

Cataloging in Search of Catalogers

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As a system of shared cataloging, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) cataloging subsystem possesses characteristics that represent the best and the worst in shared cataloging. The size of the database and the large number of specialized contributors are the major strengths of the subsystem. At this writing, the database contains more than nine million records, and 3529 members subscribe to the subsystem.¹ A veritable Goliath among bibliographic utilities, OCLC is not without weaknesses. A serious flaw of the cataloging subsystem is the variance in quality among the member contributed records that constitute the majority of records in the database. Unlike the records of the Library of Congress (LC) that are loaded into the subsystem, member contributed records frequently

are not cataloged in accordance with applicable cataloging codes or OCLC input standards, often lack appropriate call numbers and subject headings, and often possess a number of typographical errors. Studies conducted to identify these flaws and their frequency of occurrence indicate that in random samples of member contributed records between 40 and 43 percent of the records need local enhancement.²

Because of this variance in quality, catalog departments have adopted a variety of methods to enhance locally member contributed records. These methods have centered on two factors: the degree to which OCLC member records are verified and the staffing patterns necessary for verification. Surveys of libraries demonstrate a variety of verification patterns and reveal the conditions established to accept member records without verification. Of those libraries that verify member records, according to one survey, 70 percent indicate that they verify call numbers against LC or Dewey classification schedules; approximately 70 percent verify that the choice and form of entry is in accordance with applicable cataloging codes; 88 percent similarly verify the bibliographic description; and a majority verify subject headings against Library of Congress *Subject Headings* (LCSH), check the supplied heading for appropriateness to the item, and assign or further subdivide existing headings.³ Conditions by which libraries accept member contributed records without verification include such criteria as whether the record was input by a "reliable library," whether the record appeared incomplete or of poor quality vis-a-vis cataloging codes, input standards, etc., or whether the record was an I level record with LC call number or subject headings. Other conditions included the format of the material and the library's expertise in cataloging that format or the cataloging ability of the terminal operator or online cataloger.⁴ Surveys also show that a variety of staffing patterns have emerged. Responsibility for cataloging with member copy in some libraries rests entirely with librarians; others use only support staff; and in other institutions, librarians and support staff share this responsibility. A number of respondents distinguish among degrees of complexity of member records and assign the most difficult to librarians. Other libraries use support staff for verification and professional staff for revision. Many catalog departments use support staff exclusively to verify member records that have LC copy for a variant edition.⁵

Since the implementation of OCLC's system of shared cataloging, libraries have come to rely increasingly on support staff to verify and revise member contributed copy. This represents a departure from an older division of labor that existed prior to the advent of online cataloging systems, a division that assigned cataloging with LC copy to support staff and cooperative cataloging copy and original cataloging to librarians.⁶ The advent of online bibliographic utilities, such as OCLC, has necessitated a change in verification and staffing patterns because of the utilities' ability to make available immediately more member contributed cataloging than was available through older cooperative cataloging efforts, such as LC's National Union Catalog. As the availability of contributed copy increased, so increased the variety of methods adopted to utilize it effectively.

At Indiana University Libraries (IUL), many of the methods identified by the aforementioned surveys have been considered, rejected, adopted, or abandoned since the library first went online. Patterns of verification and staffing have changed frequently in order to establish the most effective method of using contributed copy cataloging and at the same time maintain acceptable standards of quality as defined by changing cataloging codes, input standards, classification schedules, and subject headings. This article describes the evolution in verification and staffing patterns of the Automated Processing Department at IUL. An outline of the evolution provides the opportunity to examine one member of the cataloging community and its attempts to effectively utilize member contributed copy by relying heavily upon support staff for verification and revision. This history presents a microcosm through which cataloging with member contributed copy may be further analyzed.

