Adventures in Librarianship -- Greetings

Ned Kraft
U.S. Department of State, kraftno@state.gov

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5132

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
“Library of Congress Record Dependency Disorder.” (This despite Rick Lugg’s observation that “Every day, in libraries all over the country, perfectly good LC records are subjected to all manner of scrutiny and revision.”) OCLC’s Karen Calhoun forecast a “retirement wave for a generation of bibliographic control experts” after 2010. Beacher Wiggins of LC reported that librarians sent letters to Congress over the library’s decision last year to delay redistribution of Italian cataloging records obtained from Casalini Libri.

Oh yes, the misquote. On the agenda posted on the Web, I was listed as “Bob Nardini — The Vendor,” meaning, I’d been invited to speak on behalf of book vendors, all of them. That was an honor and also a weighty assignment, to speak for such a farflung, varied constituency which on a personal level included a good many friends, colleagues, and former colleagues; but on a less personal level, a whole lot of competitors. Still, there is a sense of community among vendors, and everyone I spoke to beforehand wished me well and offered their best advice.

Book vendors, I tried to say, are already substantial, if not always acknowledged, contributors to the enterprise of bibliographic control. We send original and upgraded Cataloging in Publication (CIP) records to OCLC. Libraries everywhere obtain records of all conceivable levels from us. Our MARC records, before any user tries to find one of our books in the OPAC, provide a platform for libraries to find out about the book at all; to select and order the book; to receive the book and pay the invoice; and, if we vendors have not been asked to do it for them, to print a spine label so that someone on staff can put the book on the shelf in case a user comes looking for it.

Maybe vendors could take on the straightforward work for LC, so that LC would be in better shape to take on more of the not straightforward work that’s out there today in such abundance. Some things would need to change, though. LC estimates its costs to produce a CIP record, for example, at $130. Yet anyone with around $10,000 can subscribe for a year to the LC “Books English” file, and buy 175,000 new records for something like six cents apiece. The day’s theme, after all, was the “economics of bibliographic control” and so it seemed fair to point out that to book vendors, those economics didn’t look too appealing. It’s as if LC were a large developing country from which every day container ships sail to American ports to offload cataloging records assembled in workshops that might bear a little investigative reporting.

I tried hard to get my facts straight and to stick to what I knew. One point I wanted to make was that vendors hire a lot of degreed catalogers. I thought about saying that Coutts Information Services, my employer, has more catalogers than any library in the United States and Canada. But in the interest of truth-in-investigative reporting. It’s as if LC were a large developing country from which every day container ships sail to American ports to offload cataloging records assembled in workshops that might bear a little investigative reporting.

Maybe the day will come — who knows? — when most catalogers will work for vendors. That could be the future of bibliographic control, or one part of it. But today they do not, no matter what you find I said out there on the Web.

The Working Groups’ Website, with links to all of the papers delivered at the three public meetings is: http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future.