PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF UNION LABEL DESCRIPTION IN BIBLIOGRAPHIC & ARCHIVAL CATALOGING

by Lincoln Cushing

Challenging Invisibility

Step by step, the longest march
Can be won, can be won;
Single stones will form an arch
One by one, one by one
And, by Union what we will
Can be accomplished still
Drops of water turn a mill,
Singly none, singly none.

from the cover page of the Constitution of the American Miners' Association, 1864.

Data are like drops of water. Individually, they are usually quite meaningless. Only once they are organized, with purpose, do they take on significance. This article seeks to rectify the oversight by bibliographic catalogers to include information about a small but important item of published data — the union label, or "bug."

A Brief History of Union Printing

The dawn of modern printing occurred during the 1880s, when photoengraving and rotary presses made their debut. By the 1890s the production improvements included linotype machines, electric drives, and automatic paper feeders. Mechanization began to transform a small-scale industry into a trade with craft specialization.

In January 1850, New York journeymen organized the New York Printers' Union, whose president was Horace Greeley, apprenticed printer and founder of the daily New York Tribune. Greeley was an outspoken advocate for social justice — "...the first if not the most important movement to be made in advance of our present social position is the organization of Labor." The National Typographical Union was organized soon afterwards on May 3, 1852 (in 1869 it revised its name to International Typographical Union, or I.T.U.). Originally the I.T.U. was a comprehensive industrial union with a membership drawn from all phases of the printing process.

Technological developments at the end of the 1800's resulted in increased job specialization, which in turn led to segregation of union jurisdiction. Pressure formed within the I.T.U. for a separate pressmen's union. The International Brotherhood of Bookbinders (I.B.B.) was founded in 1892. The International Printing Pressmen Union of North America (I.P.P.U.) was founded in 1889, and by 1897 added the Assistants to form the I.P.P.A.U. The International Stereotypers' and Electroplater's Union (I.S.&E.U.) was formed in 1902. By the time the International Photoengraver's Union (I.P.E.U.) was formed in 1904, four separate unions represented the portion of the printing trade outside the composing room. However, of these the I.T.U. remained the strongest and most stable printing union in the United States until the mid 1900s.


The impact of union membership on document production varied depending on geographical region, type of document, printing client, and date. As with most industrial unions, membership was highest in urban areas. Also, some parts of the country (Northeast, Midwest) have a history and culture that is supportive of trade union activities. The following chart shows the A.L.A.-represented workforce in 1958 and illustrates major regions of union membership.
The most common union bug is that of the Allied Printing Trades Council (displayed at beginning of article), and indicates that all production work, from typography through bindery, was performed with union labor. There are two exceptions to the use of the Allied label. The United Typothetae of America (U.T.A) was founded to represent the interests of printshop owners in response to the demand by the I.T.U. for a nine-hour day in the late 1880s. In 1899 the U.T.A. passed a resolution deprecating the use of the union label by its members and encouraged them to stop putting the label on work produced in their shops. 

The first is shops that use their own printing union's bug, such as that of the G.C.I.U., when there is no regional council to issue an Allied bug. Some examples displayed above are the G.C.I.U. "football" bug and the Amalgamated Lithographer's Union. The other exception comes from shops that are in-house duplication services for unions representing workers other than printers, such as the United Electrical Workers Union, the United Farm Workers, the California State Employees Association (used by California State Publishing), or the Industrial Workers of the World.

Use of the Union Bug

Printers have been known to use a bug to designate work by union labor as early as October 15, 1891, when it appeared at the head of the editorial column of the Compositors (I.T.U.) Typographical Journal. The first known use of a bug in commercially produced documents was by the I.P.P.A.U. in May 1893. The union label has at least five purposes:

1. It is a protection against anti- or non-union shops that might otherwise profess union working conditions.
2. It can be part of a public-relations campaign to induce customers to buy union-made products.
3. It is a sign of good workmanship and quality standards.
4. It is badge of union prestige to attract new members.
5. It is warning against trespass by competitive unions.

