Outsourced Cataloging of Materials in Languages for Which There Is No In-House Capability

Joshua Hutchinson

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

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

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.

Outsourced Cataloging of Materials in Languages for Which There Is No In-House Capability

How the University of California, Irvine Libraries Increase the Breadth of their Collections While Dealing with Reduced Cataloging Capabilities

by **Joshua Hutchinson** (Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, University of California, Irvine) <jhutchi@uci.edu>

Introduction

This column will explain the procedure and reasoning behind the **University of California, Irvine (UCI) Libraries'** decision to do selective outsourcing of material in languages for which the library does not have cataloging capabilities. **UCI** was founded in 1965 and is an R1 public university located south of Los Angeles in Orange County, California. It has over 35,000 students and offers almost 100 undergraduate majors. To support these students and the over 5,000 academic staff, the **UCI Libraries** have three locations (the main library, a science library and a medical library, along with an affiliated law library that has its own technical services) and the Cataloging and Metadata Services Department has over a dozen employees: four librarians and ten staff members. Besides a special collections backlog of several thousand volumes, there isn't a significant cataloging backlog of modern material.

The Problem

The **UCI Libraries** collect widely and actively in a variety of languages including Japanese, Chinese, Korean, French, German and Spanish. Historically, the Libraries' cataloging department had in-house capability for all those languages. However, with a smaller department, there is no longer the ability to do original cataloging in some of these languages. In addition, the Libraries collect irregularly in other languages for which there is no in-house cataloging capability — notably, recently there has been an effort to collect Armenian-language material in response to the growth of an Armenian Studies program on campus.

The library receives regular donations in Korean, and purchases significant amounts of Korean-language material—primarily books, DVDs and audio CDs. Beginning in 2016, the Library received three large donations, totaling several thousand volumes, of Armenian-language books that formed the basis of an Armenian collection. The Libraries have an approval plan and several standing orders for German books.

The Cataloging and Metadata Services Department has chosen to use a variety of different methods to catalog in these languages in order to most efficiently and effectively make material available. The method chosen depends on a variety of factors including the format of the material, additional language capability

elsewhere in the library, and the number of items requiring cataloging.

The Process

Korean — Purchased and donated Korean material arrives from the Acquisitions Department with records in the Alma library services platform. The Acquisitions assistant downloads a record from **OCLC** where possible and otherwise enters a brief record. The PO Line number is written on a flag and inserted in the book to assist in retrieving the record. In the case of material with good records in the **OCLC** database, the cataloger double-checks bibliographic details such as size and pagination, and finalizes the bibliographic, holdings and item records. In cases with poor or no records in the **OCLC** database, the cataloger can recheck **OCLC** for new or improved records. If there is no good copy, a determination needs to be made about whether the existing record can be improved by the cataloger working in conjunction with colleagues with Korean language expertise.

The **UCI Libraries** has been until recently in a fortunate position in that one member of the Acquisitions staff is a native Korean speaker, and the library annually hosts a **Korean Foundation** intern for an 11-month period. The Korean-speaking Acquisitions assistant has recently left, which may necessitate significantly more outsourcing of Korean material. The cataloging librarians can work with the **Korea Foundation** intern in order to create minimal-level catalog records in conjunction with tools such as the Google Translate app. This process is time-consuming for both the intern and the cataloger and results in minimal-level catalog records, so is not a solution to all Korean materials. However, when an item has been requested by a library patron and needs to be made quickly available, this solution is acceptable.

Armenian — Unlike with Korean materials, nobody on the library staff can speak, read or even identify Armenian characters. It is difficult to search for Armenian books without knowing the language. Google Translate doesn't offer character recognition for Armenian. The Libraries hired a graduate student in the Armenian program to help identify **OCLC** records for donated Armenian books. Most were 20th century imprints and duplicates from other academic libraries, and so there were high-quality records in the **OCLC**

database. Once the records were identified by the graduate student, the book was passed to catalogers who dealt with the record import, local holdings and item records, and the physical processing. Over the course of two years and two graduate students, this process was lengthy but successful — **OCLC** records were identified for almost all the books, working with the graduate students was a pleasure, and the Armenian collection now sits on the shelves in the library. However, some books were left over with no identifiable records in **OCLC**. Fewer than a dozen books lacked good records in **OCLC**. These are currently waiting to be sent for outsourced cataloging but have a low priority.

German — German books are almost all purchased rather than donated. They are generally purchased upon publication and sometimes arrive before there are good records in **OCLC**. While no catalogers speak German, it is a language that uses the Roman alphabet and so those who do not know the language are still able to successfully search **OCLC** for the items. In order to improve the department's language capabilities, one cataloger is currently taking German language classes on campus. However, while that helps with grammar and vocabulary, the cataloger is far from fluent. When titles arrive that do not yet have a good record in **OCLC**, a calculation must be made about whether to wait for another — more expert — cataloger at another institution to complete the cataloging for this material, or to improve the record to the best of **UCI's** ability in order to get it to the shelf as quickly as possible. Thankfully, for mainstream academic works in German, enough other libraries catalog these books within a week or two of arrival (most probably have similar approval plans with the same vendor) that **UCI** never has to wait for long. Our German cataloging is an example of the cost savings inherent in cooperative cataloging in the contemporary environment.

The Outcome

German acquisitions are all newly published mass-market books. Therefore, the decision has been made that German books are ineligible for outsourced cataloging because there is less of a problem finding a matching record in **OCLC** within a reasonable time period. Armenian and Korean materials, on the other hand, have been successfully outsourced, and it has been a positive and worthwhile experience for the **UCI Libraries**. The Libraries has had an ongoing relationship with the company that provides outsourced cataloging and has

continued on page 22

Outsourced Cataloging of Materials ... from page 21

gradually regularized its outsourcing process to make it part of the foreign language cataloging workflow.