Monographic cataloging at IUL first went online with OCLC in October 1975 with the installation of four terminals and a printer.⁷ Terminal operators searched the database, printed records, ordered cards from edited printouts and LC cards, and input new records. Librarians handled materials with no copy or with member copy. Support staff, known locally as Junior Catalogers, edited LC copy to conform to local practices. Local authority files took precedence over LC's, and the use of Cutter-Sanborn tables precluded the use of LC's sliding scale. Having made these changes in accordance with local practices, Junior Catalogers routed the edited cards or LC printouts to the terminal operators to order OCLC printed cards. The

practice of cataloging material online was not implemented in this initial period of automation.

In order to more effectively utilize the automation potential offered by an online system of shared cataloging, IUL established in July 1977 the Automated Processing Department. The new department contained the filing unit, a catalog support unit, and for materials with LC copy, a newly established online cataloging unit. Support staff primarily from the old catalog department filled all of the twenty-three positions, and a support staff member headed each unit. Three professional positions, the Head of Automated Processing, the Catalog Consultant and Liaison to the Catalog Department, and the Special Assistant for Work Flow, Production, and Quality Control, topped the organizational pyramid.

The reorganization also necessitated changes in procedure. LC authority took precedence over local authority files, and the use of LC's sliding scale precluded the use of Cutter-Sanborn tables. Most authority work, shelf listing, and the resolution of filing conflicts occurred after the receipt of cards.

The assignment of material with OCLC member contributed copy proved difficult. In a report to IUL prior to the reorganization, Susan Brynteson, Assistant Director for Technical Services, summarized the strengths and weaknesses of this type of copy. Assets included its immediate availability, the ever growing number of member records in the database, and its potential for cutting cataloging costs. On the other hand, she asserted that "Some of the contributed cataloging is not of a quality basis and should be rejected. However, it is assumed that the contributed cataloging of certain libraries, especially that of large research libraries . . . is of a sufficiently high quality to be accepted by the IU Library." Brynteson recommended cataloging online contributed copy of an acceptable quality, defined as copy conforming to ISBD(M), AACR, and OCLC MARC format input standards and having LC subject headings. However, Dean of Libraries Carl Jackson maintained that the recommendation needed further study, and it was not adopted at that time.⁸

The Committee on Catalog Department Organization, formed to assist with the reorganization of that department, later renewed the discussion on the definition of acceptable OCLC member copy, the compilation of lists of institutions whose cataloging was considered acceptable, and the question of whether to distribute ma-

terials with member copy to librarians or support staff. The committee polled the technical services librarians and support staff, branch librarians, and subject and area bibliographers to solicit their input. In its September 1977 report on reorganization, the Committee declined to recommend a policy for cataloging with member copy and suggested instead "That members of all cataloging units be allowed input into deciding what is acceptable OCLC member copy and that unit heads work together in establishing acceptability lists."⁹ Librarians in the catalog department continued to catalog materials with member contributed copy.

The next year support staff in Automated Processing acquired limited responsibility for cataloging with member copy. A change in departmental procedures allowed online catalogers to catalog variant editions. The procedure applied to materials for which a database search retrieved a matching member record and a LC record for an edition that varied by place of publication and/or publisher. The member record was altered to reflect the classification and access of the LC copy, and verification, shelf listing, and resolution of filing conflicts occurred after the receipt of the OCLC cards. Later in the year, a reorganization merged the cataloging and processing activities of the Regional Campus Libraries (RCL) with those of the Bloomington Libraries.¹⁰ The merger added another unit with ten more support staff positions to Automated Processing. The responsibility of one of the positions was devoted entirely to cataloging material with member contributed copy. For the first time the department included a staff member with cataloging responsibility formerly delegated only to professionals. The merger also marked the first full year of operation for Automated Processing, and the presence of a contributed copy cataloger in RCL was indicative of the future of contributed copy cataloging for the Bloomington Libraries.

