

RETROSPECTIVE CONVERSION

(ReCON)

Old catalogue records
become searchable digital
records

OLD
RECORDS

DIGITAL
RECORDS



What Is ReCON?

A simple definition

ReCON changes existing catalogue records from a manual form into a digital form that a computer can store, search and use.

**OLD RECORDS → DIGITAL
RECORDS**

One Record: Before and After

The information stays the same; the form changes



Understanding the Name

Three words explain the idea

1

Retrospective

Looks back at records already held

2

Conversion

Changes the record from manual to digital

3

Bibliographic

Describes a library resource

**Author • Title • Edition •
Subject • Call number**

Looking back + Changing form + Resource details

Why Is ReCON Needed?

Library automation needs digital records

- Paper cards cannot be searched by the library software
- Old holdings must be added to the digital catalogue
- Users can search the complete collection online
- The library can prepare reports and improve services

ReCON and Current Cataloguing

Both create digital records, but for different materials

CURRENT CATALOGUING

- New materials
- Regular daily work
- A new record is created
- Begins when the item arrives

ReCON

- Old or backlog materials
- A planned project
- An existing record is converted
- Supports full automation

What Makes a Good ReCON Project?

Four simple conditions

1 QUICK
Complete the work without unnecessary delay

2 AFFORDABLE
Use time and money carefully

3 CONSISTENT
Follow the same record structure

4 ACCURATE
Check every record before use

Main Benefits of ReCON

Four groups are easy to remember



FASTER SERVICE



LOWER COST



RESOURCE SHARING



BETTER PLANNING

Benefit 1 • Faster Library Service

Digital records improve daily work

- Users search the catalogue quickly
- Staff locate holdings more easily
- Different library services use one database
- Routine work becomes more organised

Benefit 2 • Lower Cost and Better Protection

One catalogue is easier to maintain

LOWER COST

- Avoid maintaining cards and computer records together
- Reduce repeated manual work
- Use one shared source

BETTER PROTECTION

- Create backups
- Reduce loss from damaged cards
- Recover records after a problem

Benefit 3 • Resource Sharing

Digital records can be shared between libraries

- 
- Create combined catalogues
 - Share catalogue information
 - Support interlibrary loan
 - Make collections visible to more users

Benefit 4 • Better Collection Planning

Converted records show what the library has and lacks

- Count books by subject or type
- Identify strong and weak areas
- Find unnecessary duplicates
- Plan future purchases using evidence

A Simple ReCON Workflow

Six easy steps

1

SELECT

**Choose
the old
records**

2

CHECK

**Read the
existing
cards or
lists**

3

SEARCH

**Find a
matching
record**

4

ENTER

**Type or
import
the
details**

5

VERIFY

**Check
the
record
carefully**

6

USE

**Add it to
the
library
system**

Step 1 • Plan and Select

Decide what will be converted first

PLAN

- Choose the collection
- Set priorities
- Assign time and staff
- Agree on the record structure

SELECT

- Identify old records
- Count cards or entries
- Group similar materials
- Keep source records safe

Step 2 • Search Before Typing

Reuse a matching record when available

SEARCH FIRST

- Confirm title, author, edition and publication details
- Use a suitable matching record
- Create a new record only when necessary
- Avoid duplicate records

Step 3 • Enter the Information

Transfer the old details into consistent digital fields

- Enter title and author information
- Add edition and publication details
- Add subject and classification information
- Follow the same style for every record

Step 4 • Check the Record

Quality checking comes before use

CHECK THE DETAILS

- Spelling and dates
- Edition and publication
- Subject and classification
- Item and location

CHECK FOR PROBLEMS

- Missing information
- Duplicate records
- Wrong classification
- Inconsistent entries

Three Different Processes

Do not confuse ReCON, digitisation and data migration

ReCON

**Catalogue card
→ digital
catalogue
record**

DIGITISATION

**Physical
document →
digital copy**

DATA MIGRATION

**Old digital
system → new
digital system**

Data Migration: Simple Meaning

Moving existing digital records to another library system

BEFORE

- Records are already digital
- The library uses an old system
- Data may contain errors

