A Survey of the Extent and Utilization of Cataloging Tools and Resources within Technical Services in the North Texas Public Libraries

Submitted by
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Introduction

Many aspects of current cataloging trends and practices in our nation’s public libraries have been the subject of numerous studies over the last several decades. The increase in both traditional and non-traditional information materials, as well as resources unleashed by the Internet and the World Wide Web, have placed an enormous responsibility on those in libraries who control organization and access to these materials, especially within the parameters of current library catalog systems. Outsourcing and cooperative cataloging are invaluable to the growth and maintenance of these catalogs, but the involvement of so many in this process has raised questions as to the overall quality and accuracy of the bibliographic records themselves. Furthermore, there seems to be a disturbing trend of complacency when it comes to the assumption that the records gained from these practices are viable and error-free (see Bade, 2002). The quality control of all bibliographic records, whether outsourced or original, falls under the responsibility of the catalogers who provide bibliographic control for one or more libraries. This responsibility in turn greatly depends on the catalogers’ knowledge of and expertise with the cataloging tools and resources available to them. The purpose of this study is to describe the extent and utilization of cataloging tools and resources within technical service departments. The 73 public libraries in the North Texas Regional Library System (NTRLS) will serve as the initial sample for development of this description.

Statement of the Problem

Cataloging resources and tools are broadly defined as any device or document (print-based or electronic) that assists in the creation of an original bibliographic record or in the verification of bibliographic information in existing records. This includes input rules, metadata formats and standards, cataloging software and textbooks, continuing education programs/workshops, cataloger’s web-based “toolkits,” etc.

The current relationship between cataloging education and cataloging practice has been discussed at great length in the LIS arena, with a strong focus on the debate about the knowledge and skills expected of new professional catalogers (i.e., how much of both theory and practice is learned in the classroom versus how much training is needed upon entering a new cataloging position). In addition,
the issue of paraprofessional/non-MLS cataloging responsibilities has had a roughly equal share of the
debate, especially as it pertains to the question of who is actually performing the cataloging in U.S.
libraries. (See list of Additional References.)

The quality of bibliographic control is also a point of much contention, specifically within libraries
that outsource most or all of their catalog records or that participate in cooperative cataloging programs.
However, this study will not address the question of where the records originate or the amount and quality
of training and education possessed by those who download, enhance, distribute, or create these
records. These issues are well-documented and are important enough to drive those who provide the
education, practice, and polices of present-day cataloging to work toward ensuring efficient and
responsible maintenance of our society’s store of public knowledge.

The reality of the cataloging process where cataloging tools and resources are concerned must
be observed. An architect can design a house with pen and paper, but a carpenter cannot be expected to
build it without tools or materials. If we call upon libraries to “house” recorded human knowledge, then
how strong are those who build the houses and what materials and tools do they use? This may be an
overly simplistic analogy, but the questions remain fundamentally the same. How does one approach
measuring and characterizing this important step in the creation of the bibliographic artifacts that
comprise library catalogs? What types of tools and resources be expected in a typical cataloging
department? What standards are the tools measured them against, if these standards exist? If standards
do not exist, how should they be developed and put into place?

This study will attempt to put into motion processes to address these important broader issues by
instigating a study within the local cataloging environment of the North Texas Public Libraries. The
researchers will address the following questions:

- How comprehensive are the cataloging resources and tools found within the technical service
departments?
- What is the level of utilization of these tools and resources by staff, both professional and
  paraprofessional?
- How are currency and reliability of the tools and resources determined?
- How often are staff trained or updated in the use of these tools and resources?
What factors, such as budgetary and staff limitations, affect the availability of these tools and resources to the libraries?

