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## Catalog Information and User Expectations in an Amazoogole World: Too Much? Too Little?

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3. The receiving function within the ILS is not used. Acquisitions staff members do go into the order record and change the purchase amount to reflect the invoice, as well as make a notation to indicate receipt of an invoice. Received material moves to a separate area for copy cataloging.

4. Copy catalogers review the record in the ILS, search for the record again in OCLC, make minor corrections, and add the holdings data. Catalog librarians receive material that has no call number or has a low level record that needs upgrading. All material needing original cataloging goes to the catalog librarians. The copy catalogers assign the barcode and affix it.

5. Using the information in the ILS, staff members in a separate marking unit generate spine labels and affix them as part of the end processing. Finally, the same staff members handle property stamping and security striping at this time.

Serials workflows are not as disparate. Both libraries use the acquisitions module fully. Both libraries use the same serials vendor, EBSCO

and place the majority of the orders through this vendor. As mentioned earlier, Library A has embraced the technology more fully, which is evidenced in their invoicing methods. They place orders on the ILS, receive issues on the ILS and process claims on the ILS. The library receives invoices using EDI. Library B places orders on the ILS and receives issues on the ILS. The serials/periodicals technician continues to claim issues manually, as it does invoicing. However, Library B is investigating the use of EDI with serials.

The choices made by each library cannot be judged right or wrong, good or bad. Each library, though faced with many of the same situations as the other, chose a different path that suited the needs of the library at the time. The use of technology introduced in the form of an ILS influenced the choices made. As more and more technological advances are made, there is a thought that this might engender greater uniformity. However, as demonstrated by these two institutions, it is just as likely that there may be more diversity of implementation rather than less.

Library A has committed itself to using the system more fully. This can be a burden as well as a benefit. It puts a greater onus on the library staff to use the system in the most complete way possible. This may put them into a position of using a process that is cumbersome in the long run, but may be

difficult to extract oneself from in the future. This is especially noticeable in the use of the many funds and ledgers used by Library A to track every transaction and item in the library. On the flip side, Library A is allowing as much work as possible to be done in a way that frees personnel to do other things. Staff within Library A are proud to use the system to its fullest extent, but recognize that they are making adjustments to do so.

Library B believes it is being more efficient when they don't employ work-arounds. They view their workflow as being more flexible, because they are not locked into the system as thoroughly as Library A. At the same time, Library B acknowledges that it doesn't have as much data available electronically to use for reports and tracking transactions.

There is discussion at each library to change the level of use of the acquisitions module. Library B wants to use more of the capabilities of the system as soon as it is upgraded to allow for the detachment of records within the system. Library A's discussion centers around foregoing some of the features, such as the detailed ledgers, because the work-arounds are too cumbersome. At some time in the future there may be a point in which both libraries are using the system in a very similar way. 🐛

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## Catalog Information and User Expectations in an Amazoogle World: Too Much? Too Little?

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### Background

In the spring of 2005, the **University of Michigan Library** began a comprehensive, multi-phase assessment of its selection, acquisition, and cataloging workflow with the objective of making operations in these areas more cohesive and efficient. The initiative was just one part of an ongoing, user-focused, programmatic review of all of the library's operations and services. This review was initiated in part because the library had recently migrated to a new integrated library system. Another major motivation to undertake this effort, though never explicitly stated in the charges to the review working groups, was the then relatively new partnership with **Google** to digitize the entire **University Library** collection. It was clear to everyone that an initia-

tive of such a scale would affect all aspects of the library. For Technical Services units, this meant a potentially massive growth in their already sizable digital workflow. New strategies for processing the existing print and digital resources would be necessary in order to have the resources to handle this addition to the workflow.

Prior to the review getting underway, a question that came up repeatedly during discussions about the process was, "Do we know what information users want in the library catalog?" Anecdotally, we knew that users were expecting OPACs to behave like their favorite search engines and **Amazon.com** but we did not know what they were expecting in terms of bibliographic information. With this in mind, the Library's administrators charged a work-

ing group to gather feedback from users of the library's OPAC on the extent of the bibliographic and classification information provided in the catalog; review current literature on user search behaviors; and make recommendations based on our findings. The obvious implication made by acknowledging a need to investigate this aspect of the workflow is that detailed cataloging requires more time which translates to slower, most costly cataloging throughput. Our findings were meant to contribute to a cost-benefit analysis of the amount of effort necessary to catalog new collection materials in relation to the benefit the cataloging provides to the library's users.