The annual report for that first year recommended that Bloomington online catalogers begin cataloging material with member contributed copy, and in August 1978 the procedures were implemented. Member copy had to have a LC classification number that could be verified in the LC schedules. Belles lettres without a LC number could be cataloged if the author's literary number had already been established in the IUL files. Subject headings had to be LC headings pertinent to the text. The copy had to show any applicable series, and these had to be verified in either the local series file or in LC's

Monographic Series (LCMS). Member copy sent to catalogers included copy with no classification number, only a Dewey number, or a number for a classed together series that IUL classed separately. Other materials sent to the catalog department included items whose records lacked requisite subject headings or those with non-LC headings, records with series not established in the series file or LCMS, and items that presented problems because of language, access, or subject coverage. Online catalogers initially concentrated on English language material and, of those, primarily on belle lettres. Verification occurred offline and prior to card production. Staff members were instructed to spend one hour a day on materials with member copy. The Catalog Consultant and Special Assistant provided training and offered guidance regarding cataloging problems.

These procedures remained in effect for over a year, but within that time staffing patterns changed radically. As a secondary priority for online catalogers, materials with contributed copy received less than their necessary attention, and the time span between receipt and cataloging increased. To allow for more timely processing of this material, one of the online positions was redefined as a cataloger of contributed copy in May 1979. Instead of eight staff members each verifying member copy for one hour a day, one person would catalog for eight hours. However, eight hours was still insufficient time to stem the slow growth of the Bloomington backlog. In November another, albeit larger, reorganization of staffing patterns occurred that further effected the evolution of contributed copy cataloging at IUL. The member copy position for RCL and the Bloomington position were combined with a new full time position and a half time, temporary position, both for Bloomington, to form a new section designated as the Contributed Copy Cataloging Section. The section assumed the responsibility for cataloging material with member copy as outlined in the August 1978 procedures. Online returned to cataloging only material with LC matching copy or to cataloging occasional member-copy material for which LC copy for a variant edition existed. The Special Assistant, one of the three librarians in Automated Processing, assumed responsibility for supervision and training. This marked the first time that a librarian assumed direct responsibility for any section in Automated Processing.

With training and accumulated experience, the staff began gradually to assume more responsibility for cataloging a larger

variety of material with member contributed copy. As a result, the strict limits imposed by the August 1978 procedures were relaxed. Staff members gained the expertise to perform the following: change or assign LC classification number; add, delete, or further subdivide LC subject headings; change existing or establish new name heading for local files; submit to the Name Authority Cooperative Project (NACO) name headings established in accordance with AACR2; modify or establish new series; revise descriptive cataloging in accordance to the appropriate cataloging code; input new records for variant editions; and, catalog in any western European language. Workshops provided instruction to contributed copy catalogers in AACR2, NACO guidelines, and LC subject heading practices. The staff also has access to the same cataloging tools and reference works as librarians, and they regularly consult with the Department Head, Cataloging Consultant, and Special Assistant regarding cataloging problems. Certain materials, primarily works in east European languages and/or works in a non-Roman alphabet, remain off limits. Contributed copy catalogers may elect to route other materials to the catalog department if they think the level of cataloging difficulty too great or the language or subject material too abstruse or esoteric. Despite the cataloging difficulties presented by the materials that IUL as a large research library collects, contributed copy catalogers elect to route few items to the catalog department. By far, the majority of the material received by IUL and for which contributed copy is retrieved is cataloged by contributed copy catalogers.

Not only did the unit grow in expertise and experience, but it also grew in size. In March 1980, the section assumed responsibility for cataloging audiovisual (AV) and curriculum laboratory materials for the RCL. Because LC purchases little of this type of material, most of the copy retrieved is member copy. This reassignment reduced the workload of the RCL original cataloger and provided more timely cataloging for these materials. In September 1980, another Bloomington online position was reassigned to Contributed Copy, and in 1982 another position within the department was redefined as an AV position for RCL. These reassignments brought the total number of staff members to six. The section also received regular allocations for a part-time searcher. New, detailed search procedures were written that stressed the importance of broadly based searches to retrieve all matching copy and to retrieve or identify copy for variant editions.

