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Technology Left Behind -- Where Have All the Catalogers Gone?

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meeting officially known as "Chief Collection Development Officers of Large Research Libraries," but in real life always called "Big Heads." This regular Saturday morning session, never known as a headline-maker, was a good show indeed this time, the first public forum in the profession since the **Google** news broke. "Be nice to your undergraduates," advised **Mark Sandler**, representing **Michigan**, alma mater of **Larry Page**, "you never know when they might succeed."

Big Heads is usually the most collegial of groups, but in Boston Hethe **Google** libraries said there were some things they were not free to talk about. It was like a Congressional hearing, as if they'd brought counsel. The many unanswered copyright questions, sure to keep law firms occupied for many years, accounted for some of the secretiveness. But each of the five partners of **Google**, as well, has its own financial deal, its own operational plans, and its own ideas, as yet not fully formed, on how in the years ahead to make best use of the bibliographic, technological, and intellectual windfall with which they've been blessed. They are partners with **Google**, not with one another. **Google's** ultimate plans, for that matter, remain unclear too.

Matching these moments of non-disclosure on the part of the **Google** libraries were one or two slightly sour comments from non-participants. To be fair, on a number of fronts at this point it's no sure thing that **Google's** plan will succeed at all. A good summary of maybe why not can be found

in a *Library Journal* interview with **Alice Prochaska**, University Librarian at **Yale**, which was not among the libraries approached by **Google**. **Prochaska** raised questions about the risk of damaging books in such a mass digitization project, on metadata standards, on the level of duplication among the parallel projects, and on the randomness of such a vast digital collection versus digital content selected and packaged for users. But on one front at least, **Prochaska** verified that the project is already an unqualified success. "If I had a regret," she told *LJ*, "it is that we missed out on the publicity."

Yale was not alone in public doubt. **American Library Association** president-elect **Michael Gorman**, most notably, compared **Google** hits to fast food, and said that the "**Google** phenomenon is a wonderfully modern manifestation of the triumph of hope and boosterism over reality." In a story that played everywhere, **Jacques Chirac**, president of France, proposed a European challenge to **Google Print**, one that would curb the "omnigooglisation" of the world, as another French official put it, and give students an alternative to **Googling** their way in English through, say, the French Revolution, an example chosen by the director of France's national library.

One didn't need to be president of anything, of course, in order to dissent from **Google's** vision. A representative online comment referred to a "Faustian bargain." Library collections in the past, this critic argued, "have served as their own advertisement, but now they will become a vehicle for selling something else." Much of the commentary, on the other hand, was quite positive, if a little wonder-struck at the boldness and

scale of **Google Print**. "I think what **Google** are undertaking in this program is truly fantastic!" one blogger recorded. "To have all that information available through **Google** will really bring information that would be otherwise unobtainable to the masses."

The idea of a universal library is far from a new one, but the dream always came mixed with a good dose of sci-fi. More than that, librarians were supposed to be in charge of the universal library, weren't they? Now, from nowhere, there's a plausible model resembling the universal library and who's running things but a pair of 30-something grad-school entrepreneurs who set out to organize all of the world's information and knew that meant making a deal with librarians. The academic library, in all its history never ranked among society's bolder institutions, is suddenly a partner with an organization recognized by everyone as a marvel of capitalist innovation.

But, the truly remarkable thing is that when capitalists finally took note of libraries, what they noticed wasn't their hi-tech apparatus, but their books, printed books. And they wanted *old* books, the ones in remote storage, many of them still classified in **Dewey** or in some home-made pre-**LC** system, the ones dusted off every decade or two and borrowed less often than that, the forgotten books, problematic in every way, to some librarians their most unloved belongings, almost an embarrassment. If these books can find a suitor like **Google**, and capture the world's imagination—who knows?—one day perhaps even the *Readers' Guide* will make a comeback. 🍀

Technology Left Behind — Where Have All the Catalogers Gone?

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Recent announcements of job openings at libraries at colleges and universities across the country demonstrate a growing trend in the cataloging field, the creation of metadata-related positions and an emphasis on metadata schemas other than **MARC**. Libraries of all shapes and sizes are creating new positions with varying degrees of emphasis on metadata duties.

