developments in Europe since 1992, a systematic updating from 1992 to the present is not possible without a trip to Europe to examine internal documents, discover references to materials in the grey literature, and interview the appropriate librarians and administrators. The IFLA archives, in particular, may include important information that is not consistently available on its Web site. In addition, this paper does not investigate the use of *RVM* in francophone countries beyond North America and Europe though Haiti and countries in francophone Africa have purchased copies or received them as gifts (Gascon 1994). Furthermore, the article concentrates on topical subject headings and does not treat authors, corporate bodies, conferences, and geographic names used as subject headings.

In conclusion, the library of the Université Laval has served as a bridge for North American library practice (*LCSH*) in the area of subject access with libraries in francophone Canada and Europe.

Methods

The following article is based primarily on secondary sources that have appeared almost exclusively in French with one major exception (Jouguelet 1983a). Gascon (1993–94) wrote the key article for the history of *RVM*, including its transfer to France while the proceedings of the 1992 Fribourg conference (Buntschu et al. 1993) provided a survey of subject heading practice in francophone Europe. The other articles, especially those by Henry (1990) and Jouguelet (1983a, 1983b, 1985, and 1989), provide supplementary information and varying perspectives. With funding from the Province of Quebec, the author spent March 2002 at the Université Laval Library where he was able to obtain additional information from the *RVM* team. Insofar as possible, he consulted the original sources as cited in Gascon. Significant archival documentation on *RVM*, however, does not exist. Claude Bonnelly, Directeur de la Bibliothèque; Jo-Anne Bélair, Bibliothécaire, Chef *RVM*; and Pierre Gascon, Bibliothécaire *RVM*, reviewed this article for accuracy. The author takes responsibility for the English translation of the French documents cited in this article.

Early History of *RVM*

Located in Quebec City, the Université Laval is a comprehensive research university that offers degrees, including the doctorate, in many different fields. In 2001, its library had 219 employees and a total budget of around $19,000,000 (Canadian) including $7,100,000 for acquisitions. The size of its collection is 3,680,568 volumes with 15,999 current serial subscriptions (Bonnelly 2001). According to the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) statistics for 2000, the library added 42,093 volumes to its collection, a large number though down significantly from the record high of 82,599 volumes in 1997 (Association of Research Libraries 2002). As a further indication of its research status, the library has been a member of ARL since 1985 (Association of Research Libraries 2002).

The Université Laval Library started crafting a francophone version of *LCSH* in 1946 when it was a much smaller library, though precise statistics are not available. Catalogers discovered that they were able to find a significant number of catalog records in the *National Union Catalog (NUC)*, published by the Library of Congress (Fournier 1978; Gascon 1993–94). Though serving a francophone clientele, the library's status as a research institution in North America meant that it purchased significant

numbers of anglophone materials published in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere. Furthermore, the Library of Congress, itself one of the major research libraries in the world, acquired and cataloged a significant number of francophone items and made these cataloging records available (Henry 1990).

In his history of *RVM,* Gascon (1993) correctly evaluates the problems that the library would have faced in creating a thesaurus or subject-heading list entirely on its own, especially since *LCSH* had grown to a substantial list since its first edition in 1914. Instead, "practical and prudent as they were, the [librarians] of the Université Laval tackled the task of translating [*LCSH*] according to their needs and of developing their French list while taking into account the francophone and Quebec realities often ignored or incorrectly portrayed by the American list" (129). Thus, several fundamental characteristics of *RVM* were present from its beginnings. The librarians at Laval would not attempt to systematically translate *LCSH* but would instead add French terms to *RVM* according to the principle of literary warrant as the library acquired items. They would, however, scan LC publications such as the *Weekly Lists* to discover subject headings of possible use and to make changes to existing headings (Fournier 1993a; Henry 1990). Furthermore, they would modify terms as needed to meet the requirements of a francophone, Quebec clientele as described in greater detail below.

Though the library published two mimeographed lists in 1954 and 1959 (Gascon 1993–94), the first official edition of *RVM* appeared in 1962, published by les Presses de l'Université Laval. This edition included an introduction, rules for use, subdivision tables, a bibliography, and 269 pages of subject headings in French in the traditional *LCSH* format of the period (*RVM* 1962). At an average of slightly under 40 headings per page, this first edition of *RVM* includes around 11,000 subject terms, significantly less than the approximately 50,000 terms in the seventh edition of *LCSH* of the same period (Quattlebaum 1966). (This estimate is based upon 35 headings per page and 1,432 pages.) In comparison, Fournier reported at the 1992 Fribourg conference that *RVM* included around 100,000 subject headings compared with the 200,000 in *LCSH* (1993b). (As for current growth, the *RVM* unit adds about 7,000 subject headings annually. [Gascon 2002]). The bibliography of the 1962 edition indicates that the Laval librarians also used various editions of *Biblio* and *Catholic Subject Headings* as well as several specialized lists published by the Special Libraries Association (Gascon 1993–94; *RVM* 1962). What the introduction does not say is that the first printed edition of the list does not include many medical, scientific, or forestry terms since these disciplines had their own libraries that were integrated with the main library later in 1963. Only after recataloging these materials could

RVM be properly called an encyclopedic subject heading list with the fourth edition in 1966 (Gascon 1993–94).

