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An Essay on Cataloging

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Introduction

The imminent arrival of *Resource Description and Access (RDA*), the proposed successor to *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR)*, makes now an opportune time to clarify a profound misunderstanding regarding the objective of cataloging. The objective has been widely misunderstood to be about the production of bibliographic records, or about the production of bibliographic records and their supporting authority records, or about the production of *perfect* bibliographic and authority records. But it's not. Viewing the creation of bibliographic and authority records as the objective is an error and has led to mistaken actions. (Note: for the remainder of this essay I will refer to bibliographic records, or just records, intending that to include supporting authority records, etc.) My hope in this essay is to offer a more accurate picture of the objective of cataloging, working from Cutter's early statement, which I will use as a reference point in re-considering some misperceptions and actions being taken in the profession of cataloging and librarianship at large.

It is incorrect to view cataloging's objective as the production of bibliographic records. Doing so has led to mistaken perceptions and actions; most importantly the perception that cataloging is costly and that action must be taken to reduce costs, most significantly by eliminating some of the content required for standard bibliographic records. Cataloging's objective is to provide a service to our patrons. While this has been noted (Boissannas, 2001, CannCasciato, 2003), it must be clarified and the cost of misperception understood. The catalog is a surrogate service, or an indirect service in the sense that the service is delivered to the patron by the catalog system and not by a person (generally). David Bade might refer to it as an indirect communication between the cataloger and the patron (Bade, 2008, p. 129). The fact that cataloging's objective is a service is made evident in the terms Cutter (1904) used to describe the "objects" of the catalog: ". . . *To enable a person to find . . . To show what the library has . . . To assist in the choice . . .* " Conceptually, then, Cutter's objects can be combined and considered as constituting a single objective, which is not mere bibliographic record creation, but that of enabling, showing, and assisting a patron to locate materials. When we study transaction logs (Graham, 2004; Moulaison, 2008), we are studying elements of surrogate reference interviews that have taken place between our patrons and the catalog. Cataloging's objective is to provide a surrogate for the reference interview.

Stemming from the misperception of cataloging is the error that the cost of cataloging is too high to support. A number of studies have focused on improving the efficiency of record creation and other production issues in cataloging: Workflows have been examined and streamlined; new technologies and cooperative efforts adapted to and incorporated into different practices; and training methods have been studied and changed (Mandel and Herschman. 1983; Wade and Williamson, 1998; CannCasciato, 1993; DeZelar-Tiedman, Genereux, and Hearn, 2006; Wiggins, 2007; Copeland and Freeborn, 2010). Yet cataloging is considered too costly, still.

Cost studies of cataloging are generally based on the single transaction model and the transaction being measured is that of record creation or cost per title (Kochen and Segur, 1970; Kent, 1979; Leung, 1987; Mandel, 1988; Harris, 1989; Deriez and Giappiconi, 1994; Schafer, 2009). Cost is based in various ways on a combination of the personnel costs and the support costs that are required to create a bibliographic record to represent one title in the catalog. The ALCTS guide to cost analysis mentions many sensible ways to estimate per record creation costs, but not service costs (ALCTS Technical Services Costs Committee, 1991). To accept the perception of per record cost means that the record is seen as the objective of cataloging, so its cost of production is seen as the cost of cataloging. This is not how the cost should be measured, however, because it neglects the purpose of cataloging, -- that is, service, -- and thus measures the wrong transaction. The transaction of importance is the service interactions with the patron.

Bibliographic records are intellectual assets produced to support the service provided by means of the catalog. They are possibly the only intellectual assets of such enduring value produced in librarianship. OCLC's draft "WorldCat Rights and Responsibilities for the OCLC Cooperative," with its focus on controlling distribution of bibliographic data, demonstrates this very clearly (OCLC, 2010). Cataloging's objective is to answer patrons' questions about what information resources we make available. It is achieved by means of the creation of records that have resided in the library catalog, and in bibliographic utilities, for decades. The single transaction cost or record production is a convenient measure of an aspect of cataloging work, but stopping there ignores the important characteristic that bibliographic records are enduring intellectual properties that remains viable for decades. Patrons' interactions with the catalog are repeated by the thousands with no erosion of data integrity. Bibliographic data can be, and even now are being, exported to different environments with no loss or harm to the source material. If cataloging's cost is to be estimated based on transactions, then the transactions in question are the searches done by patrons, - - that's the point at which the service of cataloging is delivered. The cost of cataloging must be considered in light of the enduring service provided by catalogs with their infrastructure of records. The enduring aspect of the intellectual asset is fundamental to understating cataloging's cost and cataloging's value. As a demonstration of cataloging's perception in the profession, consider recent changes at the Library of Congress.