**Background of the Study**

The idea for this study arose from the desire to understand the realities of the everyday operations of a cataloging department and how those realities intersect with the state of cataloging practice and education as it is reported in the library and information science literature. It comes also from an educator’s need to prepare new catalogers for real-time cataloging, but who is continually frustrated when faced with the inability to send both local and distance students to their own local libraries to observe or even borrow cataloging tools. With the demand of web-based cataloging courses on the rise, the ability to supplement course materials with hands-on experiences is critical to the success of both the student and instructor.

As mentioned above, the issues surrounding cataloging in all types of libraries has been the subject of countless articles in the library and information science arena. However, an extensive review of publications from a variety of library and information science publications, in particular publications centered on bibliographic control and technical services, has not revealed a study such as the one proposed here, that is, one that focuses solely on the extent and utilization of tools and resources in a technical service department (core sources of this review have been Weiss & Cartens, 2001; and Kim, 2003).

There have been surveys that hint at these categories, such as the study commissioned by OCLC to assess “interest and needs for education and training of library workers and how widely these needs vary worldwide” (Wilkie & Strouse, 2003). Data were collected using categories such as information sources or tools, library standards or practices, professional publications or professional associations, etc. These are vague categories, at best, and do not shed much light on the types of tools and resources about which librarians worldwide would like to attain more skills and knowledge.

The Cataloging Policy and Support Office at the Library of Congress has a list of cataloging tools and documentation but there is no indication of how comprehensive the list is, nor does the list categorize tools via the two fundamental areas of subject cataloging and descriptive cataloging. The LC Cataloging
Distribution Service offers a comprehensive resource for cataloging tools, but again, gives no real indication of how many or which tools a typical library should acquire. The ALA’s Association of Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) offers a variety of discussion groups and publications on issues surrounding library cataloging practice and education, but does not specifically address what tools and resources should be directly accessible to, or in direct possession of, a cataloger.

Intner and Hill have edited several valuable books on cataloging education and the profession as a whole (see Intner & Hill, 1989; Intner & Hill, 1991; Hill, 2002) in which information organization experts have offered opinions and studies on how to keep professionals from lowering their standards or becoming overwhelmed by the complexity of information objects, standards and metadata schemes, etc. In particular, Joudrey (2002) offers a survey of bibliographic courses in 48 library schools in which he breaks down the areas of bibliographic control (e.g., subject analysis, cataloging technology) and talks of the responsibilities, skills, qualities, and knowledge needed by catalogers.

Bade (2002) perhaps sums it up best in his study of misrepresentation in shared library catalogs: “catalogers are ultimately responsible for the keystrokes destined for cyberspace, and the library administration is responsible for finding and hiring the catalogers for the responsibilities they shoulder and for the resources they use.”

Study Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to describe the utilization of tools and resources in the 73 public libraries in the North Texas region with the idea of using the results as a catalyst for a wider national study of cataloging departments/technical services in all types of libraries. Specifically, we intend to do the following:

- Determine the categories of tools and resources so as to ensure the survey is comprehensive and addresses every possible aspect of resource utilization.
- Identify any common in-house practices in the cataloging departments that may impact acquisition and utilization of tools and resources.
- Identify the degree of professional and paraprofessional use of the tools and resources.
• Identify the current state of outsourcing of bibliographic records and the effect of outsourcing on in-house utilization of these tools.

• Identify any bibliographic vendor benchmarks or standards that identify appropriate tools and resources for a typical cataloging department.

**Deliverables, Significance, and Benefits of the Study**

This study will result in several deliverables that we feel will have significant impact on the field of library and information science, in particular the area of bibliographic control. First, this investigation into public libraries in the North Texas region has the potential to serve as the basis of a much larger national survey of libraries of all types. A survey of the literature so far has not revealed any substantial investigation of this particular aspect of technical services. Secondly, the results of this regional study will serve—in the absence of any such tool to date—as a necessary benchmark for catalogers responsible for the quality control of library catalogs. In essence, it will lead to the creation of a list of cataloging resources and tools that every technical service department should possess. Such a list would help ensure a level of consistency in library cataloging across the board, especially if disseminated and endorsed by such institutions as OCLC or associations such as ALISE, ALA, or the Library of Congress.