Francophone and Quebec Aspects of *RVM*

The Université Laval Library has taken on the responsibility of providing appropriate subject headings for its user community that is francophone and Quebecois. The library faced significant hurdles in doing so since it based *RVM* on Library of Congress (LC) subject headings that are anglophone and American. One should note here that LC has always said that *LCSH* is a subject heading system based, for the most part, upon literary warrant and that it is intended to meet the needs of its users who most often approach subject information from a United States perspective. Yet another complication is the fact that the National Library of Canada has published *Canadian Subject Headings* since 1978, so that the Université Laval Library, with its obligations toward the Canadian community, sometimes must take into account varying subject headings in English for the same concept. Finally, English and French have different linguistic structures, of which perhaps the most notable is the variation in adjective-noun placement, that affect subject heading creation and perhaps even more importantly the need for appropriate cross references (Fournier 1978 and 1993a; Jouguelet 1983a and 1983b).

Fournier, former Coordonnateur à la Normalistion de l'Indexation Matière at Laval, and Henry describe the care with which the librarians review English and French resources to determine the correct French term for the English *LCSH* term and then to create the appropriate cross references (Fournier 1993a; Henry 1990). This research may extend to consulting experts among the faculty at the Université Laval, but this occurs rarely (Gascon 2002). Bensaadi (1995) provides an excellent schematic diagram of the process.

In most cases, a one-to-one correspondence exists between the French and English terms. This is particularly important since the Université Laval uses a program, originally developed by UTLAS, the cooperative cataloging system developed by the University of Toronto, to provide automatic translation of subject headings in bibliographic records when the software finds a one-to-one correspondence in *RVM*. In some cases, however, an English or French term has more than one possible translation, in which case the indexer reviews the possibilities and makes the appropriate choice (Fournier 1993a; Henry 1990). (As of March 2002, 4,813 *LCSH* subject headings have two or more *RVM* equivalents, and 3,866 *RVM* subject headings have two or more *LCSH* equivalents [Gascon 2002]). For example, one *RVM* French heading, "Usines," covers the two *LCSH* headings, "Factories" and "Mills and mill-work." On the

other hand, the *LCSH* subject heading "French-Canadians" becomes either "Canadiens français" or "Quebecois" in *RVM* (Fournier 1978, 111–16 for this and other examples; also Henry 1990, 378). The creation of cross references can help solve some problems since they exist only in the authority file and in any reference structures in the *RVM* users' catalogs and do not create concerns about conflicts with *LCSH*.

The Université Laval Library also does a significant amount of original cataloging, slightly less than 20% in 1990, according to Henry (1990). While the catalogers often find an existing *LCSH* subject heading that they can add to *RVM*, they sometimes create new subject headings in French. In this case, they suggest an English-language equivalent to the National Library of Canada that in turn suggests the subject heading to LC (Henry 1990). The Université Laval Library has not asked for a privileged relationship with LC and gathers information about *LCSH* in the same way as other external users. What influence it does have comes from its partnership with the National Library of Canada. "It [Laval] uses LCSH like any other [library] and does not have any part in planning for changes in its American model" (Henry 1990, 375).

As will be seen throughout this article, wise use of resources has been one of the driving factors in the development of *RVM*. Fournier (1993a, 26) puts it well when he states:

> The participation of the Université Laval Library within a cooperative cataloging network as well as the automatic translation of subject headings require the team responsible for *RVM* to not move away from *LCSH*. To ignore this reality would cause the library to lose the advantages of shared cataloging and indexing with libraries that follow common standards.

Cooperative Use of *RVM* within Canada

An important decision for future cooperative activities took place in 1963 when the library decided to automate *RVM*. The university computing center wrote the software that was used to create six editions of *RVM* that appeared from 1964 to 1976 (Gascon 1993–94). Catalogers at Laval, however, continued to use a manual authority file that was started sometime in the mid-1960s.