Beacher Wiggins, Director for Acquisitions & Bibliographic Control at the Library of Congress (LC), as recently as July 2007, enumerated considerable changes and improvements in output for the Library of Congress, stating that in fiscal year 1991 LC had a cataloging staff of approximately 750 and cataloged 240,000 volumes; in 2006, LC's staffing in cataloging was just above 400 and output was 350,000 volumes cataloged, an increase of over 100,000. That is, at LC, the volumes per staff per year ratio went from 320 to 875; a 270% increase in volumes per staff per year. He concluded, "I view these as impressive numbers, but still we must do more," (Wiggins, 2007). One might wonder why.

The view of cataloging within the profession has reached such a low that in 2006 the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services Cataloging & Classification Section Executive Committee issued a document, "*Value of Cataloging Librarians.*" The purpose was "to provide catalogers and cataloging managers a tool for describing the critical importance of cataloging librarians" (Association for Library Collections & Technical Services Cataloging & Classification Section Executive Committee, 2007). It is instructive that there appears to be no similar existing statement for other specializations in librarianship.

Mr. Wiggins' perception of not enough having been done is not isolated. Cataloging is still seen popularly as resistant to change, despite all the evidence to the contrary: revisions to standards to meet new publishing methods; implementations of new technologies for efficiencies; creation of new technologies for better service (e.g.: next-gen catalogs); more openness and participation in cooperative efforts to leverage expertise and time. Yet, in an article from November 2009, the opinion of a head librarian, Jay Schafer, was quoted as, "Libraries have been slow to change their cataloging practices," (Kniffel, 2009). A possible contributor to such an unfounded view is the negative impact of the incorrect perception that cataloging is about the pursuit of perfection. Again from that same 2009 article, "It has not been necessary for a very long time for every library to catalog every book . . . 'The biggest question we have to ask ourselves,' Schafer said, is 'What's good enough?' Is a nearly perfect catalog record worth the cost of achieving that goal?' Or, as a different speaker put it, (back to the 2007 meeting at which Wiggins spoke) "At the root of these processes are two powerful beliefs. One: the cult of perfection. And two: cataloging is about how print books are arranged on the shelf," (Lugg, 2007). The anecdotal basis of such statements bears investigation in a little detail as it shows a profound error in identifying the source of the problem.

Schafer's and Lugg's statements about cataloging's pursuit of, or cult of, perfection are important in that they are wrong. David Bade laid that to rest in 2008. (Of special note is Bade's discussion of quality rather than of perfection.) Even without Bade's article, Lugg's evidence in 2007 was insufficient and misapplied. In a brief description of the issue, Lugg wrote, "is there in fact any record (with rare exceptions) that is worth a full day of a professional cataloger's time—a figure we have heard more than once. Can libraries really afford this level of attention to detail?" There are no current cataloging requirements requiring such time requirements and it is notable that he cites none. There might be some items that do require a large amount of time to catalog, the "rare exceptions" indicated by Lugg, but as Wiggins' example concretely demonstrated, increased productivity, doing more with fewer personnel, is a more consistent trend in the practice of cataloging. The specter Lugg raises of the perfectionist, hand-wringing, cataloger agonizing over the creation of one perfect record per day is just that: a specter. His further statement regarding minimal productivity, that it is "a figure we have heard more than once," is little more than painting a horror story across all of cataloging and a mis-assignment of responsibility. If there are isolated catalogers needlessly spending all day to create one record, then it's not a cataloging problem: it's a management problem. Not management in the sense of allocation of resources, but management in the sense that mediocre supervisors or directors are allowing mediocre productivity. To compound their problem, they are asking the profession as a whole to change as a means of helping them manage more effectively and to do so by undercutting cataloging's objective. The profession of cataloging doesn't merit disparagement because of isolated and largely anecdotal examples of a director's poor management skills, especially not at a national level conference on the future of bibliographic control.