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## Literature Review

Our primary challenge was developing an understanding of users' attitudes toward the information contained in catalog records and their use of it. We began with our literature review but at the time, most research on users and OPACs focused on either the users search strategies or user interactions with OPAC interfaces. While these articles did not directly address the use of the information found in records, they did touch on users' apparent preference for more descriptive information as well as the influence of search engines on their expectations of OPACs. In 2004, a study on OPAC design effectiveness at the **Pennsylvania State University** libraries indirectly found that users highly value the inclusion of summaries and tables of contents in bibliographic records.<sup>1</sup> **Arlene G. Taylor** and **Tina Gross** undertook a study to discover what percentage of English language bibliographic records retrieved by keyword searches, the strategy of choice, actually contained the keyword in a subject heading.<sup>2</sup> They conclude that, even if all bibliographic records include complete tables of contents, subject headings would still be essential for successful keyword searches. Half of the results for successful keyword searches would not be retrieved with subject headings and for just under half, more than 40% of the hits would be lost. Tables of contents would decrease the chances of zero results but it also increases the number of irrelevant hits.

Further inquiry on this topic as it relates to searchable digitized full text is the subject of **Jeffrey Garrett's** study of adding subject headings to the **Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)** database.<sup>3</sup> His study shows that the addition of subject headings increases the rate of retrieval by 29% and, were further work of this nature performed on ECCO records, could increase the rate of retrieval by 89.2%. Noting the current trend of determining that subject headings are irrelevant in a world of digital information, **Garrett** responds, "it can be readily shown that keyword searching in full-text databases is no substitute for searches run against OPACs or other bibliographic files with ample descriptors and subject headings." **Joseph R. Matthews' 2001** work on catalogs discusses the means by which accurate bibliographic and authority records add value to a library by increasing access to and use of its collections.<sup>4</sup> **Matthews** presents formulas with which individual libraries can calculate the value of a bibliographic record in MARC format, authority record, and holdings/location/status information. He asserts that accurate MARC records, bibliographic and authority, increase the value of the library's collection by increasing the likelihood that the user will find records that match a search.<sup>5</sup> These bibliographic records include subject headings "knowledgeably designed and carefully applied by professional catalogers in order to help our customers improve both precision and recall of their searches," and authority control as "an important tool that a library can

use to improve the success rate experienced by its users while searching the OPAC."<sup>6</sup>

## The Survey

To gather the needed feedback, we designed a brief online survey to be accessed from within the OPAC. The online survey was complemented by a printed version directed toward users of catalog information for rare materials. These types of records were of particular interest to our administrators because their typically detailed descriptive elements contrasted with the basic elements found in most catalog records. Links to the survey were also placed on the library's Websites and library staff were also asked to direct users to the surveys. The printed user survey was distributed only at the Special Collections Library because that location consistently has a high number of users of its special and rare materials. Both surveys were available for one month during the fall term of 2005.

The survey was kept to only nine questions in order keep the participants' time commitment to a minimum but they were effective in revealing users' attitudes and opinions. We constructed the survey around Question 3, which asked users to rank the various elements of a bibliographic record in importance to their search process. In addition, we asked users how they typically search the OPAC; how helpful they found authority control and collocation; and what they thought should be done to improve their search experience. A total of 429 responses were received from faculty and students. Sixty-two library staff also responded to the online survey but those numbers are excluded here because our focus was the opinion of the external users of the OPAC. The survey scale was 1-5 with 1 being rarely/not important and 5 being frequently/very important.

**1. When you search the OPAC, how frequently do you search for a specific item you already know something about, such as the author or title?**

Seventy-seven percent (328) reported that they frequently use the catalog to search for specific items they already know about.

**2. When you search the OPAC, how frequently do you run a general search to find out what is available in the library on a particular topic?**

In regard to general topic searching, responses were more mixed. Fifty-one percent (219) reported using the catalog frequently for general topics while 30 percent (123) do so with some degree of infrequency or not at all.

**3. Looking at the following catalog record, please check the most important elements that aid in deciding if an item might be helpful to you. You may check as many elements as you feel are important.**

When asked to identify the most important elements in a sample catalog record, users reported that most of the cataloging information is relevant at one time or another. This sentiment was reinforced through the written comments in response to Questions 7 and 8. While users indicated that not all of the information is important for their work, they could envision its necessity for users in other

disciplines. The only element of the record that is truly ranked low in importance was the Bibliography/Index note. In ranked order from most important to least important with number of votes in parentheses, the following was how users ranked catalog record information:

Title (399)  
Contents (353)  
Author (335)  
Format (272)  
Subject headings (257)  
Physical Description (148)  
Publisher (132)  
Series title (131)  
Bibliography/Index (66)

**4. Occasionally authors publish materials using different forms of their names. For instance, T.S. Eliot may also have published under Thomas S. Eliot or Thomas Stearns Eliot. How important is it that a search for T.S. Eliot also finds works published as Thomas S. Eliot and Thomas Stearns Eliot versus having to run separate searches for each variation of his name?**

This question addresses the issue of authority control and its importance to the library by asking about authority control for an author's name. Ninety-two percent (389) of users indicated that authority control was important.