Other Canadian libraries were becoming interested in using *RVM*, as can be seen from the following quote from the seventh edition: "[A]s the different editions of *RVM* gradually appeared, librarians from other places made increasingly numerous and insistent requests that we make available to them the tool that we were slowly creating"

(*RVM* 1972, Introduction). The first partner was the library of the Université de Montréal that in 1969 began sending subject headings to Laval that it wished to see included in *RVM* (Introduction). In 1970, the Université Laval Library agreed to include these subject headings. In addition, cooperation increased between the two libraries through regular meetings and contact by mail. The Université Laval Library also sent weekly *RVM* updates to the Université de Montréal (Fournier 1978; Gascon 1993–94). In the preface to the sixth edition, Lucien Papillon, directeur des services techniques, explicitly refers to the cooperation with the Université de Montréal and states that "we are thinking about expanding this cooperation in order to make this tool increasingly useful for Canadian libraries" (*RVM* 1970, i).

The next step, cooperation with the Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada (National Library of Canada) would prove to be more difficult. Librarians were beginning to discover the power of library automation. At a 1970 Conférence Nationale sur la Normalisation du Catalogage (National Conference on Cataloging Standards), held at BNC in Ottawa, Rosario de Varennes, a systems analyst in the Université Laval Library, suggested "that the National Library of Canada arrive at an agreement with officials at the Université Laval to establish *RVM* as the official list of subject headings in French and establish a standing committee to revise and to update *RVM*" (Gascon 1993–94, 133). Though it was agreed at the conference to establish a study group in keeping with this recommendation, it was not until six years later in March 1976 that an agreement would be signed between BNC and the Université Laval. The issues, much more fully described by Gascon (1993), included the aging software at the Université Laval, budgetary restrictions, and the need to convert *RVM* subject headings to the MARC authority format. Notwithstanding the long negotiation period, in 1974 BNC began using *RVM* as the official list for French subject headings in *Canadiana*, the Canadian national bibliography. According to the 1976 agreement, the Université Laval Library would be responsible for the intellectual creation of *RVM* subject headings while BNC would manage the database and its products. In addition, the Université Laval Library agreed to provide francophone subject headings for new terms used either in *Canadiana* or to describe items within BNC's collection. Finally, the agreement included financial compensation to the Université Laval for its services. Renewed several times, this agreement remained in force during the period covered by this article.

In the late 1970s, the Université Laval Library also faced a key decision on whether to support cooperative cataloging by having *RVM* included in UTLAS. At that time, many university libraries in Ontario and Quebec used UTLAS. By participating in UTLAS, the Université Laval Library would make additions and changes to *RVM* available immediately so that libraries would no longer have to

wait months for this information. Thus, in 1979 the library signed an agreement with UTLAS though this step required significant additional costs in supporting *RVM*. This agreement continued until December 1993, when the Université Laval purchased an integrated library system that allowed it to administer *RVM* on its own (Gascon 1993–94).

The Bibliothèque Nationale du Quebec became a key partner in 1976 when it began using *RVM* for its cataloging and for producing la *Bibliographie du Quebec*. Soon after in February 1977, the three main Quebec libraries—Laval, Montréal, and BNQ—formed a Comité Tripartite des Vedettes-matière that was joined about a year later by a BNC observer. The committee's charge included training librarians at the Université de Montréal and BNQ and overseeing the intellectual content of *RVM*. The group had many important accomplishments in this second area. The committee established written principles for the construction of subject headings, decided on difficult cases, and translated into French the introduction to the eighth edition of *LCSH*. In 1979 an even higher-level committee, le Comité de Gestion des Vedettes-matière, was formed that included the directors and heads of technical services for the three libraries. In January 1980 this committee changed its name to Comité Tripartite de Dévelopment Intellectuel du Répertoire de Vedettes-matère de l'Université Laval and enlarged the charge of the Comité Tripartite. Nonetheless, the Comité Tripartite held its last meeting in September 1980, although it was never officially disbanded. Budget restraints from the economic crisis of the early 1980s and administrative reorganizations as well as some disagreements among the partners were the causes (Gascon 1993–94).

RVM in France

Among the European francophone countries, *RVM* has had the most influence in France. This is not surprising because France has the largest population, the most libraries, and probably the most centralized library administration of the four francophone countries in Europe. (The other three are Belgium, Luxembourg, and Switzerland.) In addition, it is the one country where French is the only language used in major libraries.