AFTER

- Records move to a new system
- Data is checked and tested
- Library services continue

Four Checks Before Data Migration

Know • Clean • Protect • Test

1 KNOW
Understand what data exists

2 CLEAN
Correct errors and duplicates

3 PROTECT
Keep a safe backup

4 TEST
Check the new system

Role of MarcEdit

A tool for working with many catalogue records

- 
- Edit many records together
 - Change records from one format to another
 - Combine duplicate records
 - Check records for common errors

Common Challenges and Responses

ReCON needs time, care and trained staff

CHALLENGES

- Many old records
- Missing or incorrect details
- Different cataloguing practices
- Limited time and staff

RESPONSES

- Work in phases
- Set clear rules
- Train staff
- Check records regularly

ReCON in Five Lines

A complete revision summary

- ReCON converts old catalogue records into digital records
- It is needed for complete library automation
- It preserves earlier cataloguing work
- It improves service, sharing and planning
- Every record must be checked before use

Memory Formula

A simple sequence to remember

**OLD RECORDS → CONVERT → CHECK →
SEARCH**

**Searchable records • Better access • Better
service**

1. What is RECON?

Retrospective Conversion in Libraries



RECON is the process of converting existing manual library catalog records into machine-readable form using ILS LMS.



Started 1968–1969

- Library of Congress study
- Council on Library Resources funded



Pilot project 1969–1971

- Converted 58,000 records to MARC

RECON • Retrospective Conversion • Large 3D Fonts • Ultra 3D Gloss

2. Need for RECON

Why Retrospective Conversion?



Automation Essential

Need for library automation
ILS • LMS



Machine-Readable Access

Convert manual catalogue to MARC
machine-readable for searching OPAC



Resource Sharing

National bibliographic service
union catalogue • resource sharing

**Essential and one-time activity —
but foundation for automation**

3. RECON Approaches & Methods

How to Convert Records?



In-House Approach

Library staff manually keying records on a daily basis.



Outsourcing Approach

Vendor converts records using an external database.



Combination Approach

Mix of in-house and outsourced to maximize efficiency.



Sources

Using LC MARC, OCLC, vendor databases, and original cataloging.

RECON Approaches • Methods • Ultra 3D Gloss

4. RECON Process - Steps

From Manual to Machine-Readable

- 1 Step 1: Weeding**
Weed collection based on library criteria before recon withdraw shelflist cards.
- 2 Step 2: Inventory & Shelflist Analysis**
Check physical collection vs shelflist.
- 3 Step 3: Recon Decisions**
Decide approach — in-house, outsourcing, or combination.
- 4 Step 4: Conversion**
Keying manually on daily basis or matching with external databases.
- 5 Step 5: Verification & Editing**
Verify records & edit for accuracy & quality control.
- 6 Step 6: Upload to ILS / LMS**
Import MARC records to library system OPAC live.

RECON Process Steps Ultra 3D Gloss

5. RECON Considerations

Things to Consider & Challenges



Cost

Cost per record • staffing vendor cost
• budget planning



Time

Time consuming • essential and
one time activity • months → years



Quality Control

Accuracy of MARC records
• standards



Staff Training

Need trained staff for
cataloging verification



Duplicate Records

Avoid duplication • handling
multiple editions



Maintenance

Regular evaluation • how often does
library evaluate RECON project updating

RECON Considerations Ultra 3D Gloss

6. RECON History & Impact

Foundation for Library Automation



1968 • Council on Library Resources funded study task force

Retrospective conversion of library holdings known as RECON.

1969 • Report published

Conversion of retrospective catalog records to machine-readable form — feasibility of national bibliographic service.

August 1969 • RECON pilot project initiated — Library of Congress

\$25,000 • Continued 2 years • Approximately 58,000 records converted

Today • RECON is essential & foundational

Foundation for ILS • LMS • OPAC • Resource sharing • National bibliography • MARC



RECON Road Maps • 1980–1990 • literature • medium-sized academic library • serials • workflow • scores



RECON History Summary • Ultra 3D Gloss