
Long MARC Fields, Limits and Splitting

- **Article Type:** Q&A
 - **Product:** Aleph
 - **Product Version:** 20
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Question

What is Aleph's limit on the size of a single field?
How many characters can a single field accommodate?
When Aleph encounters a long field, how this handled?

Answer

Any single tag is limited to 2000 characters.

Aleph will automatically break any longer incoming tags into multiple occurrences.

"Convert MARC Records - Step 2 (file-02)" breaks fields at logical boundaries (subfields or full words) in versions 16 and up. Please see example attached.

There are the following rules: When the text in one field is longer than 2000 Bytes it is split into several fields beginning with \$\$9. The first fields are around 1000 Bytes. E.g. when the field has 2800 bytes, it will be split into 2 fields (the first with 1000, the 2nd with 1800). If the field has 3400 bytes, it will be split into 3 fields (the first with 1000, the 2nd with 1000 and the last with 1400).

Separators are the ' -- ', blanks or full stop. If there is a "word" containing more than 2000 characters like in your example it is cut after 1000 characters. If there are blanks or full stops or ' -- ' in it, the program looks for this to cut the fields.

Additional Information

* When downloading records to the Aleph from OCLC via the oclc_server, Aleph breaks long tags at a fixed position, rather than breaking on a word or subfield boundary. The result is that a broken word displays as two strings, with a space between (for example, "subsurface" becomes "subsu rface").

* Do not use 2709 OCLC conversion (Catalog module > Records tab > Import Records > Convert Records > Convert Procedure drop-down) for records with fields longer than 2000 bytes because this routine does not handle long fields correctly.

* The preferred conversion routine is pc_tab_cat_conv. This is a REMOTE method and information about it is found in System Librarians Guide > Cataloging > Importing Records.

* If there is a convert procedure in the Cataloging module Convert Records with the name "MARC", this is probably already set up to use pc_tab_cat_conv.

Attachment

[Attached file](#)

Category: Cataloging (500)

Subject: Importing records (500)

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