Biblio

To understand the situation in France, a little bit of history is in order. France had its own list of subject headings, *Liste des Vedettes Matière de Biblio (Biblio),* derived from *LCSH*. Started by Denise Montel in 1933 with the support of the French publisher Hachette, the first printed edition of *Biblio* appeared in 1954. Even though a significant number of French libraries used *Biblio,* the last edition

appeared in 1971 (Gascon 1993–94). For the purposes of this article, it is interesting to note the following words of Montel as she described *Biblio* in 1941:

> There is no list of French subject headings comparable to those that are well known and used daily by libraries in the United States and Canada. . . . Since the philosophy and practices of libraries across the Atlantic have taken root in France, the absence of this indispensable tool has been most heavily felt (as it should be felt perhaps even more in francophone Canada) and several attempts have been made to provide such a list for French librarians. It seemed that the fastest and most economical way would be to have my colleagues profit from the experience and work of their American counterparts by translating purely and simply the subject heading list with the best reputation, that of the Library of Congress. Several times, this translation has been started. I don't know if Canadian libraries have had the same idea, but I believe in any case that, if there have been any attempts, they have not had a better fate than the French attempts that have always failed (105–6).

She continues on, however, to say that "there is reason . . . to be pleased about this turn of events rather than to complain. Because even if this project would have been completed, such a theoretical and abstract translation would have been without value" (106). Instead, as will be the case with *RVM*, she based *Biblio* upon literary warrant with emphasis upon providing subject headings for the books published by Hachette. It is therefore more appropriate for general public library collections than for academic research libraries. While the basis for the list was *LCSH*, "we were forced to a greater or lesser extent to diverge from the American list" (107). She continues by giving numerous examples of times when she found it necessary to adapt *Biblio* to the French context though it remains very close to *LCSH*. The history of *Biblio* will serve as a model for subsequent French developments in the area of subject headings.

La Bibliothèque Publique d'Information

La Bibliothèque Publique d'Information (BPI) is part of the Centre Pompidou in central Paris and opened to the public on February 1, 1977, although it began purchasing materials for its collection in 1971 (Bpi-info 2002). Unlike the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, BPI's goal is to serve the general public, and it has built an extensive collection in multiple formats. In addition, it was felt that it was more

important to provide subject access for the general public that would have less familiarity with scholarly bibliographies. As a new library, it also had greater flexibility in choosing its rules for descriptive and subject cataloging.

BPI first attempted to provide subject access through a thesaurus constructed with the terminology found in the Universal Decimal Classification. When this provided unsatisfactory, BPI's director, Jean-Pierre Seguin, wrote in August 1974 to the Université Laval Library to see if a way could be found for BPI to use *RVM* (Gascon 1993–94; Seguin 1987). In 1974, after a positive response on the part of Laval, two librarians from BPI came to Laval for training. Upon their return, BPI officially adopted *RVM* as its subject access system and began using it to catalog on November 11, 1974. After cataloging around 8,000 items, enough problems had developed that a librarian from Laval spent nearly two months in Paris in 1975.

Efforts at systematic cooperation followed. The Université Laval Library sent updates and supplements to BPI and asked its opinion on difficult questions. In return, BPI sent corrections to Laval and proposed new subject headings from the works that it cataloged. BPI published five editions of its subject heading list, *Liste d'Autorités Matière Noms Communs,* between 1976 and 1981 (Jouguelet 1983b). With the availability of this list, other public libraries became interested in using *RVM* as modified by BPI. In a letter quoted by Gascon (1993–94), the head of subject cataloging at BPI asked the Université Laval for permission to distribute its subject heading list to public libraries who wanted to use it for their cataloging. It is interesting to note that this librarian estimated that the *RVM* had contributed more than 70% of the subject headings in this list. The Université Laval Library, in the same cooperative spirit that had guided its relationship with Canadian libraries, gave its permission but asked that the BPI make it clear that their version differed in many ways from *RVM*.

In reality, librarians at Laval were worried that the BPI subject heading practice had diverged in fundamental ways from *RVM* and *LCSH,* but they also recognized that they had not been able to keep up with integrating proposed subject headings into *RVM*. In 1982, they assigned a librarian specifically to this task. Nonetheless, contact with BPI declined significantly over the next few years, probably due to the changes in France that will be described in the next section (Gascon 1993–94).

Bibliothèque Nationale de France

When the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) decided in 1979 to close its catalog, the library went looking for another way to provide subject access to replace the current system that had become too difficult to maintain (Jouguelet 1983a and 1983b; Maury 1993). At this time, *RVM* was the only readily available encyclopedic thesaurus in French. BNF also consulted BPI, which reported its success in using *RVM*. Thus, in fall 1979, BNF officially adopted *RVM* as its subject access system. In March 1980 a Laval librarian went to Paris while a representative from BNF came to Quebec toward the end of the same year (Jouguelet 1983a and 1983b).