Wanting to find out a little more about the duties of a Metadata Librarian and the impetus for creating a metadata position, I interviewed several professionals in the field, including librarians at **Princeton University**, the **University of Tennessee**, the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**, and the **University of Virginia**.

The Metadata Librarian position at the **Princeton University Library** was created in 2003 as part of an initiative to get more involved in digital libraries. It was the first position to be filled in the newly formed Digital Initiatives department (<http://diglib.princeton.edu/>). Since then a digital photographer, a Web designer, and a programmer have all been added to the department. Digital Initiatives has focused its efforts on rare and antiquarian books and materials in **Princeton's Special Collections**, and recently the department launched the prototype of **Princeton's** digital library.

Hired in March 2003, **Clay Redding's** duties as

Metadata Librarian are varied, involving generating metadata, correlating the metadata to objects, and constructing the back end architecture of the database. Other tasks include management of the **Princeton Library's** link resolver and manipulation of **MARC** and **XML** data. Lately **Redding** has focused his efforts on the creation of forms and finding other ways to automate the various tasks involved in creating the digital library.

While his position reports to the Head of Technical Services, **Redding** works in close conjunction with the Systems department. He feels his job duties are more systems and programming related than most other metadata related positions. As a consequence, **Redding** founded the metadataLibrarians listserv (<http://metadatalibrarians.monarchos.com>) as a resource for professionals in variety of fields dealing with metadata issues and a way to personally keep abreast of the field.

The **University of Tennessee Libraries (UT)** created the **Digital Library Center (DLC)** in 2001 to "foster the creation and use of digitized collections and provide open access to materials of interest to the academic community." (<http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/dlc/aboutus.html>). Examples of the types of projects the **DLC** has taken on include collections of photographs of the Tennessee River Valley and early images of Egypt (<http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/dlc/projects.html>).

The Metadata Librarian position at **UT** was created a little over three years ago to support the efforts of the **DLC**. The current Metadata Librarian, **Arwen Hutt**, manages the Digital Access unit, a division of Technical Services. The unit is responsible for scanning and digitizing materials, metadata design, and production for the **DLC** projects. **Hutt** describes her level of involvement in the local digital projects as "ranging from responsibility for all metadata and digital production to a more advisory role, determining standards and workflow and conducting training." In addition to working with the **DLC**, she also advises other university and community projects on metadata and digitization issues.

According to **JoAnne Deeken**, Head of Technical Services at the **UT Libraries**, the goal from the very beginning was to integrate the **DLC** into the library as a whole, rather than emphasizing it as a separate unit. The Digital Access unit works closely with **MARC** catalogers, especially when it is necessary to map one metadata standard to another.

Several years ago the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** began **OpenCourseWare (OCW)**, a unique initiative with the ambitious goal of making all of the course materials from **MIT** classes available to students and educators throughout the world. The project "is a large-scale, Web-based electronic publishing initiative funded jointly by the **William and Flora**

continued on page 93

Technology Left Behind from page 92

Hewlett Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and MIT." (<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Global/AboutOCW/about-ocw.htm>)

According to **Rebecca Lubas**, Head of Cataloging and Metadata Services (CAMS) at MIT, the opportunity to create a Metadata Librarian position within the MIT Libraries "came when the OpenCourseWare project asked the Libraries for help with metadata for course objects." Most of the Metadata Unit and the Metadata Librarian position, in place since July of 2003, are funded by OCW.

When conducting the search for the Metadata Librarian position, the search committee looked for several skills that a "traditional" cataloger might not have, including "experience with non-MARC metadata, more computer savvy, work with non-traditional library 'clients.'"

The University of Virginia Library just recently created and filled a Metadata Specialist position. **Mike Furlough**, Director of the UVA Library's Digital Research and Instructional Services (DRIS), was the hiring official for the search for the Metadata Specialist. DRIS brings several existing digital initiatives under one umbrella, including the Electronic Text Center (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/>), the Geospatial and Statistical Data Center (<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/>), and Rare Materials Digital Services (<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/>). According to Furlough, the goal behind consolidating all of these various service points into one area is "to find a way to support digital services in a more holistic way."