The misperception of cataloging as the costly pursuit of perfect records trivializes the process and the objective and the outcome. This view characterizes the actions taken by catalogers as "too much hand wringing and worrying about each record: this is extreme and wasteful." Overall, there is a view that cataloging needs to be "simpler, faster, and less expensive" and could be achieved by, among other actions, "[simplifying] cataloging practice to a set of basic elements; eliminate LCSH" (Calhoun, 2006, p. 33, 33, and 14, respectively).

Missed in this future environment is that the iterative approach for enhancing cataloging records is being endorsed as a future practice (with *RDA* and an envisioned practice of downstream capture of bibliographic data from various sources). The value of an iterative approach to enhancing records is being demonstrated in some studies (Ho, 2008; Copeland and Freeborn 2010; Turner, 2010), which support the earlier cited studies of the effectiveness of full records as the foundation for achieving the objective of the catalog. The concurrent moves to consolidate technical services and subsequently eliminate local changes, enhancements, and especially staff who would be able to do so (Kniffel, 2009), however, is at odds with the iterative approach. It also is at odds with common sense, in which the local enhancement can be viewed as the added value component that individuals with varying skills can bring to the iterative process. A language or subject specialist can enhance a record that served in many respects (inventory control and circulation needs, for example) so that it serves additional patron needs based on a more accurate reflection of content.

The near completion of the revamped *AACR2* that is lumbering into view, *Resource Description and Access*, is hoped to enable enhanced records by facilitating the sharing of data from different sources outside the traditional library sphere. Other actions at odds with each other are the movement in libraries to launch projects to create institutional repositories and provide more access to specialized or unique collections, while cataloging or bibliographic record production is being downplayed. Yet, records provide intellectual access to specialized materials (Bair and Carlson, 2008) as they do to more traditional but under-represented materials (Mugridge and Edmunds, 2008). The laudable interest in providing access to unique collections and resources should not be limited to unique archival or limited edition special collection materials. To do so would overlook the broad category of materials that exist on library shelves in the form of items held by a small number of organizations. They were not published as limited editions, but there are now few holdings available for patrons. Frequently, these resources are also under-cataloged due to past standards. Enhancing such records through better description and subject analyses will bring them to light for discovery by patrons. To allow them to linger as under-cataloged information resources (and to suggest systematic changes in the profession that will add more resources to that category) is to undercut discovery and use. It's as if we are trying to re-create the situation in scientific taxonomy, where duplicate work is performed by scholars since access to good information about already conducted research is not readily available (Bryson, 2004).

The perception of the costly tweaking of bibliographic data is an unfounded concern for two reasons. First, in any database, accuracy is required to facilitate the retrieval and exchange of information; it's not optional. Secondly, the cost perception for the labor involved is, if not flawed, at least troubling. Modest edits to records, those that could be considered as "tweaks", require very little time. (I'm categorizing tweaking actions as simple punctuation and formatting changes.) For a profession to attempt to regulate them is, in action, an attempt to micromanage perhaps 20 second work intervals, which is the time required to perfunctorily tweak a record. For a staff person earning $50,000 per year, 20 seconds of time equals a cost of just over $.13 in staff time. Catalogers are accused of handwringing about trivial issues? Should a *profession* be doing so?

As to the need to review and enhance records, it exists because our knowledge base changes in a societal context and well as a scholarly one. That is, the intellectual character of the resources we provide access to changes, it grows and expands, over time. Far from a cost that should be avoided, the creation or revision of name and subject headings should be *required* of all catalogers. It's essential if we are to meet our objective, because doing so reflects the expansion of scholarship in the resources we collect and those resources must be tied into the existing scholarly record in a timely manner. Two concrete examples: 1) The heading *Nazi propaganda* was created in 1995, yet works regarding that subject were published four decades earlier; the legacy from the delay is that many records for works on that topic still lack that subject heading and are thus less available for discovery: 2) There are published works regarding the English word *Nigger,* yet no subject heading exists (Reid, 2008). Scholarship changes, boundaries are pushed, and access must be provided.