Coordination became increasingly difficult between *RVM* and its two European versions because each library established subject headings as needed based upon literary warrant. In addition, differences exist in the French used in Quebec in comparison with that used in France. To give several examples, for the *LCSH* subject heading, "Literary Historians," *RVM* uses "Historiens Littéraires" while BNF has chosen "Historiens de la Littérature." While *RVM* accepts the *LCSH* English term, "House-boats," BNF uses the French equivalent, "Bateaux-maisons." The use of prepositions also varies because the *LCSH,* "Professional Education of Women," is "Enseignement Professionnel aux Femmes" in *RVM* but "Enseignement Professionnel pour les Femmes" for BNF. (See Jouguelet 1983a, 18–19, and 1983b, 385–88 for additional specific examples.) Furthermore, the perennial lack of staff and personnel changes led to differences in both syntax and vocabulary between BPI and BNF even though both were located in the same city. In addition, BPI was reluctant to make changes because it had several printed subject catalogs. Coordination between the Université Laval Library and BNF was less than ideal throughout the 1980s (Jouguelet 1983a and 1983b).

LAMECH and *RAMEAU*

Compared with the library situation in both Canada and the United States, France has a much stronger tradition of central control and a greater tendency to use legal requirements to enforce standards. (See Jouguelet 1985 for a fuller discussion of standards.) Thus, in 1982, le Ministère de l'Éducation (MEN) (the Education Ministry) decreed that French university libraries would use the same subject indexing system in return for funding to automate their libraries and to create a cooperative cataloging network —SIBIL-France. A working group was given the task of finding a way to provide uniform subject access for BNF, BPI, and 20 university libraries. The resulting standard, *Liste d'Autorité de Matières; Structure et Règles d'Emploi (Subject Authority List; Structure and Rules for Its Use),* was published in 1985. As quoted in Gascon (1993–94, 27) and Jouguelet (1985, 35), the standard recommended:

> using a system based upon a structure and syntax and making use of a list of subject words: the encyclopedic list of subject headings in French derived from *RVM* of the Université Laval in Quebec. . . .

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Within the libraries that adopt it, indexing coherence will be made easier and thus guaranteed; and they will also avoid dispersing concepts among too many headings.

Anticipating this standard, the Direction des Bibliothèques, des Musées et de l'Information Scientifique et Technique (DBMIST) of MEN created in 1984 the Cellule Nationale de Coordination de l'Indexation-matière (CNCIM), whose task was to create and manage this list that was initially called *Liste d'Autorité de Matières Encyclopédique, Collective et Hiérarchisée (LAMECH)*. At this point, contacts with the Université Laval Library focused on technical issues, and the differences between the various versions of the authority list became greater (Gascon 1993–94).

In 1986 DBMIST signed a contract with OCLC to allow selected university libraries to use the system for their cataloging. As most of these records included *LCSH* subject headings, it became more important to find a way to have them translated into French to achieve the savings that shared cataloging makes possible. BNF therefore signed an agreement with MEN in 1987 to maintain the intellectual content of an *LCSH*-based subject heading list that was renamed *RAMEAU (Répertoire d'Autorité-matière Encyclopédique et Alphabétique Unifié)*. The majority of the subject headings in this list came from *RVM*, with the rest coming from the BNF authority file and the BPI authority list. As they began cataloging, other libraries were able to propose subject headings for validation by BNF; but "only libraries with a relatively advanced training are allowed" (Maury 1993, 41). In addition, six specialized libraries, after training by BNF, had the ability to create headings in their areas of expertise (Maury 1993).

By 1992, the use of *RAMEAU* had expanded in France to include large municipal libraries, public libraries, le Cercle de la Librairie, and la Bibliothèque de France. (Le Cercle de la Librairie had earlier supported a competing subject heading list edited by Martine Blanc-Montmayeur and Françoise Danset, *Choix de Vedettes Matières à l'Intention des Bibliothèques*, published in 1984 [Jouguelet 1985 and 1989].) In 1992, *RAMEAU* had about 56,000 topical subject headings. As with *RVM*, *RAMEAU* is based upon literary warrant, a fact that lead to a lack of subject headings for science and technology as long as BNF was a largest source of headings since this library does not collect extensively in these subjects (Jouguelet 1985 and 1989; Maury 1993).

BNF has modified some Library of Congress practices but has tried to avoid extensive changes. BNF would like to see some simplification and rationalization of *LCSH* syntax, especially in the area of subdivision practice. Such a move would help resolve the other major problem, which has been training librarians outside BNF in the use of *LCSH* (Maury 1993).

Cooperative Agreement between the Université Laval and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France

During this entire period, no official agreement existed among the parties who were using the various versions of *RVM*. When MEN asked for permission to load *RVM* on the *RAMEAU* server, both sides concurred that it was time to negotiate such an agreement. The first version of this agreement was ready for signing in 1987, but major changes on the French side as DBMIST became DPDU (Direction de la Programmation et du Développement Universitaire) resulted in an additional three years of negotiations. On December 14, 1990, Laval, BNF, and DPDU signed the final agreement that would remain in effect for three years. (Freschard and Bonnelly 1993; Gascon 1993–94). This agreement included some financial compensation for the Université Laval, though this portion of the agreement was considered confidential (Freschard and Bonnelly 1993).

