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ONLINE CATALOGING TOOLS

versus

PRINT CATALOGING TOOLS

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Introduction

With today's technology, most primary cataloging tools are available online, such as:

- Library of Congress Subject Headings:
<http://classificationweb.net>
- Anglo-American Cataloging Rules:
<http://desktop.loc.gov>
- Bibliographic Formats and Standards:
<http://www.oclc.org/bibformats>

Today's catalogers are now able to access these and other cataloging resources from their computers to find the information they need with a few clicks. Many in the cataloging community have welcomed these technological advances and incorporated them into their cataloging work. Others seem reluctant to embrace the changes and continue to use print cataloging tools.

In the Bibliographic Services Department of The University of Southern Mississippi's Libraries, the department not only maintains up-to-date print cataloging tools, but also subscribes to most of the online cataloging tools. The five catalogers in our department have different preferences in choosing the online or print versions when cataloging: one uses only print, one uses only online when possible, and the rest use both as needed. It appears that migrating totally from the print to online cataloging tools is not a preferred process for many of our catalogers, even though the benefits of using the online tools are substantial in saving time, accuracy, and uniformity. The authors' experience with colleagues raised questions about what prompts

some catalogers to prefer online to print and vice versa at libraries in the southeast region of the United States.

In particular, the authors will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- Did catalogers receive training in using online cataloging tools when they were in library school?
- Are catalogers influenced by their colleagues in choosing print and/or online cataloging tools?
- What particular reason(s) cause catalogers to prefer to use print or online tools?

Literature Review

Little research has been done to investigate how catalogers have been incorporating online cataloging tools into their work. Simpson and Williams (2001) did conduct a survey to assess the impact Cataloger's Desktop has on cataloging operations. They surveyed 159 academic and large public libraries to explore reasons for its use or non-use and provided recommendations for successful implementation of this database. The reason for non-use of Cataloger's Desktop was categorized as a mix of personal dynamics and technical considerations. Personal dynamics was the answer for some long-time catalogers who have already established routines and do not want to reorient themselves to the online environment. Another reason was fear of or getting lost in the electronic version. Strategies for incorporating the online tools into the

workplace were: creating an atmosphere that is conducive to change; encouraging communication among staff; provide more training for staff; supply more documentation; and addressing the technical issues.

Ferris (2006) conducted a study on the use of the Classification Web database at the University of Colorado at Boulder and discovered a lower than expected use of this tool. Even after more formal training, there was no increase in usage of the database. It was speculated that the low usage of this tool was due to the number of copy catalogers who did not need to use it; also other senior catalogers at the management level did not need to use it. Another explanation was the fact that some of the catalogers still used only the print material.

Methodology

An online survey instrument was developed (see Appendix) to explore the reason why some catalogers prefer online cataloging tools, while others prefer print versions in the southeast region of the country. Messages were posted on the following four listservs requesting members to access the online questionnaire survey:

- Alabama Library Association: alala-l@maillists.samford.edu
- Louisiana Library Association: LLAGneral@llaonline.org
- Mississippi Library Association: mla@usm.edu
- Southeastern Library Association: sela@listserv.cc.ucf.edu

This survey was introduced with an explanation of its purpose with responses sought from catalogers with anonymity. The survey was comprised of 16 questions, 10 of which were multiple-choice and 6 of which were open-ended questions. The questions pertaining to print versus online cataloging tools were purposely open-ended to enable respondents to express why they choose either print or online as their preference. The survey was available from October 11 to November 25, 2006.

Profiles of Respondents

A total of 69 respondents to the survey was received and recorded by the online survey software. Over 90 percent of the respondents have an ALA accredited library degree, but nearly 40 percent of the degrees were received during or prior to the 1980s before online cataloging tools became readily available. The majority of the respondents work in academic and public libraries with 75 percent of them having more than five years of professional cataloging experience.

Survey Findings

Did catalogers receive training in using online cataloging tools when they were in library school?

Of all the respondents, 29 percent had received training in using online cataloging tools when they were in library school. One would assume that most catalogers who received their library degrees prior to the 1990s had not received training in using online cataloging tools, while the majority of catalogers who received their degree after 1990s would have received training with online cataloging tools. Surprisingly, 11 percent of the respondents who received their degree prior to the 1990s had received online cataloging tools training, while only 58 percent of the respondents who received their degree after the 1990s had received online cataloging training.

The definition of online cataloging tools has evolved over time. In the 1980s and 1990s, the online tools that were taught at library school were mostly in a CD-ROM format as compared to the online Websites of the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, the data shows that even for the newest catalogers who just received their MLS, there is still a significant number who never received training with online cataloging tools. This trend seems to shift the responsibility of training in online cataloging from the schools to library managers.

Are catalogers influenced by their colleagues in choosing print and/or online cataloging tools?

Among the 54 catalogers who responded to this question, 47 stated their colleagues did not influence their decision and four felt they were influenced to use either the print or online tools. The final three stated they were encouraged and shown the advantage of using the online tools.