Creating the Metadata Specialist is a natural extension of the integration of the various digital services under DRIS. Furlough envisions the new Metadata Specialist, who will start in July 2005, acting as a point person for metadata issues at the library, regardless of the nature of the project. Furlough does not expect that the incumbent will perform all of the hands-on metadata tasks. Rather, she will act more as a consultant, a liaison between the Cataloging Department, library patrons, and DRIS, helping patrons understand their needs and options and conveying those needs to the people who will produce it.

Common Themes

While each of the libraries highlighted above has created its metadata position for slightly different reasons, there are some common themes running through their comments that shed some light on Metadata Librarian positions, why they are created and what is expected of them.

One of the most significant factors influencing the growing emphasis on metadata appears to be the development of new digital initiatives and projects. As libraries build collections of images, rare books, and exhibits online, it is necessary to find new ways to describe these resources and to hire new personnel to handle the work load. The digital initiatives described above each have different internal structures and serve different purposes within their institutions, but they have all incorporated a metadata position into their workflow.

Because of their involvement in digital initiatives, Metadata Librarians are a little more to the forefront and in the public eye than most librarians in Technical Services. As a consequence, experience working with the public is sometimes a desired qualification. In the course of our interview, **Clay Redding** mentioned that one of his job duties is to work with library clientele, helping them plan their projects and explaining their various options.

While **Redding's** position as the Metadata Librarian at Princeton University is a Technical Services position, he finds it important to have a certain level of people skills and an ability to work with his clients. This sentiment was echoed by **Mike Furlough** at the University of Virginia. When conducting the search for the new Metadata Librarian Furlough and the search committee looked for candidates that "had experience working directly with end-users (faculty and students), were strongly driven by service, and who were interested in developing digital content to support teaching and research."

In addition to working with the public, the tasks Metadata Librarians are expected to complete are more varied than those of a traditional cataloger and, at the same time, more specialized. Announcements for Metadata positions (Some examples are listed below.) list a variety of required and preferred qualifications, including familiarity with metadata schema like MARC, TEI, EAD, DC, and OAI. It is important to note, though, that metadata positions are not entirely separated from traditional cataloging positions. In fact, many of the daily duties of a Metadata Librarian require working in cooperation with traditional catalogers. For example, at both the University of Tennessee and the University of Virginia the Metadata Librarian is responsible for working with the catalogers to develop better matching of metadata schema across objects and collections.

JoAnne Deeken at the University of Tennessee considers the most important difference between Metadata Librarians and MARC Catalogers to be in the nature of their work. She describes the work of MARC catalogers as interpreting and following rules created by others, while Metadata Librarians develop the rules and standards for new initiatives. As libraries expand their services into the digital world, it is only natural that new library personnel, like Metadata Librarians, be hired to accomplish these new tasks, but that does not displace the traditional cataloger. Rather, Catalogers and Metadata Librarians are working together to meet the demands of new digital initiatives.

Posted Metadata Job Openings (as of May 14th)

The below list of positions is by no means comprehensive, nor do I guarantee that any of these positions are still open. They merely represent some of the types of metadata positions that are out there.

Cataloging/Metadata Librarian, **Carleton College Library** — <http://www.carleton.edu/campus/library/employment.html#cat>.

Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, **University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries** (part of the Greater Western Library Alliance) — <http://www.gwla.org/jobs/lune-meta.htm>.

Head, Cataloging and Metadata Service, **Stanford University Libraries & Academic Information Resources** — http://jobs.stanford.edu/openings/display.cgi?Job_Req=007034&Jfam=NIL&JOBCODE=1600.

Digital Resources Catalog Librarian, **Yale University Library** — <http://www.library.yale.edu/lhr/jobs/mp/LDTB14750.html>.

Digital Projects Metadata Librarian, **University of Florida/George A. Smathers Libraries** — <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/pers/DigitalProjectsMetadata.htm>.

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