Against the Grain

Manuscript 8497

Let's Get Technical – St. Thomas Library, Automating for the Future

Tia Felock

Rebecca DeJesus

Stacey Marien

Alayne Mundt

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Column Editor's End Note: Librarians' roles are constantly evolving to include services such as Food for Fines programs and the like, which tackles topics such as library programs and services, community involvement, food security, and sustainability. For years, IGI Global has been aware of these ever-changing roles and has worked to include the most recent and quality peer-reviewed research on these topics. Research surrounding the topics in this article can be found in IGI Global's databases, InfoSci-Books and InfoSci-Journals specifically, which act to provide valuable content to librarians and their patrons.

Let's Get Technical — St. Thomas Library, Automating for the Future

by **Tia Felock** (Technology and Automation Coordinator) <tia.felock@neric.org>

and **Rebecca DeJesus** (Librarian II, Electronic and Media Resources, Capital Region BOCES - School Library System) <Rebecca.dejesus@neric.org>

Column Editors: **Stacey Marien** (Acquisitions Librarian, American University Library) <smarien@american.edu>

and **Alayne Mundt** (Resource Description Librarian, American University Library) <mundt@american.edu>

Column Editor's Note: In this issue's column, we profile how a regional organization helped a private elementary school automate their catalog. — **SM & AM**

Introduction

Capital Region Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) partners with and supports 24 component school districts in Albany, Schenectady, Schoharie and Southern Saratoga counties. Capital Region BOCES also provides service to more than 150 school districts outside the Capital Region area and delivers more than 300 programs and services designed to support the entire educational process. Capital Region BOCES helps school districts receive access to high-quality educational services and resources at an affordable cost. The School Library System, a part of Capital Region BOCES, supports the component districts as well as nineteen private

schools in New York's Capital Region. We provide professional development, resource sharing, and print and digital products in support of our school librarians, teachers, and Students.

In July of 2018, the Capital Region BOCES School Library System was approached by **Thomas Kane**, Principal of **St. Thomas the Apostle School**, a small, private Catholic school serving students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth in Delmar, New York, about automating their library collection. Automating the school's collection of an estimated 4,000 titles would provide greater ease-of-use, more accurate records, and access to a wide network of libraries with which to share resources. Automation is important for students as it helps them gain the skills to search more efficiently for what they need. On behalf of **St. Thomas the Apostle School**, Capital Region BOCES School Library System Director **Dr. Jen**

Cannell assisted the school in applying for and receiving a Regional Collections Grant from the Capital District Library Council in the amount of \$4,982 for the purpose of creating the MARC records needed to automate the **St. Thomas the Apostle School Library**.

Members of the School Library System team working on the automation project were the following: **Tia Felock**, Library Automation Coordinator; **Rebecca DeJesus**, Electronic and Media Resources Librarian; **Sophia Geitgey**, Senior Library Typist.; **Regina Boyles**, Administrative Assistant; **Shelley Viola**, Secretary to School Library System and Arts in Education; and **Tim Furgal**, School Library System Clerk.

The Problem

St. Thomas the Apostle School does not have a full-time professional librarian. Prior to this project, its library records were contained

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in an old-fashioned card catalog, and the middle school collection of young adult titles, which are housed separately from the main library in a classroom, were poorly organized. It was difficult to locate the desired title(s), difficult to keep accurate records of what items the library owned, difficult to record statistics of library circulation and lending periods, and a wide network of interlibrary loan partners was unavailable to the **St. Thomas School**.

With little time, expertise, or funding to complete the project, it was necessary to enlist the help of outside organizations to get the **St. Thomas School's** library automated. The School Library System had the knowledge, staffing, and tools to create an electronic catalog for the school's library; through the grant received from Capital District Library Council, the School Library System was able to procure the necessary funding to complete the automation project.

The Process

Principal Kane invited us to meet with him and some school representatives on July 12, 2018 to discuss his vision for the school library and what his students' and staff's needs were. We looked at the physical space and number of books and were able to assess their needs and estimate the time required to meet the project goals, develop a plan, including making a list of needed materials, and gathering a team of staff members to execute the plan. We ordered customized scannable barcodes for the books as well as a handheld barcode scanner for the school library; these costs were covered by the grant money. We determined that the project of automating the **St. Thomas School Library** would take four people working six-hour days approximately three weeks in order to complete the automation project before the start of the 2018-19 school year.