In 1897, under the pact with Pressmen and Bookbinders, the Compositors agreed to a design for a new Allied Printing Trades Council label (see Appendix 1). In 1911 all five unions in the trade (I.T.U., I.B.B., I.E.&S.U., I.P.P., and I.P.E.U.) formed the International Allied Printing Trades Council (I.A.P.T.C.) as an inter-union agency to control and promote the use of the union label. By 1939 the Allied label was in general use throughout the printing trade and took precedence over the individual labels of the five internationals. Of course, this was not seen as an entirely positive activity by the management side of the industry. The United Typothetae of America (U.T.A) was founded to represent the interests of printshop owners in response to the demand by the I.T.U. for a nine-hour day in the late 1880s. In 1899 the U.T.A. passed a resolution deprecating the use of the union label by its members and encouraged them to stop putting the label on work produced in their shops. 

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The label has always been, and remains, a symbolic weapon in the struggle between labor and capital.

**Bug Metadata**

Bugs usually appear discreetly at the corner of a back page or at the bottom of a title page. The example below displays the Allied bug in such a context. The Allied bug at the beginning of this article is large enough to easily observe all of its data components. The lower arc contains the geographic region, which may be a city ("New York") or a broader area ("Northern California"). Coupled with that location is a shop name or number. The number is permanently assigned when the shop is organized. A regional list of union shops, indexed by shop name and number, is available from the local Printing Trades Council. A national database is also now available on the Web.

Most catalogers, however, have no idea what to do with them. Full cataloging of bug-bearing documents either fails to mention them at all or indicates only that portion which is recognizable. The following document is from the Library of Congress’s “An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera” on-line gallery. Because it provides excellent images of the artifacts, it is easy to identify items that have bugs and then view the documentation. A good example is the detail below of the poster "Woman suffrage co-equal with man suffrage." (New York, 1910). The Allied bug is clearly evident in the image.

It should be noted that the union bug is a copyrighted symbol, and is occasionally accompanied by a © symbol. This adds a legal dimension to archival material duplication, because any reproduction of the document, commercial or otherwise, cannot bear the bug unless it is reproduced by union labor. The bug is protected by state laws as well as printing trade customs, with penalties for misuse including fines and imprisonment.

**Union Bug Recognition and Oversight**

Some catalogers recognize the importance of the union bug in describing materials. One example is a commercial website specializing in political campaign ephemera, including buttons and badges (significant text bolded by author):
of Congress has not sought to describe (this) level of detail...when encoding historical documents with the American Memory DTD.19

Sources for Guidelines for Cataloging Bugs

The authoritative source on cataloging guidelines is the Anglo American Cataloging Rules (AACR2r). According to Michael Gorman, Dean of Libraries at California State University at Fresno and editor of the AACR, “I can safely say that the Union Bug is not mentioned in any English-language cataloguing code.” A review of the 1988 edition provides several potential loci for specifying union bug information:

1. General Rules
   1.4G1 Place of manufacture, name of manufacturer, date of manufacture
   “If the name of the publisher is unknown and the place and name of the manufacturer are found in the item, give the place and name of the manufacturer”
   2.4G1 Place of Printing, name of printer, date of printing
   “If the name of the publisher is unknown and the place and name of the printer are found in the item, give that place and name as instructed in 1.4G”

2. Early Printed Monographs
   2.16D
   “Give the rest of the details relating to the publisher, etc. as they are given in the item. Separate the parts of a complex publisher, etc. statement only if they are presented separately in the item. If the publisher, etc. statement includes the name of a printer, give it here. Omit words in the publisher, etc. statement that do not aid in the identification of the item and do not indicate the role of the publisher, etc. Indicate omissions by the mark of omission.”
   2.16H
   “If the printer is named separately in the item and the printer can clearly be distinguished from the publisher or bookseller, give the place of printing and the name of the printer as instructed in 1.4G”

3. Graphic Materials
   8.4G1
   “If the name of the publisher is unknown and the place and name of the manufacturer are found in the item, give that place and name as instructed in 1.4G”
   8.4G2 Optional addition.