An Australian survey suggests that doctoral researchers account for some 65% of research output overall (Siddle, 1997). Dissertations and theses are the works that carry the subject of that research forward to the scholarly community, often for the first time. We know that patrons want additional subject access (Calhoun, 2009) and that they are assisted by it. Authors have noted the need to facilitate the longevity of catalog records while noting that some content will necessarily need revision at some point, regarding subject access terminology specifically (Osborn, 1941, p. 399; Gregor and Mandel, 1991; CannCasciato 1999-2000). Without the professional systematic support of the iterative process, not only will some content become, eventually, out of date, but new content will be lost. Lastly, as David Bade has demonstrated, the loss of expertise among a lessening number of catalog practitioners leads to inadequate and meaningless records (Bade, 2007). Records must be created and updated by capable catalogers when they can be. Such enhancements, whether by hand or in an automated fashion are required to support the service the catalog provides.

The cataloger's purpose is to create an answer to patrons' questions about what information resources we have that will help them. The description, the number of access points, and the various access fields created combine to facilitate the possibility of a successful interview. Keyword access and structured subject heading access are not redundancies; they are access and guidance mechanisms for students who approach their possible topic from various directions, some articulate and some ambiguous. References from various spellings of names, variations in terminology, or different languages provide guidance to students and faculty. The inclusion of tables of content information and unbiased summaries can enrich searching potentials and interview strategies for the students and faculty. The availability of these varieties of approach are supportive of success, of discovery, in much the same way that having multiple directional signs for finding a building or navigating through the streets, so that those who approach the destination from different directions and still arrive at the appropriate place.

When the objective of cataloging is misunderstood and cataloging is viewed incorrectly as too expensive, we find moves in the profession to reduce costs. This is a sensible reaction; however such changes, when warranted must be taken in reference to other aspects of the profession, not as isolated actions. An unfortunate consequence of some changes is that they not only undermine our objective, as already discussed, but they also inadvertently undermine our ethics. The "*Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*," (*ALA Code*) Principle I states that ". . . We provide the highest level of service . . . and accurate . . . responses to all requests. . . ." (American Library Association, 2008). To provide the highest level of service, we need to re-examine the profession's adoption of core or base records. It takes substantial cynicism to say that by first lowering a standard, we now meet the ethical principle for highest level of service. It also takes remarkable ethical flexibility to accept that less-than-full records (however named) fulfill the accuracy requirement so long as they lack typographical errors: an error of omission is an inaccuracy and needs to be recognized as such. As if to emphasize the wrong-headedness of changes in practice, studies show that full and robust bibliographic records enhance access and use and that keyword and controlled vocabularies are complimentary, not redundancies (Lee-Smeltzer and Hackleman, 1995; Sapon-White and Hansbrough, 1998; Gross and Taylor, 2005; Bair and Carlson, 2008). Even Gregor and Mandel (1991), whose article was titled "Cataloging must change!" supported the ongoing use of controlled vocabularies in subject analyses.

Cataloging's objective, to provide a surrogate for the reference interview, meshes well with the ethical principles stated by ALA. Yet there remains little discussion of our professional actions in relation to our professional ethics. As of now, there is not a specific set of ethical principles for cataloging. There have been some attempts in this area. Bair proposed a code of ethics for cataloging based upon the *ALA Code* and expanding upon it. Her proposed elements, requiring that "[catalogers] are honest and truthful in the representation of resources in regards to [their] subject area … [and are] unbiased [in the] application of cataloging rules, standards, classifications …" retain the spirit of the *ALA Code*. She placed a strong emphasis on the quality of the work, suggesting that nonuse of subject headings, for example, would be an ethical violation. She also required accurate, full-level records as an ethical principle (Bair, 2005, Principles 3 and 7).

Bierbaum suggested some general principles for the content of a code specific to technical services, including the ethical imperative of supporting quality and not harming the library's clientele (Bierbaum, 1994, p. 14, element 4.) Ferris emphasized ethics and integrity; reviewing various codes of ethics for information professionals she noted "professional neutrality" has been identified as a core value amongst librarians (Ferris, 2008). She then identifies, as has CannCasciato (1999), that for catalogers, a professional priority is that the catalog be "objective and reliable." Walmart provides much more guidance than does ALA regarding ethics. From the main page of their website they link to a 34 page "*Statement of ethics*" which includes brief vignettes on the application of the ethics principles. It also provides a concise definition of integrity: "Integrity can be described as making your beliefs and your actions line up" (Walmart, 2008, p. 27, quoting John C. Maxwell, "author and leadership expert").

