You May Own It . . . But Can They Find It? A Panel Discussion: Part 3 of Panel Presentation: Collection-Level Cooperative Cataloging

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You May Own It . . . But Can They Find It? A Panel Discussion: Part 3 of Panel Presentation: Collection-Level Cooperative Cataloging

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Abstract

Have you purchased e-book or e-journal collections where the metadata was not provided or was incomplete? Can users find all of your collections? If metadata is unavailable, researchers can't find your materials, resulting in lower usage.

Library directors and electronic resources managers are encouraged to add metadata specialists to their e-resources teams by reassigning catalogers. Catalogers are encouraged to develop skills for cataloging collections, in addition to their skills cataloging individual items.

Librarians I work with say I'm practical and user centered. My bottom line is that I want patrons to find and read the e-resources my library purchases.

Four or five years ago, when I worked at a West Coast seminary, I came into e-resources management, after heading a team of original catalogers for 20 years. So with e-resources, in addition to purchasing, and checking contracts, and promoting e-resources, I've created metadata. I've created metadata for one collection of over 4,000 Spanish-language e-books, and metadata for smaller collections as well. Many e-resources management librarians have a background in serials or acquisitions, so my cataloging background brings an atypical perspective.

My colleagues on today's panel are mostly talking about specific projects. I've discussed specific projects in other presentations, so today I've decided that I want to speak at a more general level.

I think there is an overlooked gap in e-resources management.

There's a problem. A problem that affects patrons. And that problem is . . . Patrons cannot find resources we provide, and have paid for, because many e-resources have poor metadata.

Let me quote from an excellent article, which I recommend, by my fellow panelist, Yukari Sugiyama (Sugiyama, van Ballegoie, & Takashi Rocha, 2016). Yukari sketches the complex supply chain for e-resources metadata and points out that it is "mostly supplied by parties outside the library."

This data is supplied to libraries in bulk, perhaps through a discovery layer, or through batches of MARC records. It probably won't surprise you that individual e-resource data in these bulk loads contain significant inaccuracies.

For example, my library subscribed to one prominent publisher that distributed three title lists, each with a different selection of titles for the same collection: one title list was on their marketing website, different titles were in the KBart file for discovery layers and URL resolvers, and a third and different list of titles came through MARC records—all supplied by the same publisher. This says nothing about the quality of the data in these title lists.

The bottom line is that vendor-supplied data is imperfect. And, in many libraries, that data is never reviewed. That's a gap in e-resources management—few librarians are looking closely at our e-resources metadata to evaluate and improve it.

Indeed, e-resources have been promoted to library administrators and managers, at least in part, on the claim that no local processing will be needed, and staffing could be reduced. I acknowledge that there can be some staffing reassignments because of e-resources. Yet like most technological changes, reductions in one staffing area often necessitate some staffing additions in another area.

The problem is poor metadata. Patrons cannot find resources we provide and have paid for because many e-resources have poor metadata.

Next, I want to suggest that both catalogers and e-resources team managers can play a role in responding to the need for improved e-resource metadata. I believe that there's an interesting opportunity for some catalogers to move from cataloging individual resources to collection-level cataloging.

Several hiring managers have told me that it's difficult to find librarians with collection-level skills. Skills like using MarcEdit, or complex Excel work, or Notepad++ find and replace tools, or APIs, or MS Access. And it's especially hard to find librarians with these collection-level skills, who *also know* MARC and KBart standards inside and out.

I would love to see cataloging librarians, who have shared MARC records for decades, now get excited about sharing collection-level improvements. Do you recall the movement in the 1970s when librarians began to share, via OCLC terminals, MARC records for individual books? I was barely out of grammar school, yet I think of that cooperation as a proud moment in library history. Sharing is in the DNA of librarians. None of us wants to duplicate each other's efforts.

Today, the infrastructure is available to share metadata improvements, not just one book at a time, but improvements made to entire collections—collections of e-books, collections of journals and articles, collections of streaming video. "Collection-level cooperative cataloging," I call it. OCLC's collection manager encourages the cooperative improvement of the collection-level metadata. We have the infrastructure. We need the people skilled and assigned to a library position to make a difference.

Catalogers have the right personality traits for this work: traits such as deriving meaning from labor that is shared with other libraries, having an eye for detail, and able to learn new software and data structures.

With the trend in libraries away from acquiring individual items toward acquiring collections, it makes sense for some catalogers to learn these new skills and focus on collection-level cooperative cataloging.

The data needs to be improved, and cataloging librarians can rise to the task.

There's also an opportunity for Electronic Resources team leaders and library directors. E-resource teams often have librarians skilled in negotiating licenses

and prices, skilled in collecting and promoting and branding and configuring. Yet e-resource teams often lack deep metadata skills. Now is the time to add to your team librarians with collection-level metadata skills.

To date, the trend has been to reassign catalogers toward "unique" collections and archives work. Library directors need to catch a new vision—an additional strategic reassignment for catalogers. Some catalogers also need to be deployed to improve our poor metadata for costly databases, journals, and e-book collections. Unleashing catalogers on collection metadata will improve the experience of patrons as they discover and download these e-resources.

Indulge me as I also toss in a plug for open access. To make a collection of open access resources discoverable, someone must create metadata, and often metadata for open access resources are a low priority for vendors. If you are a fan of open access—be a fan of raising up "cataloger-like" specialists to create metadata for open access collections.

Here are some types of data improvements that I've needed to make.

- The vendor may not supply metadata.
- The vendor may not supply metadata in a timely manner. It may be behind in sending metadata to discovery services.
- The vendor may not supply adequate metadata.
- Vendor data may need to be improved with ISSNs, ISBNs, complete titles, correct URLs, and OCLC numbers for the best MARC record. I've done these kinds of improvements on data from quite reputable vendors.
- The vendor may use only the current journal title in their metadata, even though they have full-text for preceding titles of a journal.
- Vendors may be reluctant to release their data.
- Vendors may not separate out open access data.

Many of these improvements to KBart data are easy to do, once you decide to learn some new skills.

To summarize, to catalogers, I challenge you to develop skills for collection-level cataloging.

And to librarians who hire and reconfigure staff, I challenge you to add people with collection-level cataloging skills to your e-resources team.

If we take these steps, we can make collection-level metadata better for many libraries. And when we make collection-level data better, then these titles will be discovered by and delivered to your patrons. Just look at how elated this student is! She found the e-resource she needed.

Finally, here are a few URLs to help you get started with collection-level cataloging. These give instructions and demonstrations about:

Collection-level cataloging: <https://www.slideshare.net/jsiemon/adding-oclc-numbers-issns-and-isbns-to-the-knowledge-base>

How to add OCLC numbers to KBart data: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2sHKamxnl-dQmFkcUVmS1d4RTQ>

How to enhance collections: <https://vimeo.com/237468207/00de177b16>

Reference

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