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# Quality Assurance Online

C. Tom Sutherland

QA, or quality assurance, is not just a current corporate buzz word. Indeed QA can be a "practical tool for library management . . . a blueprint from which to extract whatever fits *your* library."<sup>1</sup> Commercial nuclear power utilities are required by the *Code of Federal Regulations* to have a QA program.<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Energy facilities like the Savannah River Plant and the Savannah River Laboratory are required to have QA programs by DOE Order.<sup>3</sup> The DuPont Company, operator of the Savannah River site, has further directed that all departments, including the library, develop and implement Quality Assurance Manuals in compliance with the order.<sup>4</sup> Since the DuPont Site Plan and its references set forth the requirements for the "design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of nuclear facilities"<sup>5</sup> their application to library services can require some imagination. However a basic concept of QA is a "customer-supplier relationship." The ultimate purpose of any quality assurance scheme is to ensure complete satisfaction by the customer with the goals or services provided by the supplier,<sup>6</sup> a concept that any Librarian can agree with.

Quality control, assuring product quality, is an essential component of QA. One way we are implementing QA in the Savannah River Laboratory Library is to apply some new quality controls to our online catalog. Quality control assures product quality both by monitoring a process and by eliminating causes of unsatisfactory performance. Our online system already provides several controls to records when they are entered. Thesaurus control on the subject, series, and corporate author fields insures that those entries are correct. Another validation check insures that a title is present. Now we are developing procedures for additional database verifications. These will be batch jobs which can be run at night since a record by record check online would be very time consuming and tedious. In our catalog each book is represented by a catalog record and a circulation record. The first checks will be to match these records. For every catalog record is there a matching circulation record? Conversely for every circulation record is there a catalog record?

Over half of our 40,000 volumes are departmental or desk copies, books that were ordered through the library but are assigned to the individual who ordered them. The catalog record for departmental copies contains author, title, and publisher information. Library copies also have call numbers and subjects. For our quality control, the records of departmental copies will be checked for an entry in the name field. Similarly, the records for library books will be checked for an entry in the call number field and entries in the subject field.

In addition to these tests we plan to check the following conditions:

- If a library book is marked as checked out, is there an entry in the name field?
- If the book is checked in, is "name" absent.
- For every acquisition record, if the book has been received, are there matching catalog and circulation records?
- Does every acquisition and catalog record have a title?
- Are all price entries numbers?
- Are all date fields in the correct format?

These inspection procedures will identify the records which need correcting. While these tests will not make necessary corrections, they will identify problem records, and we will be able to conduct these periodically to evaluate the quality of our database records.

## References

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6. Lionel Stebbing, *Quality Assurance: the Route to Efficiency and Competitiveness*, Ellis Haywood Ltd., 1986, p 9.
7. ANSI/ASQC A3, *American National Standard Quality Systems Terminology*, 1987, p 4.