The most important portion of the agreement can be summarized by the following quote from the agreement as reported by Claude Bonnelly:

> Considering the common origin of *RVM* and *RAMEAU* from the Library of Congress Subject Headings, considering in addition the recognition of *RVM* by the National Library of Canada as a national standard, the parties to this agreement recognize the need to pursue the goal of standardization and agree, while recognizing the autonomy of each other's work, to maintain the greatest possible compatibility between *RVM* and *RAMEAU*, to develop the two tools coherently and conjointly, and to limit as much as possible differences in regards to the content and the construction of the headings that are added to the lists (Freschard and Bonnelly 1993, 205).

The agreement went on to enumerate three mechanisms to achieve this coordination. Both parties agreed to exchange all their publications at no cost, to send each other much more regularly lists of new and updated headings, and to sponsor an annual week-long meeting that would alternate between Quebec and Paris "whose goals are to take stock of developments in *RVM* and *RAMEAU*, to share the experiences of the parties involved in the lists, to look at the differences and modifications brought about by either side and to establish the necessary dialogue in regards to the rules for establishing headings" (Freschard and Bonnelly 1993, 205).

Other Countries

The 1992 Conference on Subject Access

The 1992 conference in Fribourg, Switzerland, whose official name was "Rencontres Francophones sur l'Indexation Matière, 1er et 2 Juin 1992 à Fribourg, Suisse," included information about subject access in the three other francophone European countries. As indicated above, this conference may represent the high point in cooperation for subject access in the francophone world. Martin Nicoulin, Directeur de la Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire de Fribourg, and Claude Bonelly, Directeur de la Bibliothèque de l'Université Laval, had the idea to organize this conference in 1991 as they sat on the terrace of a cafe on the Boulevard St-Germain in Paris. Pierre Buntschu and Plavio Nuvolone, two librarians from Fribourg, took care of the practical details. Pierre Gavin, Animateur des Réseaux SIBIL de Suisse, de France, et de Luxembourg, was responsible for the content of the presentations (Nicoulin 1993).

More than 170 people attended from Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Quebec, and France, though the list of attendees indicates that the vast majority came from Switzerland (Buntschu et al. 1993). The conference included a report from each country, a roundtable on multilingualism, a synthesis, and a discussion of current collaborative efforts, including the agreement between the Université Laval and BNF. The published proceedings appeared in 1993, jointly published by Les Presses de l'Université Laval, Quebec; Éditions Universitaires Fribourg, Suisse; and École Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques, Villeurbanne/Lyon, France. The proceedings report the discussions, including the questions and answers after each presentation. (As of August 2002, *Bibliothèques et vedettes* is still available from Les Presses de l'Université Laval at www.ulaval.ca/pul/index.html.)

The conference does not provide adequate information on one aspect of subject access in francophone Europe. While the presenters from France, Belgium, and Luxembourg all indicate that public libraries use *RVM* or *RAMEAU,* their focus is almost entirely on academic and national libraries without much discussion of developments within public libraries (Clement 1993; Holley 1994; Maury 1993).

Belgium

Jacqueline Clément, Chef du Département Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines, Université Libre de Bruxelles, (ULB) describes a complicated situation in Belgium (Clément 1993; Bonnelly 1993). In her first sentence, she says: "I wish to make it clear from the beginning that there isn't any national coordination of subject indexing in Belgium for academic libraries" (Clément 1993, 75). Subject indexing practice varies not only from university to

university but within various parts of the same university. Before giving more details about her own university, she provides the following summary for university libraries in regards to the *RVM/RAMEAU/LCSH* triumvirate:

> *RVM*
> Centre d'information et de conservation des bibliothèques de l'Université de Liège since 1980
>
> *LCSH* and *RVM* with *LCSH* as the standard
> Université Libre de Bruxelles since 1988 plus complete retrospective conversion
> Bibliothèque Royale since 1988
>
> *LCSH* and *RVM* with *RVM* as the standard
> Faculté Polytechnique de Mons since 1991
> (1993, 85)

Francophone public libraries are required to use *RAMEAU* in accordance with a 1987 decree, but she does not provide further details (1993).

At the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the library provides subject access in French and English (*RVM* and *LCSH*) for materials cataloged after 1986 and in English (*LCSH*) for pre-1986 items. While the goal is to provide subject access compatible with *RAMEAU, RVM* has remained the preferred source for subject headings: "There was therefore a political need to recognize that we were a francophone university and to ensure reasonable compatibility with *RAMEAU*" (Clément 1993, 87). She then provides various statistics about subject access, including the fact that, in the subject index, *LCSH* is the source for 153,064 entries while *RVM* provides 39,757 (Clément 1993).

