

Technical Services Quarterly. 1983, vol.1, n.1, p.117-120.

ISSN: 1555-3337 (electronic) 0731-7131 (paper)

DOI: 10.1300/J124v01n01_19

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Libraries on the Line

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Abstract

The utilization of online systems has necessitated many changes in technical services including the following: 1. Increased cooperation among libraries is obvious; 2. Card catalogs have been closed or frozen; 3. The focus of cataloging has changed from manual to online access with the publication of AACR2; 4. There is a growing realization of the importance of authority control; 5. The automation of serials is in the beginning stages; and, 6. Libraries are exploring implications for user services.

Since the early 1900s librarians have discussed ways of streamlining technical services. However, implementing proposed changes was slow. For example, the first edition of *A.L.A. Catalog Rules* appeared in 1908. Although a committee for the second edition was appointed in 1930, the second edition of *A.L.A. Catalog Rules* and *Rules for Descriptive Cataloging* were not issued until 1949, nineteen years later.

From the advent of automation in the late 1960s to the present, more changes have occurred in technical services than in all the years preceding 1967. Much credit is due the academic librarians of Ohio who conceived the idea of a cooperative automated cataloging system, now the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC).

Cooperation

Cooperation among libraries is evident today in the widespread use of bibliographic utilities such as OCLC, the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), and Washington Library Network (WLN) for acquisitions, cataloging, authority work, serial processing, and interlibrary loan. Greater attention to certain areas will make cooperation even more effective. One goal must be the development of better national and international standards of rules and formats. Also imperative is the interface between the Library of Congress (LC) and bibliographic utilities, as well as the interface among the various bibliographic utilities. Additionally, the practice of assigning libraries specific responsibilities in cataloging, name authority work, serials, and interlibrary loan must be expanded.

Selected Aspects of Technical Services

Catalogs

Many libraries are now freezing or closing card catalogs and developing or using catalogs in online or microform format. Some catalogs are new while others have evolved from existing

systems. For example, at the Ohio State University Libraries (OSUL) the automated circulation system has been expanded so that it now includes an online public catalog as well as online access to detailed serial holdings.

Before the online catalog can completely replace the card catalog, some problems need to be resolved. In the first place, the online catalog must provide at least as much information and as many access points as the card catalog. Cross references are necessary. Moreover, large academic libraries must decide whether or not such non-Roman scripts as Arabic, Hebrew, and Chinese should be transliterated. Essential, too, are improved search capabilities for national and local online systems. Terminals must be less costly and more efficient to operate and have less down time.

Cataloging Codes

With the publication of AACR2, the focus changed from manual to online access. It has been difficult to keep up with the numerous AACR2 rule interpretations and changes. The inevitability of AACR3 raises the following questions: When will AACR3 be published and implemented? Will there be major changes? Can these changes be carried out without serious upheaval to the system? Will practicing catalogers at the local level have input into future catalog codes?

Authority Files

There is a growing realization that authority files are of primary importance to an online catalog. While some libraries have changed from paper to online or microform authority files, others are establishing authority files for the first time. Links between online catalogs and online authority files enable changes in an online catalog to be made much more quickly and accurately than in a manual catalog. However, decisions concerning authorized forms of headings and links must be made by library personnel.

Especially helpful for technical services processing is online access to the LC name authority index which is available through the bibliographic utilities. Perhaps in the near future there will be access to LC subject, series, and uniform title authority files as well.

Serials

Some libraries are beginning to automate serial processes, such as online bibliographic records, online check-in, and online union lists. An example of online serial activity is the Ohio State University Libraries serial holdings file, which displays detailed holdings statements and permits access by volume and year. These serial holdings are kept up-to-date by online maintenance.

Future online capabilities for individual records should include serial publication patterns, date of next expected issue, check-in, and claiming. Among other areas of interest are online periodical indexes, electronic journals, batch and online searches for journal articles, document delivery, and copyright law problems.

Implications for User Services

Recent cooperative activities have pervaded all areas of the library world from international standardization to bibliographic utilities to individual libraries. Technical services support is essential for public service to patrons. If technical services do not use innovative methods to eliminate backlogs, patrons will not be able to locate needed information.

As patrons become excited about the use of the online catalog, they may prefer to use it to search for information about monographs and serials. Two factors which make the online catalog a viable tool are AACR2 and online authority files. Helpful to patrons are the use of natural language and user-oriented choice and form of entry as indicated by AACR2. Good authority control, including cross references, also assists the reader. User-friendly terminals will permit patrons to find needed information and materials with minimal or no assistance. Recent and projected changes in technical services have enabled library staff and patrons to find what they need, when they need it, in the least amount of time.

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