**5. How important is it to have materials on the same topic shelved side-by-side in the library (including various editions of the same book shelved next to each other) so that you can browse the shelves to see what is available on a topic?**

Eighty-seven percent (370) reported that shelf collocation of items on the same topic or subsequent editions of a work is important.

**6. If you use materials in languages with non-Roman alphabets (for example: Chinese, Arabic), how important is it for you to be able to view information in the alphabet of the language in question?**

This question was included because cataloging and searching with non-Roman alphabets is one of the major features of our integrated library system. User opinion was quite mixed. Since the question asked only users of these types of materials to respond, 261 survey takers answered "Not applicable." It was difficult to tell whether these 261 respondents truly do not use these materials or if they were just indifferent to the issue. Forty-seven percent (66) of respondents reported that it was important while 30% (42) indicated it was not important and 28% (39) were neutral.

**7. What information would you like to see added to records in order to make our OPAC a better research tool? (Ex. tables of contents, links between print and electronic versions of books, content notes, etc.)**

There were a variety of responses to this question but the largest portion centered on adding content information. For example, table of contents was mentioned by 118 users and content notes/summaries by another 36. Respondents indicated that providing this type of additional "subject" information would aid

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them in deciding whether a particular item would be relevant to them. They also mentioned how helpful this would be in locating authors of chapters or works in anthologies. The second most frequently cited improvement was the inclusion of links between print/electronic versions of materials, which was mentioned by 94 users. Many more suggestions focused on catalog search and display functions rather than record content.

**8. Is there any information that is not helpful and could be reduced or eliminated from records? (Number of pages, content notes, series title, etc.)**

There was very limited consensus from users on what information could be reduced or eliminated from records. Many users acknowledged the value of most the information in catalog records except for the aforementioned Bibliography/Index note. A number of users suggested removing size, pagination, or series title, but others indicate their preference would be to retain this information. Many additional suggestions focused again on catalog search and display functions rather than record content.

**9. What is your affiliation to the University?**

	Print Survey		Online Survey		Survey Totals	
Undergraduate student	48	78.7%	32	8.7%	80	18.6%
Graduate student	5	8.2%	212	57.6%	217	50.6%
Faculty	4	6.6%	108	29.3%	112	26.1%
Guest	4	6.6%	16	4.3%	20	4.7%
Total	61		368		429	100%

**Data from the OPAC Search Logs**

We anticipated that the surveys would give us the desired insight into users' impressions of their own search behavior but we agreed that an accurate report on user behavior would require hard data from the OPAC's search logs. Our Library Systems Office provided us with the following statistics on the types of searches performed from April to September 2005:

Words anywhere .....	738,123
Title begins with .....	413,843
Title Words .....	188,518
Author (last name first) .....	235,693
Author Words .....	97,826
Subject begins with .....	83,927
Medical Subject begins with .....	2,688
Subject Words.....	29,730
Journal/Serial name begins with ...	132,350
Journal/Serial name words .....	29,308
Call number begins with .....	48,226
Conference name.....	276
Publisher word.....	2,071
URL/Web address.....	87
Total.....	1,972,936

These search log numbers are consistent with the survey responses in that both sets of numbers strongly indicate that author and title are two of the most valuable pieces of information. However, "contents" ranked second in importance as a record element. The ranking of "words anywhere" well ahead of other types of searches is mostly like due to the fact it is the default search but it is also a primary example of how users' expectations of have been influenced by search engines. Both "digital natives" and "digital immigrants," terms coined by **Marc Prensky**<sup>7</sup>, have learned to simply enter search their terms in the initial, single box, click the search button, and wait for the results.

**Recommendations**

We made the following recommendations to the Library's Executive Council:

- Include or add table of contents, content notes, summaries, etc. to catalog records whenever possible. Purchase the information vendors or utilize automated methods to acquire it from peer institutions rather than commit staff time to manual entry.
- More widely utilize the strategy of automated enhancement of brief records in the local catalog. These bibliographic records, with at least title, author, and imprint, provide faster catalog access to

users. The strategy is already in use in some units but it could be implemented in others to further expose unprocessed collection materials to users.

- Eliminate the addition of the bibliographical references and indices notes.
- Include links between print and electronic versions of resources whenever possible.
- Maintain the current level of subject analysis for original cataloging.
- Continue the practice of shelving for collocation purposes.
- Continue authority control practices.
- Although surveyed users were largely indifferent to non-Roman searching and display, the library should continue the practice for the greater good of scholarship.