For current cataloging, ULB uses OCLC. The cataloger checks first in *RVM*. If the heading does not exist or "does not appear to meet the needs of the European situation" the cataloger consults *RAMEAU* (Clément 1993, 89). For documents that treat Belgian issues, often neither authority list includes an appropriate subject term that must then be established. As was the case with France, Clément (1993) has concerns about the complexity of *LCSH* subject subdivision practice and about the difficulty in training subject catalogers.

Luxembourg

Claude Loutsch, Bibliothèque Nationale du Luxembourg (BNL) and coordinator for the SIBIL network in Luxembourg, describes the situation in the Grand Duchy (Loustch 1993; Bonnelly 1993). All the important libraries in Luxembourg not connected with the European Union belong to the SIBIL network except for the Clervaux Abbey library. The eight member libraries collectively hold about

a million volumes, with BNL being the largest at 700,000 volumes. The public library (40,000 volumes) is a member.

Luxembourg did not have a long tradition of providing subject access, but when a subject catalog with *Biblio* subject headings as described above was made available to the public in 1973, it was heavily used. The introduction of the SIBIL system and the fact that *Biblio* was no longer updated led to the decision to implement *RVM* in 1985. The SIBIL network also considered the Swiss system, RERO, and *RAMEAU*. It rejected the first for three reasons: it was not a controlled vocabulary; the network did not have online access to the Lausanne catalog; and choosing RERO would have required closer coordination than was possible at the time. The advantage that *RVM* had over *RAMEAU* was that it provided a well-established authority list in a print format. (Loustch 1993, 66) The major intellectual modification to *RVM* was the decision to create chronological subdivisions as needed according to literary warrant.

The seven other libraries were required to adopt *RVM* as a condition of membership in the SIBIL network. While some libraries had to use very specific index terms—for example, to provide subject access to special collection materials and journal articles—Loutsch (1993) is of the opinion that this has not created difficulties for general users of the online catalog. While subject catalogers continue to use the printed ninth edition of *RVM* to avoid the inconvenience of consulting the subsequent microfiche editions (Loustch 1993), they are no longer hesitant to add new terms as needed to reflect changes in knowledge. (See Bonnelly [1993] for a criticism of using the older edition.)

Switzerland

Joëlle Walther, Subject Coordinator for le Réseau des Bibliothèques Romandes et Tessinoises, describes subject access in the Suisse Romande (the francophone part of Switzerland) (Walther 1993; Bonnelly 1993). The network's libraries use their own system, RERO, which is precoordinated and also includes term switching so that all independent subject concepts become the lead term. All catalogers within the network can create headings that then receive a multilevel review before becoming officially established (Walther 1993). While one Swiss reactor, Gavin, commented that this system of review could seem overly complex and cumbersome to outsiders, he believed that the Swiss librarians felt that it worked well in practice and was the only way to assure cooperation among the very independent-minded Swiss libraries (Walther 1993). *RVM* and *RAMEAU* serve as resources for the creation of subject terms, second only in importance to the *Grand Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Larousse*; but RERO pays no attention to the syntax of subject headings in these authority lists (Walther 1993).

Future Plans

Proposals for the future came forward from the Fribourg conference (Gavin 1993). Several are particularly relevant to this article. First, Gavin suggested an increased informal information exchange among the francophone countries, with one organization designated as the official contact in each country to simplify matters. Second, the group hoped to hold another conference in two years; but this did not happen. The third was to pay more attention to developments within the European community in the area of vocabulary control. The last was to see whether it would be possible to provide all of the various subject-heading lists on CD-ROM.

In addition, it was suggested that Laval and BNF meet with the Library of Congress to propose changes to *LCSH* that would benefit francophone users. The main concern, as indicated above, was the simplification of syntax and the creation of clear rules for the use and order of subdivisions (Freschard and Bonnelly 1993). The French representatives in particular hoped that such changes would make it easier to train others in the use of *LCSH*. This meeting did occur on May 27–28, 1993; but its content will be part of the second article on this subject (Gascon 2002). On this subject, Devroey from Belgium quips: "We know very well that the Library of Congress will continue to change and, because it is God, won't take into account us poor mortals" (Gavin 1993, 240).

Conclusions

1. The Université Laval Library created *RVM* and has overseen its development as a pragmatic tool to meet the subject access needs of francophone libraries.