Even apparently innocuous enhancements to cataloging processes and methods should be discussed in reference to ethical principles. Some examples: part of *ALA Code* Principle I requires unbiased information; Principle IV calls for respect for intellectual property; and Principle VI excludes the advancement of private interests. What are we to make then of our moves towards including *unedited* publisher summary data, user contributed subject analysis (without review, training, or remuneration) and actions such as linking back to Amazon to increase their sales for our use book jacket images? The reason behind the interest in using these enhancements is apparent and, in some ways, supports the aims of the catalog. Their implementation, though, must not go unexamined.

Publisher blurbs, generally presented as summary notes, routinely contain somewhat extravagant language, e.g.:

- *Details the often incomplete, incoherent, and ineffectual U.S. energy policy . . .*
- *Sadly, today we're living in a time when dissent is equated with giving aid to terrorists . . .*
- *Libertarian author Woods sets the record straight with a provocative look at the hidden truths about our nation's history-- the ones that have been buried because they're too politically incorrect to discuss . . .*
- *[Demonstrates] how the manipulation of government and public opinion with fake intelligence and threat inflation . . .*

Importantly, for our patrons, these advertisements provide nothing additional not already available by way of the titles, subject headings, and tables of contents (that is, those tables of content that are actually descriptive). Tables of contents themselves are a beneficial enrichment (Calhoun, 2009; Faiks, Radermacher, and Sheehan 2007) that harmonizes with our ethical principles. Distinct from the unedited summaries just cited, they are descriptive information from the work being cataloged and as such reflect that work and that author, not the commercial bias of a publisher's sales pitch.

User-provided content has the appearance of being an engagement with our patrons. While also a popular addition for many web sites, the solicitation and inclusion of content provided by patrons should be re-examined in light of ethical Principle IV, which calls for respecting intellectual property rights (not to mention Principle III, "We protect each library user's right to privacy . . ." that is, it requires us to *proactively* protect our users). How does the solicitation of free intellectual contributions demonstrate a professional respect for the intellectual property of the contributing patron? This is really a form of volunteerism in libraries, but we are building a professional expectation of, and a reliance on, user-provided content that we should reconsider. There is some analogue with the current model of scholarly publishing, where the scholarly work of writing an article is then given to a for-profit publisher (Rausing, 2010) and with the web environment, which solicits free labor under the rubric of social networking or Web 2.0. The shift to requiring patrons (or customers in the business environment) to do part of the labor required for their own service is fairly widespread at this point (Truss, 2005). Yet neither the analogue to scholarly work nor the prevalence of soliciting free labor gives the action ethical footing in librarianship and cataloging. The lukewarm response of users to providing such data perhaps mitigates this issue (Calhoun, 2009, p. 18), but it remains actively promoted for next-generation catalogs and library websites and should be evaluated in our professional context.

Lastly, we should weigh the opportunity to link freely with a commercial site such as Amazon, for use of their supply of book-jacket images, for example, with regard to Principle VI. Such an action could seem effective, efficient, professionally endorsed and correct (Calhoun, 2009, p. 53). However, Amazon's allowance of such linkage is based on the express goal of "driving sales of products and services on the Amazon site" (Amazon, 2009). Consider such an action in light of *ALA Code*, Principle VI which excludes the advancement of private interests. At a state run institution, there are likely state ethics provisions that would also disallow such a practice.

Adaptations to emerging changes in our social and scholarly environments are essential, but, as in the just mentioned cases, can be misdirected. They must be evaluated in the context of our professional objective and also our professional responsibilities and ethics. Since the objective of the catalog is to be a surrogate for the reference interview, since its aim is to answer patrons' questions, to help them find resources, show them the collection, and assist them in selection, then why do we think we're in competition with Google?

Article statements abound regarding this new competitive age: statements such as "In the age of Google, when digital natives expect everything . . ." (Mugridge and Edmunds, 2008) or a title such as "*Research Authority in the Age of Google: Equilibrium Sought*" (Regalado, 2007) are not uncommon. There is general acceptance the phrase "Google age" has meaning regarding our young patrons, that they are somehow different from past ones – as noted by the term digital natives – regardless of whether such a term has any substantive value (Brabazon, 2009). User studies can demonstrate that many of our students begin their research with a web search engine, Google becoming the generic term and likely most popular of the engines:

"The existing local catalog's market position has eroded to the point where there is real concern for its ability to weather the competition for information seekers' attention." (Calhoun, 2006, p. 10)