The procedure is as follows. The cataloging librarian accumulates enough material for an efficient shipment (generally between ten and twenty-five books at a time, usually all the same language) and adds barcodes to the books or DVDs. These barcodes enable the rapid creation of a “set” within Alma, and the creation of a spreadsheet of those titles being sent. Barcoding the material also reduces reliance on slips inserted in the books in order to match books with records. The librarian then contacts the outsourcing company, alerts them that a shipment is on the way, and packs the box. Once the material returns, generally about six weeks after dispatch, the librarian unpacks the box, matches the books with the records that have been put into the Libraries’ online save file in **OCLC Connexion**, and does the final steps (downloading the record into the Alma LSP, marking the call number on the title page) to enable the material to get to the shelf.

Lessons Learned

While outsourcing is not a major part of the **UCI Libraries’** cataloging workflow, it

does enable the library to catalog and add to its collection material that would otherwise be impossible to add without significant staff training in new languages. It allows the library to be responsive to changes in teaching and learning focuses on the **UCI** campus, and it allows for a greater diversity of languages and material within the Libraries’ collections. Making use of our cataloging partners, **UCI Libraries** can be much more flexible in terms of our collections and cataloging output.

Using companies that provide cataloging services allows the **UCI Libraries** to collect in areas that would otherwise present significant cataloging challenges. While outsourcing cataloging has its own challenges (it costs money and reduces already tight budgets; it takes time to collect, pack and send the material, and then takes time at the end of the process to reconcile the new records and to unpack the boxes; and it presents a challenge simply because it represents a deviation from the regular workflow), **UCI** has benefitted significantly from its ability to outsource cataloging. It saves time and money while allowing the Libraries’ collections to be wider and broader than would otherwise be possible.

Going forward, **UCI Libraries** will probably expand its use of outsourced cataloging as it loses further language capability from within its Acquisitions and Cataloging departments.

It is also probable that this will be expanded to other languages as the University creates new programs and the library adds new languages to its collection. It is hoped that there is some scope for expanding the amount of shared cataloging within the **University of California** system.

For any other library considering outsourced cataloging, the experience of **UCI Libraries** has been generally very positive. While the turnaround time means that books are cataloged more slowly than if there were an under-worked cataloger with excellent language skills at **UCI**, those conditions do not exist. The considerable cost of outsourced cataloging remains considerably less than hiring and training a new cataloger and enables the Libraries to remain far more flexible in terms of language abilities. It is important for a library that is thinking about beginning a program of outsourcing small batches of cataloging to think hard about the process and how records will be retrieved and marked (whether they will be sent with barcodes, what the status will be set as, whether there is a note in the location, etc.), but due to the reliable nature of the process it does not require the same solutions as relegating a book to a semi-permanent backlog might. 🌸

Wandering the Web — STEM and STEAM: Selected Ideas for Children’s & Young Adult Programming

Compiled by **Roxanne Spencer** (Associate Professor and Coordinator, Beulah Winchel Education Library, Western Kentucky University Libraries) <roxanne.spencer@wku.edu>

Column Editor: **Jack G. Montgomery** (Professor, Acquisitions and Collection Services Librarian, Western Kentucky University Libraries) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

STEM and STEAM are, well, still going full-steam ahead (sorry!)! If your batteries are running a bit low on makerspace ideas, get your engines revved up again by following some of the examples, lesson plans, and templates here. These resources are from a variety of websites, commercial and noncommercial, to consider for programming ideas for engaging children and teens in school and public libraries, and to encourage future teachers and school librarians (Note: Mention of commercial websites does not constitute an endorsement of the vendor’s products by the author or by this publication. Included for informational purposes only.).

Steam-Powered Family — <https://www.steampoweredfamily.com/steam-activities/> — “Ultimate Guide to STEM Activities – with over 100 Activity Ideas!” This mom-blog is by a homeschooler with a background in animal sciences, computer programming, and psychology. She researches childhood trauma and mental health, offers definitions and resources

for families and educators to begin or expand their STEM and STEAM activities.

DEMCO — <https://ideas.demco.com/blog/8-inexpensive-stem-ideas-pokemon-go-library/> — the well-known library supplier offers plenty of ideas through their blog, activity guides, webinars, and idea gallery, as well as their products for school, public, and other types of libraries. In this short piece, find information on Pokémon GO and affordable STEM ideas for library programming.

We Are Teachers — <https://www.weareteachers.com/steam-books-classroom-library/> — provides a variety of information and products on the teaching life. School and public libraries also will benefit from free printables and ideas for programming. This particular link includes 50 STEM books to consider for your library collection, including titles on coding, environmental titles, math concepts, and historical figures who changed the world.

STAR*net — <https://www.starnetlibraries.org/steam-in-libraries/what-is-stem/> — Sci-

ence-Technology-Activities & Resources for Libraries – offers extensive ideas and links to reliable sources for bringing STEM into the library. Among the information provided are links to a National Research Council Report, “Identifying and Supporting Productive STEM Programs in Out-of-School Settings”; the 2019 National Science Foundation’s “STEM for All Video Showcase”; as well as posters, presentations, and projects for libraries on STEM topics.

Microsoft Education Educators STEM Lessons — <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/education-workshop/default.aspx> — presents “Hacking STEM Lessons & Hands-On Activities, with free lesson plans on a variety of topics from communication to models to space. Classroom kits are also available, which inspires public librarians to collaborate with teachers and support local school curricula. An Activity Library offers more lessons that can be adapted to other than classroom settings.

continued on page 32