As well, this would be a powerful tool for both cataloging educators and cataloging practitioners in that it could serve as both a source for course curricula in library schools and as a training tool for technical service administrators.

Our findings will hopefully give library technical services departments a push to perform self-evaluation of the resources and tools used by their professional and paraprofessional staff. At the very least this could make aware to all those concerned, especially library administrators and library catalogers, the minimal standards that support the efficiency and effectiveness of our cooperative library catalog systems.

**Research Design and Methodology**

The project will employ both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Technical services managers at each of the 73 libraries listed as members of the North Texas Regional Library System
(NTRLS) will be asked to complete a survey that will provide details of the types of tools and resources employed by the respective technical services departments as well as how those tools and resources are utilized. We expect a high survey response rate, especially with the endorsement and cooperation of a regional library director such as Eva Poole, an immediate past president of the Texas Library Association. See letter from Eva Poole in Appendix 2.

After the surveys are completed and the results analyzed, a random cross-section of 10 to 15 libraries will be selected and follow-up interviews will be conducted. These interviews will allow for a more detailed analysis of tool and resources utilization and clarification of issues revealed by the surveys. Lastly, we will evaluate and verify our results by presenting our findings to a focus group composed of select catalogers and library administrators at the Texas Library Association (TLA) Annual Conference to be held in April 2005 in Austin, Texas. All surveys, interviews, and the focus group will be anonymous.

Brewer and Hunter (1989) write that the use of multiple methods of measurement is "simple, but powerful" because its "fundamental strategy is to attack a research problem with an arsenal of methods that have non-overlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths" (p. 17). Miles and Huberman (1994), speaking of the argument between qualitative and quantitative proponents, believe that "numbers and work are both needed if we are to understand the world" (p. 40).
Project Planning and Management

The project will be managed by the principal investigator, Dr. Shawne Miksa, and will employ two doctoral research assistants, Toby Faber and Barbara Schultz-Jones. The table below details the project timeline over a three-and-a-half month period, the preliminary work plan, and primary responsibilities of the three investigators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Duration (# Days)</th>
<th>Time Period 2005</th>
<th>Investigators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop Survey</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>January 14- February 16</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compose survey questions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14-Jan 24-Jan</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver survey via E-mail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25-Jan 25-Jan</td>
<td>Faber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirmed receipt of surveys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26-Jan 28-Jan</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect &amp; process survey data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31-Jan 4-Feb</td>
<td>Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perform Analysis</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7-Feb 18-Feb</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify 10-15 Libraries for Interviews</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>February 21- March 25</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<td>Write interview procedures</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21-Feb 25-Feb</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct Interviews</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28-Feb 4-Mar</td>
<td>Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyze interview data</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7-Mar 11-Mar</td>
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<td>Develop TLA Focus Group interviews</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7-Mar 25-Mar</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<td>Setup TLA focus groups</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>March 1- April 15</td>
<td>Miksa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify, contact potential participants</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1-Mar 22-Mar</td>
<td>Miksa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct TLA Focus Group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5-Apr 8-Apr</td>
<td>Miksa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11-Apr 15-Apr</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compose final report, submit to OCLC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15-Apr 20-Apr</td>
<td>Miksa, Faber, Schultz-Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissemination of final report</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer 2005</td>
<td>Miksa</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Evaluation of the Study/Measures of Success

The success of this study will be measured by the response and input of the very people who will benefit from its outcomes and deliverables. A select group of library catalogers and library administrators will be presented the findings in one or two focus group sessions to be facilitated at the Texas Library Association (TLA) Annual Conference to be held in April 2005 in Austin, Texas. Dr. Miksa, as a Chair of the Texas Regional Group of Catalogers and Classifiers, will invite all of its members to participate in this activity. This will include catalogers from all over Texas, as well as the North Texas region. (TLA conferences are equivalent in size to annual ALA conferences.)