"End users want to be able to do a simple Google-like search and get results that exactly match what they expect to find . . " and *" As one end-user survey respondent requested, "Make it as easy as a Google Book Search . . ." (Calhoun, 2009, p. 12 and p.14 respectively).*

Strong statements, yes, but patrons don't stop at Google (Mann, 2005). We know they don't because they download hundreds of thousands of articles from licensed full-text databases. We know they don't because they perform thousands of searches in the catalog. We know this will continue to be the case because scholarly publishers will not allow their materials to be freely distributed for quite some time (Rausing, 2010). Patrons do more than use Google and, in fact, value libraries and librarians (Williams, 2007). Libraries are not stand-alone agencies. Catalogs serve patrons and they function within a library's mission of serving its parent organization, whether that parent organization is a university, or a high school, or a public government at some level. There's nothing in our organizational structures to support our notion of being Google competitors. Unfortunately, by accepting the idea that we are in competition with Google, or the web at large, we've chosen a losing battle. We have restrictions on our activities precisely because of our organization setting, being non-profit, for example that guarantees we cannot compete.

As noted by Thomas Mann, "It is not appropriate, to begin with, to force research libraries into a business model because it does serious damage to their mission" (Mann, 2006, p.3). Businesses, as he notes, are profit driven. Libraries are not businesses in that sense. We have a mission and a group that we serve. As Mann aptly states, "the niche audience to be served by research libraries . . . is that of *scholars* . . ." (p. 7, emphasis in the original). Yet some suggest that we are a business and that we must, when it comes to cataloging, cut costs, lessen content, and abandon the status quo, candidly advocating that " 'Good enough' is just fine for today's users," (Eden, 2008). As others stated in response to Eden's article, libraries are not businesses, being efficient is certainly reasonable, and our mission must be referenced when evaluating our value (Elrod, Girshick, and Brush, 2008). To accept the "good enough" rallying cry relegates patrons of today and the future to a lesser status than previous generations, a slight that, as Gorman wrote, might not be noticed for years (Gorman, Sept. 15, 1995, p. 33). At the same time, though, the complexity of the scholarly publishing environment suggests we should provide more assistance. Our response to this current storm of information production should not be less assistance for our patrons. "Good enough" is a concept that might reflect patron perceptions, as in they find using a web search engine a good enough starting point, but we must remember they do not stop with web search engines. Nor should we allow them to.

Our participation in the education, or just the assistance, of our patrons requires that they become information literate and understand the differences between Google, other web search engines, library catalogs, and citation databases with or without full-text access. I would argue that in academe we *must* require our patrons to understand and use different avenues for the conduct of research. Scholarship is not easy. Since scholarly work now takes patrons into a networked environment including splogs, spoofing, cybersquatting, typosquatting, spam, keyloggers, viruses, and identity theft, then we are compelled to educate them on those issues, let alone critical thinking, copyright, and plagiarism. While they might want scholarly research to be "as easy as Google," they might not be able to have it, perhaps because use of just Google is not, in fact, all there is to the scholarly research process (Mann, 2009).

Some disagree with an information literacy obligation, suggesting a better process would instead be a focus on the systems used - - improvements will make searching easier (Wilder, 2005). The suggestion of a technological solution - - an unassailable suggestion always embraced in these times - - doesn't remove the fact that information literacy is about more than searching and finding. As Williams succinctly put it while referring to information literacy educational goals, "The perennial challenge of information literacy has not been teaching students to navigate . . . but in persuading them not to stick to the shallows…" (Williams, 2007, p. 8).

Assisting students to get beyond the shallows is a means of changing the use pattern, the 80-20 distribution. A catalog should assist students to materials that they would not have thought of consulting, either by content, location, or format (e.g. government publications, materials in microformat, archival resources). Good records are a means of spreading the circulation of materials over a broader base of materials and a means of bringing more information into context for our patrons' consideration, which is a patron expectation (Calhoun, 2009). A scarcity of bibliographic information, as with a scarcity of any resource, serves fewer people, meets fewer needs, and has less potential for future development. A flashy interface ultimately matters little, if all we are presenting through that glitz is mediocre content.