The School Library System team worked throughout August and September 2018 on completing the automation project. Our first

step, once working on-site, was to remove all the books from the shelving, organize them by genre or Dewey Decimal classification, and, working on laptops seated at the school library tables, start searching for the titles, one by one, in the School Library System library automation catalog, Follett Destiny. A barcode sticker was placed on the upper right corner of each book cover. Titles were located electronically in the Destiny catalog using ISBN or title; for titles which were already present in our collection we simply added a new copy record for the **St. Thomas** site. If a title was not present in the Destiny catalog, we would find the title, using the book's ISBN or title in OCLC. We downloaded the records as needed from OCLC and then imported them into Destiny; from there, we attached a copy record for the **St. Thomas School Library**.

Once titles were added to the Destiny catalog, we physically organized them on newly constructed library shelving that the school had purchased. Keeping in mind that the library serves a population of students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade as well as the faculty and staff of the school, we divided the collection into "everybody" picture books, organized alphabetically by author's last name, juvenile nonfiction organized by Dewey Decimal numbers, juvenile fiction organized alphabetically by author's last name, and the middle school collection of young adult fiction and nonfiction, organized alphabetically by author's last name or Dewey Decimal number, as appropriate. The books were clearly and accurately labeled and placed in proper order on the shelves for easy locating.

After three weeks of cataloging, organizing books, and getting the library ready for the start of the school year, the **St. Thomas Library** was ready for digital circulation. The team once again worked with **Principal Thomas Kane** to develop a plan to train the certified retired public-school librarian who would be volunteering two to three days a week, along with some parent volunteers on how to access and use the library catalog. We covered the basics of using the Destiny catalog, including searching, circulation, and requesting books

through interlibrary loan, and running basic reports such as overdues.

Outcomes

The automation project was completed in September 2018; the students, faculty, and staff of **St. Thomas** have access to a fully-functioning, accurate and up-to-date library catalog capable of circulation, interlibrary loans, catalog searching, access to eBooks and audiobooks purchased by the School Library System, and patron maintenance. Reporting capabilities include inventory, overdue notices, and many more options for a thorough, accurate portrait of the school library, its patrons, and library activity at any given time.

Linda Berry, retired school librarian, was appointed to be the school's volunteer librarian; she works at the school several days a week, teaching library skills such as searching the catalog and locating library books on the shelves as well as instilling a love of literature and learning through story time read alouds and other activities.

St. Thomas is excited to have the addition of the automated library catalog in their school and the support of the School Library System team and access to the eighty-three other school libraries in the shared catalog.

The Future

Principal Thomas Kane and library staff have reached out to request additional training on using the Destiny catalog. Looking to the future, the School Library System plans to work with **St. Thomas** to help them stay up to date on 21st century learning, collaborating with the faculty to incorporate the library into the curriculum, and to continue growing and adjusting as the needs of library users evolve. We hope to see **St. Thomas School** become involved with our professional development and become active learners and participants in the School Library System and all it has to offer as their comfort level with the Destiny system increases. 🌱

Headwaters — The Subversion of Referees

Column Editor: **Kent Anderson** (Founder, Caldera Publishing Solutions, 290 Turnpike Road, #366, Westborough, MA 01581-2843; Phone: 774-288-9464) <kent@caldera-publishing.com>

Column Editor's Note: *This essay is an updated, revised, and expanded version of a post published on "The Geyser," an e-newsletter written by the author and available at <https://thegeyser.substack.com>.*

Michael Lewis — the author of *Moneyball*, *The Blind Side*, and *The Big Short* — has an uncanny knack for tapping into themes developing in the

zeitgeist. His recent podcast, "Against the Rules,"¹ examines a trend he's observed in society — the decline of the human referee in many parts of daily life, and what that's doing to our idea of fairness.

Disrespect of referees strikes me as profound and highly relevant to publishing, especially scholarly and scientific publishing. Gatekeepers, referees, and the consequences of these have been targeted for years as irrelevant, outmoded, or objectionable. In their

place, we've been given algorithms, feeds, and search engines, all of which gatekeep in their own ways, but without an identifiable (or accountable) human behind them. It's almost as if we accept humans expressed through technology more than we accept humans expressed through a time-tested process.

Lewis' first episode examined the travails of actual refereeing in the **NBA**, talking about how, in the past 1-2 years, the level of argumen-

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