Increases in size and responsibility of the contributed copy cataloging section resulted from attempts to utilize in a cost effective manner member contributed copy while maintaining national standards of cataloging quality. The section's growth paralleled the growth in the size of OCLC's database as more institutions went on-line and began to contribute their own cataloging to the database. Because of the variance in the quality of this copy, it could not be cataloged online; however, it did not necessarily warrant the attention of librarians. By dividing the responsibility of cataloging material with member copy between highly trained staff and librarians, the library has been able to use in an effective and timely manner OCLC's system of shared cataloging.

With change as the norm of the past, contributed copy catalogers should expect additional changes in the future. Both verification and staffing patterns will further evolve. The increased complexity of input standards, reflecting in part an increase in the level of cataloging afforded government documents, technical reports, and nonprint material, will necessitate additional training for contributed copy catalogers. Regarding more traditional materials, surveys of samples of member contributed records indicate that between 57 and 60 percent of member contributed records either conform to applicable cataloging and input standards or can easily be revised at the terminals.¹¹ If these studies accurately depict the quality of member contributed records and if future studies substantiate these findings, then these records can be utilized at the terminals and can be verified after the receipt of the cards. Catalog copy supplied by publishers for titles in large microform sets may be processed in a similar fashion. The implementation of OCLC's enhance project could also affect staffing and verification patterns. On the one hand, an improvement in the quality of member contributed records could reduce the workload of a contributed copy section. On the other hand, implementation could increase the status and responsibility of such sections if their libraries were selected as enhance libraries and if responsibility were delegated to contributed copy catalogers or shared between them and librarians. Other changes await the future. One that has great potential is the future automation of libraries. A continued investment in online systems, both in integrated local systems and in shared systems, provides the challenge of retrospective conversion, of redefining even further traditional boundaries within technical services, and of increasing the interdependence of technical

and personal services. At IUL, such advances would necessitate change in the next decade of a degree similar to if not greater than the degree of change that has occurred within the past decade.

Notes

¹ Telephone call to OCLC via the Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA), 3 March 1983. Total number of subscribers is current as of 12 January 1983.

² Cynthia C. Ryans, "A Study of Errors Found in Non-MARC Cataloging in a Machine-Assisted System," *Journal of Library Automation* 11 (June 1978): 125-132; Judith Hudson, "Revisions to Contributed Cataloging in a Cooperative Cataloging Database," *Journal of Library Automation* 14 (June 1981):116-120.

³ Sally Braden, John D. Hall, and Helen H. Britton, "Utilization of Personnel and Bibliographic Resources for Cataloging by OCLC Participating Libraries," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 24 (Spring 1980):147-148.

⁴ Barbara Moore, "Patterns in the Use of OCLC by Academic Library Cataloging Departments," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 25 (January 1981):34-35.

⁵ Braden, 138-139.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁷ All materials about the Automated Processing Department at the Indiana University Libraries are from the following sources. 1) Department Files, General, which includes the following files: Automated Processing, Implementation; Automated Processing, Annual Reports, 1977-78 through 1981-82; Catalog Department Organization. 2) Automated Processing Procedure Memos. 3) Personal interview with Julie Nilson, 16 February 1983. 4) Personal interview with Lois McCune, 16 February 1983. This report does not include serial cataloging, which is a separate department within the Indiana University Libraries.

⁸ Susan Brynteson, "Cataloging Program Recommendations," TS, p. 18; W. Carl Jackson, "Cataloging Program Recommendations of the Assistant Director for Technical Services," TS, p. 4.

⁹ Committee on Catalog Department Organization, "Report," TS, p. 6.

¹⁰ Regional Campus Libraries include the Indiana University campuses at Fort Wayne, Gary, Kokomo, New Albany, Richmond, and South Bend. Before the merger, centralized processing and cataloging for the Regional Campus Libraries were administered separately from the Bloomington Libraries.

¹¹ Ryans, 128; Hudson, 118.