Give the place, name of manufacturer, and/or date of manufacture if they are found on the item and differ from the place, name of publisher, etc. and date of publication, etc., and are considered important by the cataloguing agency.”

Suggested approaches for Bibliographic Cataloging

Because the union bug is a valuable piece of cataloging data, I would like to propose that it be formally included in AACR2, MARC, EAD, and other archival cataloging protocols. A rule change would provide designated subfields to record bug data should it be present. The logical MARC location for this information is in the Physical Description, etc. Fields (3XX); the current subfield codes are:

- $a - Extent (R)
- $b - Other physical details (NR)
- $c - Dimensions (R)
- $e - Accompanying material (NR)
- $f - Type of unit (R)
- $g - Size of unit (R)
- $3 - Materials specified (NR)
- $6 - Linkage (NR)
- $8 - Field link and sequence number (R)

An example of MARC record accommodation for bug data might look like this:

300 164p. $h Union Label $i Allied Printing Trades Council $j #147 $k Northern California $1 Inkworks Press

While dedicated subfields for bug information might be ideal, formal rules at this level change at a glacial pace. In the meantime, I would suggest that original catalogers adjust their current practice to include the relevant data under existing subfield $b. An example might look like this:

300 164p. $b Union Label, Allied Printing Trades Council, #147, Northern California, Inkworks Press

One practical problem with bugs is that they are often quite small or smudged and therefore hard to read. Some data, especially the Geographic Region, may even be illegible. Identification is another issue, and a central database of bugs would assist the description of labels from the many other
trade unions. Regardless of the challenges posed by proper and thorough cataloging, the first step is to begin acknowledging their very existence through the term “union label.”

Conclusion

It is my belief that the inclusion of these data will be of value to future researchers and archivists. The trade union movement has a long and honorable role in document preparation and production, just as the library and archival community has done so for documentation and dissemination. Catalog inclusion of the union bug as evidence of this contribution is a small but significant step in erasing the historic invisibility of those that labored before us.

Appendix 1  - historic printing union labels


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Footnotes

1 The American Miners' Association, by Edward A. Weick, Russell Sage Foundation, NY, 1940.
2 "Term 2040; bug, U.S. slang - Printed matter produced by a union shop," in Elsevier's Dictionary of the Printing and Allied Industries, by F.J.M. and E.F.P.H. Wijnekus, 1983. Although the term is used interchangeably in this document, I believe the term bug is more specific than union label, because it is in common usage in the trade and distinguishes it from the labels commonly associated with garments, cigars, and other products. Many different trades have their own form of public identification.
4 Yes, pressmen... the trade has remained overwhelmingly male (and white) since its creation.
6 The I.T.U. portion of I.A.P.T.A. membership in 1900 was 71%, and drifted downward; 61% in 1914, 52% in 1929, and 50% in 1939.
8 Graphic Communicator, newspaper of the Graphic Communications Union, October 1989.
9 Personal communication with Pete Rockwell, I.T.U. shop steward, spring 2000.
10 Labor Relations in the Lithographic Industry, page 243; figures are approximations based on 1958 Census data and estimation by the author.
13 Indirect emphasis upon buying habits of general public in Chicago can be supported by the List of Firms Whose Advertising Matter Does Not Bear the Chicago Allied Printing Trades Council Label, June, 1941." The Printing Trades, by Jacob Loft, footnote #20, page 221.
15 Printers and Technology, by Elizabeth Faulkner Baker, title page.
16 http://www.gciu.org/shop.shtml
18 http://www.gciu.org/shop.shtml
19 http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbpe&fileName=rbpe13/rbpe1312/13200200/rbpe13200200page.db&recNum=0&itemLink=D?rbpebib:5:temp/
-ammers_u0CS: @@MDb=ncpm,rbpebib,suffrg&linkText=0
20 E-mail from LeeEllen Friedland, Library of Congress, 4/24/00.

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