**Conclusion**

What might these numbers mean for cataloging workflows in general and for subject analysis specifically? Those making decisions on how to utilize a library's cataloging talent, time, and budgets might conclude from this data that less effort is needed to create and

maintain topical metadata. Others could say this illustrates the need to maintain or expand bibliographic instruction efforts to teach users how to better utilize the sophisticated resources being built for them. In the months before our assignment, **OCLC** published *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources*. The report's assertion that libraries "appeared to be increasingly less visible to today's information consumer"<sup>8</sup> was seen as confirmation of the loss of "market share" to the uncontrolled jungle of information accessed through search engines. The seeming disconnect between library strategic plans and library user expectations rightfully put the steadily increasing cost of acquiring, licensing, cataloging, and processing collections into question. These concerns were key impetuses for three major papers on cataloging at research institutions published shortly after we submitted our report to the **UM Library's Executive Council**. The **University of California's** report<sup>9</sup>, the white paper on cataloging at **Indiana University**,<sup>10</sup> and **Karen Calhoun's** report to the **Library of Congress**<sup>11</sup> together seemed to crystallize both the visions and concerns of administrators confronting the seismic shift underway in the research library landscape. All three acknowledged the value of cataloging but also expressed concerns about inefficiencies and costs. The ensuing debates suggested that, for some in the cataloging profession, the papers represented an administrative perfect storm threatening to disassemble decades of proven practices while others in the profession saw an opportunity to reinvigorate and improve a vital function of libraries.

Our findings and those of the other programmatic review groups were ultimately used by the library's administrators and a workflow-consulting firm to design new workflows and a new Technical Services organizational structure. Efficiently providing more information for users of the library's online resources was central to four of the most significant changes. First, a group of units were created to address the growing demands of digital resource acquisition, licensing, cataloging, and maintenance. Second, outsourcing of cataloging and physical processing of widely held materials is being increased to reduce the amount of handling of full level cataloging. Third, automated techniques are being used to upgrade bibliographic records when possible and statistical analysis will be used to measure their effectiveness. Finally, more cataloging staff are working with print resources that are unique to our collection, especially special and rare materials.

The realities of shifting user expectations and unfavorable economic pressures have library leaders in the thankless position of having to balance valued, complex practices with new strategies that offer greater efficiency through simpler procedures. We have confidence that the **UM Library** leadership's course of action will lead to greater efficiencies while still providing the catalog information desired by users. We also expect the chosen strategies to undergo refinements and enhancements as lessons are learned along the way. 🐾

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#### Endnotes

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We have a great article by **Ellen Finnie Duranceau** <[efinnie@mit.edu](mailto:efinnie@mit.edu)> that we were not able to run in this issue because of space. The article is called "Libraries & The Digital Commons: Eight Principles for an Emerging Ecosystem." Watch for it, coming soon!

Well, we are finally rolling out an **ATG online** at the **2007 Charleston Conference**  
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## against the grain people profile

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**BORN & LIVED:** Born Minneapolis, lived in Iowa City for past 22 years.

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**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** Libraries will become increasingly focused on providing access to the "long tail" and depth of access will be greatly enhanced by metadata, with increasing opportunity for machine-harvested metadata. Scholarly communication will change dramatically due to changing and more varied models of information dissemination — this in response to new publishing models and the impact of social networking on the use and sharing of scholarly information. The information seeking behaviors of users are and will continue to change significantly and adding value to their experience in their time and space is key to the future of the library world. The user must be the center of all of our efforts. 🌱



## It Never Ends... Technical Services and Planning in a Changing Environment

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### Introduction

Libraries are facing a period of transformational change. The ubiquity of electronic and networked information has changed their customers' expectations for timely access to an ever wider variety of materials and services. It is important for technical services departments to handle acquisitions, cataloging, and maintenance work efficiently, to make adjustments to ensure the steady flow of materials through the department, and eliminate the potential for backlogs. This article presents one library's approach to reviewing and assessing traditional functions in the light of changing user needs and enhancing its flexibility to take on new metadata work and hidden collections cataloging.

The Central Technical Services Department

(CTS) of the **University of Iowa Libraries** consists of two units: Acquisitions and Rapid Access (ARC) and Complex Cataloging (CCU). As CTS leaders, we felt it was necessary to review all operations in light of the rapidly changing library and information environment. Given the differences in the nature of the work performed each unit, we believed it would be more effective to have separate planning processes. In recognition of the magnitude of change likely to result from the reviews, it was decided to seek the services of the University's Office of Organizational Effectiveness (OE) to guide us through the planning efforts. After consulting with OE staff, a modified Lean approach was selected as most appropriate for accomplishing our workflow review.

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