The Université Laval Library created *RVM* as an economic way to provide subject access after realizing that cataloging copy with *LCSH* was available for the majority of its cataloging. This pragmatic spirit has continued with an emphasis upon making the use of *RVM* as efficient as possible. The Université Laval has held modifications to a minimum by making changes only to account for differences between English and French and to add terms not found in *LCSH*. Unlike librarians in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg, the literature does not indicate any great desire on the part of Laval librarians to make local modifications to the syntax of *LCSH*.

2. The Université Laval Library has shown a strong desire to cooperate with other libraries and to help others adopt *RVM*.

The Université Laval Library has extended the influence of *RVM* by cooperating with other libraries, first in Canada and

then in Europe. This cooperation is another aspect of the pragmatic spirit that has been part of the cultural tradition of North American libraries. Through cooperation, libraries have been able to reduce cataloging costs by reusing bibliographic records created by others. This factor became increasingly important in the 1970s with the development of cooperative cataloging networks such as OCLC, RLG, and WLN in the United States and UTLAS in Canada. *RVM* helped resolve the important problem of cooperation in the area of subject access for francophone libraries. NLC, NLQ, and the Université de Montréal, the three other major libraries with interests in francophone cataloging, all voluntarily cooperated with LAVAL in the maintenance and enrichment of *RVM*.

The Université Laval Library has also shown great willingness to cooperate with non-Canadian libraries. As seen above, librarian exchanges to and from Europe have been part of its cooperative efforts in exporting *RVM*. Furthermore, Laval has been willing to cooperate even when it did not completely agree with the changes that other libraries were making to their versions of *RVM*. Laval has, however, received some financial compensation for its efforts.

In Europe, the principal libraries of Luxembourg have shown the same spirit of cooperation by joining the same network, SIBIL, whose cataloging standards require using *RVM* for subject access. In contrast, Belgium showed an almost complete lack of cooperation among the major libraries. In comparison, its francophone public libraries are required by law to use *RAMEAU*. In France, the French version of *RVM*, *RAMEAU*, was imposed upon the major academic libraries as a condition for receiving support from the Ministère de l'Éducation for library automation. France has a strong tradition of such legal standards, though some other libraries have voluntarily decided to adopt *RAMEAU*.

3. The relative lack of support for *RVM* has probably been a positive factor.

The author of this article is amazed that the Université Laval Library, as a midsize academic research library, has been able to accomplish so much with so few resources. The *RVM* team, which has usually numbered around six full-time employees, should be complimented on its ability to manage the intellectual content of *RVM*, including reviewing and approving proposed subject headings from its Canadian partners. The relative lack of resources has led to support for automatic translation and may be another reason, beyond the pragmatism and spirit of cooperation as given above, why Laval has not wished to make substantive modifications to *RVM* that would move it away from *LCSH* and thus require more librarian intervention in its maintenance.

4. The Université Laval Library has had less influence on *LCSH* because it is not a national library.

As seen above, NLC serves as an intermediary in proposing new subject headings to the Library of Congress, the de facto though not the de jure national library for the United States. Furthermore, national library administrators meet regularly including annual meetings at IFLA and often allow other staff to participate in IFLA Standing Committees whose activities are important for the national library. In the Division of Bibliographic Control, for example, NLC represented the interests of *RVM*. During most of the history of *RVM*, LC has considered the Université Laval Library as simply another user of *LCSH* rather than as a privileged partner, though to be fair the Université Laval Library has not asked for special status.

5. Divergences among the francophone versions of *LCSH* are inevitable.

Even with the greatest desire to coordinate the francophone versions of *LCSH*, they will continue to diverge in terminology and probably in syntax. The fact that the lists are based upon literary warrant will mean that each list will have unique terms and special areas of strength. They will probably, however, also use different terms or syntax for the same concept. Close coordination has a high overhead cost and would probably also require selecting one partner as the principal authority, a fact that goes against the stated need to preserve the autonomy of each version. In addition, the proceedings of the Fribourg conference indicate a tendency on the part of the Europeans to consider *LCSH* as the direct source for the European versions rather than to acknowledge *RVM* as an intermediary. (Belgian librarian Paula Goosens stated: "In my opinion, one solution would be to refer to *LCSH* which is the common element among the majority of the systems that have been described here") (Freschard and Bonnelly 1993, 212)

6. All libraries made the correct decision to base their francophone version of *LCSH* on literary warrant rather than to attempt a systematic translation.

All the francophone versions of *LCSH* are based upon literary warrant. Though this has led to differences in the subject headings available in each version, this decision makes great sense because each francophone authority list, in the same way as *LCSH*, includes only the terms that have been found useful for that library or network. These lists are therefore not burdened by subject headings whose importance is less for currently acquired materials or that reflect the American centric collection patterns of the Library of Congress. In addition, it is much easier to

establish the correct subject heading or to translate an LC subject heading with the document in hand.

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