Another measurement of success will take place through dissemination of our preliminary results to a select group of cataloging educators and cataloging practitioners nationwide. Potential reviewers will
be selected as the final analysis draws near. In addition, we will also seek a response from the North Texas Regional Library System (NTRLS) and the AMIGOS Library Service.

Future Research

This study has the potential to create several avenues of future research. Most importantly, the survey of local libraries will serve as a model of a much larger national survey of technical services departments in academic, public, school, and special libraries. In addition, a study of the cross correlation of cataloging tool and resources standards with library cataloging education and curricula will make a valuable addition to literature of bibliographic control on both a national and international level.

Proposed Budget

Total cost of the study is approximated at $16,698. We are requesting funds in the amount of $14,617.74 from the OCLC/ALISE Library and Information Science Research Grant (LISRG) for the three-and-a-half month project time period. Appendix 1 is a detailed breakdown of the budget. LISRG funds will cover faculty and student personnel project salaries and benefits, as well as travel costs. Travel costs will cover approximately 15 to 20 trips to libraries within the North Texas region.

The School of Library and Information Sciences and the University of North Texas will support institutional cost sharing by providing $2,080 to cover equipment, supplies, and communication. See letter from Dean Samantha Hastings in Appendix 2. The Texas Center for Digital Knowledge (TxCDK) will provide support in the form of facilities and administrative services. See letter from Interim Director Dr. William Moen in Appendix 2.

Project Personnel and Qualifications

Shawne D. Miksa is an Assistant Professor at the School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of North Texas. She earned her Ph.D. in August 2002 from the School of Information, Florida State University. She has taught extensively in the areas of Information Organization, Cataloging and Classification, and Subject Analysis. She has also worked in academic libraries at the University of Texas at Austin, University of Central Florida, and Florida State University, as well serving as a
Cataloging Consultant for the Florida State Supreme Court Library. She is 2004-2005 Chair of the Texas Regional Group of Catalogers and Classifiers (TRGCC), a Texas Library Association (TLA) round table, as well as the 2004 Chair of the History and Foundations of Information Science, a special interest group within the American Society of Information Science and Technology (ASIST). She is also a member of the ALA’s Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) and Library and Information Technology Association (LITA). Her research interests include the study and evaluation of current library cataloging practices, cataloging education, classification theory, information retrieval, and bibliometrics.

**Toby Faber** is a doctoral student in the University of North Texas Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Information Science. He received his Master of Science degree from the School of Library and Information Sciences in August 2004. He serves as a Teaching Assistant to Dr. Shawne Miksa and works as a Graduate Library Assistant in the University of North Texas Science and Technology Library. Additionally, he is presently serving a two-year term as a board member for the Lewisville Texas Public Library. He spent over twenty-five years in the corporate environment and has expertise in project management, process improvement, change management, operations leadership, systems integration, and ROI maximization. His research interests include information retrieval and current library cataloging and classification theory and practices.

**Barbara Schultz-Jones** is a doctoral student in the University of North Texas Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Information Science. She received her Master of Science degree from the School of Library and Information Sciences in December 2002. She currently works as a Graduate Library Assistant in the University of North Texas Science and Technology Library and as a Teaching Assistant to Dr. Carol Simpson and Dr. Barbara Stein Martin. In May of 2004, she taught the University of North Texas Integrated Library System Implementation course in Rawai, Phuket, Thailand. She previously worked as a research assistant for the Z39.50 Implementation Component of the Library of Texas (ZLOT) Project, a program of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC). Her background includes 20 years of corporate experience with expertise in project management, change management, process improvement, customer services, leadership development, training programs, and organizational development. Her research interests include group process, information retrieval, and current library cataloging and classification theory and practices.
References

Bade, D. (2002). The Creation and persistence of misinformation in shared library catalogs: language and subject knowledge in a technological era. (Occasional paper no. 211.) Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


Additional Resources


