

DEVELOPING NATURAL RESOURCE BIBLIOGRAPHIES: A SERVICEWIDE PROJECT

By R. Gerald Wright and Marilyn Ostergren

RESOURCE MANAGERS HAVE LONG recognized the need for organized park-specific information in annotated bibliographic databases as a precursor to sound park management and planning. However, efforts to initiate such products over the years, have, with the exception of a few parks, largely been unsuccessful. This failure has primarily been because of limits on the time and money allocated for such activities, personnel transfers between areas in the park system, which disrupts the continuity of efforts, and the lack of an automated technology to support such products. In 1984, Gerry Wright at the University of Idaho CPSU developed a plan for a resource bibliographic database project in the Pacific Northwest Region. This project proposed using "mini-computers" and commercial database software, technologies which were then available at universities and were slowly being introduced into the parks. The Natural Resources Preservation Program eventually funded this project in 1987.

I hired individuals to travel to each of the parks, computers in hand, and scour the libraries, vertical files, local agency files, and any other information sources suggested by the park staff or identified in their surveys in an effort to find items that would be of interest to researchers, managers, and interpreters in the park under study. Project staff entered citation information and associated data along with a few sentences to explain what information was found in the document (particularly important when documents are untitled or contain information not alluded to by the title) and described where the document was held. The project went through several iterations before project managers and park advisors agreed upon the level of detail for each citation. This took anywhere from a few weeks to several months for the work to be completed at a given unit. Using the dBASE database management software, we completed this first round work in 1991.

In 1992, the National Park Service initiated its comprehensive Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Program and published

the *Natural Resources Inventory and Monitoring Guideline (NPS-75)*. At the same time, the National Park Service adopted the Pro-Cite bibliographic software as the servicewide standard for resource bibliographies. As a start, the I&M Program funded a pilot project to convert the existing Pacific Northwest park bibliographies to Pro-Cite, install the software on park computers, and provide training on its use. Now the combined Pacific Northwest 16-park database contains almost 9,000 records.

Pro-Cite proved to be a very suitable medium for park resource databases. It is flexible and able to accommodate the wide variety of information typically found in park files. It is menu driven, relatively easy to use, and meshes well with word-processing software like WordPerfect.

Beginning in 1994, the I&M Program, under the direction of its 10-year strategic plan, began to provide funding to selected regional offices for completing natural resource bibliography projects in their selected parks. These projects are to use the format and specifications developed by the Pacific Northwest Region. The goal of the 10-year program is to compile a basic set of resource data for the approximately 250 park units that contain significant natural resources.

Inventory and Monitoring Program staff selected three regions for funding in 1994: Alaska, Rocky Mountain, and Southwest. Projects in several parks in all of these regions have been completed or are now underway. The Alaska Interagency Resource Library is directing the Alaska Region project, the Center for Colorado Plateau Studies at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and the Natural Resource Ecology Lab at Colorado State University in Fort Collins are codirecting the Rocky Mountain Region project, and the CPSU at the University of Idaho is directing the Southwest Region project. Funding for all the remaining regions will begin in 1995.

The ultimate goal of the project is to make park-specific information accessible to those who need it. Resource managers and researchers will be able to sit down at a computer and quickly pull up a list of books, maps, journal articles, unpublished reports, and even memos related to a given subject along with a brief description of each document and where that document can be found. Equally as important, the bibliographic database provides a framework for keeping park resource information organized and up-to-date obviating the need for projects like this in the future. The program has been integrally tied to the efforts of—and relied upon the support of—park-, regional-, and Washington-based NPS librarians, and it will rely on their expertise to assure that the databases are maintained in the future.

We have been excited to see the original goals set for the Pacific Northwest Region (idealistic at the outset) become, after more than a decade, a reality in a growing number of parks. Plans are now underway at the University of Idaho CPSU to convert the Pacific Northwest, Southwest Region databases, and possibly others to CD-ROM format. One day, in the not so distant future, if all goes as planned, a servicewide resource bibliography should be available on CD-Rom. Actions are also underway to convert other NPS databases, such as the cultural resource bibliography, to Pro-Cite, making them compatible with the natural resource bibliography.

For further information on this program, contact Larry Pointer, the NPS natural resource bibliography coordinator, at (303) 225-3541.



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