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Adventures in Librarianship -- Greetings

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“Library of Congress Record Dependency Disorder.” (This despite **Rick Lugg**’s observation that “Every day, in libraries all over the country, perfectly good LC records are subjected to all manner of scrutiny and revision.”) **OCLC**’s **Karen Calhoun** forecast a “retirement wave for a generation of bibliographic control experts” after 2010. **Beacher Wiggins** of **LC** reported that librarians sent letters to **Congress** over the library’s decision last year to delay redistribution of Italian cataloging records obtained from **Casalini Libri**.

Oh yes, the misquote. On the agenda posted on the Web, I was listed as “**Bob Nardini** — The Vendor,” meaning, I’d been invited to speak on behalf of book vendors, all of them. That was an honor and also a weighty assignment, to speak for such a farflung, varied constituency which on a personal level included a good many friends, colleagues, and former colleagues; but on a less personal level, a whole lot of competitors. Still, there is a sense of community among vendors, and everyone I spoke to beforehand wished me well and offered their best advice.

Book vendors, I tried to say, are already substantial, if not always acknowledged, contributors to the enterprise of bibliographic control. We send original and upgraded **Cataloging in Publication (CIP)** records to **OCLC**. Libraries everywhere obtain records of all conceivable levels from us. Our **MARC** records, before any user tries to find one of our books in the **OPAC**, provide a platform for libraries

to find out about the book at all; to select and order the book; to receive the book and pay the invoice; and, if we vendors have not been asked to do it for them, to print a spine label so that someone on staff can put the book on the shelf in case a user comes looking for it.

Maybe vendors could take on the straightforward work for **LC**, so that **LC** would be in better shape to take on more of the not straightforward work that’s out there today in such abundance. Some things would need to change, though. **LC** estimates its costs to produce a **CIP** record, for example, at \$130. Yet anyone with around \$10,000 can subscribe for a year to the **LC** “Books English” file, and buy 175,000 new records for something like six cents apiece. The day’s theme, after all, was the “economics of bibliographic control” and so it seemed fair to point out that to book vendors, those economics didn’t look too appealing. It’s as if **LC** were a large developing country from which every day container ships sail to American ports to offload cataloging records assembled in workshops that might bear a little investigative reporting.

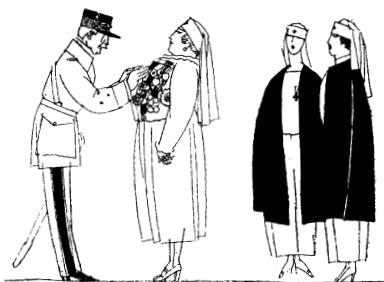
I tried hard to get my facts straight and to stick to what I knew. One point I wanted to make was that vendors hire a lot of degreed catalogers. I thought about saying that **Coutts Information Services**, my employer, has more catalogers than any library in the United States and Canada. But in the interest of truth-inventing I pulled back, figuring that certainly **LC** and maybe a few others hire more. So instead I said that **Coutts** employs more degreed catalogers than “all but a handful” of libraries in the U.S. and Canada.

Of course today the last word on everything belongs to the bloggers. It was no different for this third meeting of the **Working Group**. They were all over it within a day or two, producing some nice accounts and some decent criticisms of the whole affair. I have learned, though, that it’s with some anxiousness that you approach the exercise of searching your own name in **Technorati** after a bloggable event. This time I called up a posting that reported me as saying book vendors “may employ as many catalogers as the **Library of Congress** does.”

Well, I could just let that go. Except, **Beacher Wiggins** in his talk said that **LC** has on staff about 400 catalogers today (down from 750 fifteen years ago), and I am probably not the only person around able to estimate that there are entire regions of North America where you couldn’t find 400 catalogers. So, I will correct the public record right now, and say that while **Coutts** does hire a lot of catalogers — probably many more than your library has on board — we don’t have 400 people altogether, let alone anything like 400 catalogers.

Maybe the day will come — who knows? — when most catalogers will work for vendors. That could be the future of bibliographic control, or one part of it. But today they do not, no matter what you find I said out there on the Web.

The Working Groups’ Website, with links to all of the papers delivered at the three public meetings is: <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/>. 🌸



Adventures in Librarianship — Greetings

by **Ned Kraft** (Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State)
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ATG will be offering a line of greeting cards designed for libraries

trying to retrieve overdue books. If your standard notices have been ignored, try these beautifully illustrated cards to nudge those scofflaw customers.

Happy (belated) Birthday!
Though I’m the one who’s late,
you owe the fine.

When you’re away
the days don’t seem as good.
Come back soon, okay?
And bring those overdue books!

‘Tis another Christmas season...
A time for giving
and a time for giving back.
You know what I’m talking about.

On this your special bar mitzvah day
you take on adult responsibilities

and leave behind childish things
like those Hardy Boy books.

We love the way you walk.
We love the way you talk.
And we know you’ll do the right thing... eventually.
Happy Valentine’s Day!

The Dictionary of National Holidays
reminds us that the first Monday in June is,
for Native Americans, “Returning Overdue Books Day.”
Did you know that?
Have a Happy!

Our sincerest condolences
for your recent loss.
We know how it feels
to lose something dear to you.

We’ll begin taking orders for the cards in October. In 2008 we’ll be coming out with a line of “Please Join My Roundtable” greeting cards, and a special limited-edition fund-raising post card with an engraving from **Dante’s Inferno**. 🌸