RDA is a revision of cataloging practice that is meant to address the current publishing environment (the various resources we now find) as well as facilitate the sharing of the bibliographic records we create. Some consider *RDA* the wrong solution to the wrong problem, (Elrod, 2010), a solution in search of a problem, or more strongly, a debacle (Gorman 2010; Gorman, 2007, respectively). Regardless, it is symptomatic of some of the actions taking place in the cataloging profession to adapt to the evolving information universe. While many of the changes in *RDA* are positive, as are those elsewhere in the profession - - enriched records and enhanced display groupings provided by catalog interface software - - a number of changes are not: the other professional moves that would result in the provision of meager records or that otherwise undercut our ethics and our mission. In such an environment, we must regroup our collective decision making and discussion, focusing not on the new for its own sake. As Bierbaum suggested, ". . . the professional will neither resist change nor embrace it for the sake of change . . . " (her element 3). We should examine our proposed changes as an adaptation that must be conducted in an ethical and professional manner and such changes should *serve* our ethical and professional aims. If we are to abandon or modify our ethics, let's admit openly that this is our real aim first, rather than continuing to profess our continued allegiance to the foundational principles of cataloguing, while taking actions that in fact betray them.

The bibliographic record is the infrastructure that supports the provision of a catalog service to our patrons. It is a cost effective means of providing a service that has been with us for decades and, if it remains a healthy professional activity, it will endure for many more. The process of cataloging requires the production of records which constitute a profound intellectual resource unlike anything else in librarianship. A sound understanding cataloging's objective should lead us to a renewed commitment to fulfilling that objective, because it is the means by which we serve our patrons. As Bierbaum suggested, we must make a commitment to not harm our clientele. A poor service, a lessened capacity in the catalog, is harmful and we can avoid it.

Coda

Cutter's phrasing of the catalog's objective remains valid. We can rephrase Cutter's objectives to clarify their purpose and to, perhaps, assist in having future actions be based on a sound footing. Perhaps they should be called the "Functional Requirements of Authority and Bibliographic Data Display Systems." Cataloging is a process and a service which should be re-invigorated in our current scholarly publishing environment. My suggested rephrasing of Cutter's objectives is:

PREAMBLE

The catalog provides the patron service of a surrogate reference interview. It provides a direct service to the patron to facilitate discovery of resources made available through the library collections. The service is supported by provision of complete, personally unbiased, and accurate bibliographic metadata and a supporting [online] catalog interface to assist patrons in their pursuit of resources.

OBJECTS and MEANS for the CATALOG

Specifically, the service of the catalog is to:

1. Enable patrons to find a resource of which either

(A) the author

(B) the title is known

(C) the subject

By providing access and guidance from variations in spellings, languages, and terminology, to assist patrons to successfully discover relevant materials for their needs and to discover materials not specifically sought.

2. Enable patrons to find a resource of which either

(A') the author

(B') the title is partially known

(C') the subject

By providing access mechanisms from that partial information and guidance to assist patrons to successfully discover relevant materials. Such mechanisms will include keyword access, browse screens, suggestions for inverted searches, faceted subjects, references from broader and narrower subjects, references from differing terminologies, spellings, and languages, etc.

3. Show what the library has

(D) by a given author

(E) on a given subject

(F) in a given kind of literature

By providing guidance from variations in spellings, languages, and terminology, to assist patrons to successfully discover relevant materials for their needs and to discover materials not specifically sought.

4. Assist in an unbiased manner in the choice of a resource

(G) as to its editions (bibliographically)

(H) as to its character (literary or topical)

By providing displays and data content (descriptions, tables of content, summaries) that assist patrons to discover varying editions, translations, adaptations, etc., and assess the relevance of the materials to their needs. When technologically available, links out to reviews or other evaluative resources will be incorporated into the catalog system.

An Essay on Cataloging Bibliography

Amazon.com. (2009: Dec. 18). "Amazon.com Product Advertising API License Agreement." https://affiliate-program.amazon.com/gp/advertising/api/detail/agreement.html (Accessed April 19, 2010)

4. Usage Requirements . . . (b) . . . (iii) . . . to send end users and sales to the Amazon Site. You will not use the Product Advertising API, Data Feed, or Product Advertising Content with any site or application, or in any other manner, that does not have the principal purpose of advertising and marketing the Amazon Site and driving sales of products and services on the Amazon Site.

I became aware of Amazon's policy from reading the IUG Discussion List (for Innovative interfaces, Inc., members), March 25-26, 2010.

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