Catalogers appear quite independent when choosing their tools and colleagues do not seem to have an influence on each other. It appears that formal training is needed for both online and print cataloging tools, and library managers might encourage catalogers to share their experience with each other.

What particular reasons causes catalogers to prefer to use print cataloging tools?

Examples of responses are:

- Online tools are hard on my eyes, expensive, and confusing. Print tools allow me to relax my body.
- Force of habit. Library school did not teach me to use online tools.
- I can make my own notes to print tools.
- It is easy to go directly to the place with print tools. It is easy to research print tools to discover information. Using the index of the print tools is the only way I can find what I seek.

These results indicate that print cataloging tools have some advantages that online tools seem to lack. Perhaps cataloging database designers could consider these print tool advantages and incorporate these features of the print materials into the online ones.

What particular reasons cause catalogers to prefer to use online cataloging tools?

Examples of responses are:

- Online cataloging tools are more current, convenient, and faster. I can copy and paste with online tools.

- I can search for specific information with online cataloging tools. Online tools have better examples. Some tools are linked to each other.

According to the survey respondents, online cataloging tools seem to have many advantages over the traditional print cataloging tools. Wider accessibility to the tools, along with more convenient, click-able access, bring with it increased efficiency including a faster turnaround time and improved cataloging output. The searching functions are enhanced because of the addition of keyword and advanced searching techniques. These features allow the staff to go beyond reliance on their memory, content listing, or indexes. As a result, some institutions have noticed that catalogers are better able to find answers and have less need to consult high-level catalogers.

Conclusions

The results of this survey indicate that regardless of when the library education was received, catalogers use both online and print cataloging tools, and that migrating from print to online cataloging tools is not an easy process. RDA (*Resource Description and Access*) which will replace AACR2 in early 2009 are going to be released in both print and web-based version. This should assure many librarians who are accustomed to print cataloging tools. By-and-large, catalogers are not influenced by colleagues in their choice of using print and/or online cataloging tools. Catalogers are independent and autonomous when they perform cataloging and one cataloger's good experience with online tools might not pass on to other catalogers. Formal training might be the most effective way to advocate online cataloging tools to catalogers who have reservations towards these tools.

This online survey may have targeted only participants who are comfortable in an online environment. A paper-based survey may be needed in addition to an online one to get a broader pool of participants.

REFERENCES

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- Ferris, Anna. 2006. "Notes on Operations: If You Buy It, Will They Use It?" *LRTS* 50 (2): 129-137.

APPENDIX

Online Cataloging Tools vs. Print Cataloging Tools Survey of Catalogers' Cataloging Tool Preference

1. Do you have an ALA-accredited library degree?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. When did you receive your library degree?
 - a. Before 1980
 - b. 1980-1990
 - c. 1991-2000
 - d. after 2000
3. Did your Library School education provide you with the opportunity to use online cataloging tools?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.
 - c. Don't remember
 - d. other: _____
4. What kind of library do you work in?
 - a. Academic
 - b. Public library
 - c. Special library
 - d. School library
 - e. Other_____
5. How many years of professional cataloging experience do you have?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-5 year
 - d. More than 5 years
6. How much time do you spend cataloging per week?
 - a. 0-10 hours
 - b. 11-20 hours
 - c. 21-30 hours
 - d. 31-40 hours
7. Do you perform edit (copy) cataloging, original cataloging, or both?
(Original Cataloging refers to inputting a new master record cataloged according to current cataloging practices and AACR2 1998 rev. and amendments; Copy Cataloging refers to modifying an existing record for local use and create a copy of the record with your modifications — as defined by OCLC bibliographic Formats and Standards.)
 - a. Edit (copy) cataloging
 - b. Original cataloging
 - c. Both
 - d. Other:_____
8. If you do both edit (copy) cataloging and original cataloging, what is the percentage of your original cataloging per year?
 - a. Less than 10%
 - b. 10%-30%
 - c. 31%-60%
 - d. over 60%
9. Please check whether you use the following print cataloging tools: (check all that apply)
 - a. Library of Congress Cataloging Schedule
 - b. Library of Congress Subject Headings
 - c. Library of Congress Rule Interpretations
 - d. Bibliographic Formats and Standards
 - e. Anglo American Cataloging Rules, second edition, 2002 revision
10. What other print cataloging tools do you use when you catalog?

11. Please check whether you use the following online cataloging tools: (check all that apply)
 - a. Classification Web (<http://classificationweb.net/>)
 - b. Library of Congress Authorities (<http://authorities.loc.gov/>)
 - c. Library of Congress Rule Interpretations (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/6/18/s18-28-e.html>)
 - d. Bibliographic Formats and Standards (<http://www.oclc.org/bibformats/en/>)
 - e. AACR2 from Cataloger's Desktop
12. What other online cataloging tools do you use when you catalog?
13. How do your cataloging colleagues and supervisors influence your preference in using online cataloging tools or print cataloging tools?
14. How current (by publication date) are the print cataloging tools in your cataloging department?
15. Do you choose to use online cataloging tools if you have both print and online tools available? Please specify the reason: _____
16. Do you choose to use print cataloging tools if you have both print and online tools available? Please specify the reason: _____