

Book Reviews

Margaret Rohdy, Editor

Proceedings of the Bicentennial Conference on Bibliographic Control for the New Millennium. Ed. Ann M. Sandberg-Fox. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Cataloging Distribution Service, 2001. 536p. \$45 (ISBN 0-8444-1046-2). LC 2001-029952. Also available at www.loc.gov/catdir/bibcontrol.

In England between 1847 and 1849, a Royal Commission held hearings during which Antonio Panizzi defended the use of cataloging rules to create a catalog for the British Library because people in the British government and in the general public were unable to believe how expensive it was to create a catalog, how long it took, and how much bibliographic expertise was involved. The *Proceedings of the Bicentennial Conference* provides evidence, if it were needed, that with regard to the education of noncatalogers about cataloging, we are still living in the nineteenth century.

The authors of these papers, delivered at an invitational conference at the Library of Congress (LC), advance and debate a number of controversial positions. The first is that people who have not been trained or educated as catalogers can create resource descriptions (i.e., metadata or cataloging records). Karen Calhoun suggests that authors could create these for their own works, or that noncataloger librarians could do so; Priscilla Caplan and Michael Kaplan suggest that publishers and vendors could create these for libraries; Regina Reynolds opines that “there may come a day when information is self-indexing” (440); and Clifford Lynch points out that “anyone can become a describer of information,” but then wisely notes that “meta-

data itself is information, and we need to be able to decide when we choose to trust it” (xxxiv). It was unclear how catalogs built from such records would ensure that users looking for a particular work, author, or subject would be shown every edition of a particular work, every work by a particular author, or every work on a particular subject. However, conference discussion group 6 did recommend that a metadata authoring tool for naive users be constructed that would “interact” with online authority schemes (names, subject thesaurus, classification), with a software agent that would “enforce” the schemes (481). Subsequent to the publication of these proceedings, LC has published an action plan that includes plan 4.3, “Develop specifications of a metadata creation tool for authors.” It remains to be seen whether noncataloging librarians, authors, publishers, and vendors are willing to devote the necessary time to becoming educated, or at least trained, catalogers.

The second controversial position from the conference is that MARC is obsolete, and we need new standards to deal with cataloging electronic resources. Martin Dillon and Carl Lagoze reject MARC without any discussion, and even Michael Gorman refers to MARC as “the electronic version of the catalogue card” (xxiv). Caroline Arms, Liz Bishoff and Bill Garrison, Caplan, Thomas Downing, and Jane Greenberg all describe the recent proliferation of competing metadata standards—all this at a time when the library world is undergoing the painful reconciliation of CAN-MARC, UKMARC, and USMARC because of an earlier proliferation of competing MARC standards! Caplan

observes that in the midst of this proliferation of metadata standards “there was no general consensus that common content rules were either necessary or desirable” (68). I believe she is right that “in all of these cases . . . what we have been seeing, if we’ve been paying attention, is the reinvention of cataloging” (72). What is not clear is why it needs reinventing.

The third controversial position is that it would be possible to harness software and telecommunications technology in order to achieve “semantic interoperability,” or “seamless interconnectivity.” Lagoze suggests that “libraries should promote the catalog as a mapping or interoperability mechanism, . . . amongst individual descriptions that are distributed across the Web” (277). Calhoun describes this as the abandonment of “the notion of a single monolithic, all-encompassing global authority file in favor of a system of linked interoperable files” (371). Barbara Tillett suggests that “Many systems include the authorized form of the name as a text string and may have an associated authority record number for the entity represented by the text string. Through either the text string or the record number link, one can navigate to associated authority records with different languages and cataloging rules to display [the user’s] chosen form” (213).

The idea of linking files across the Internet may be the most fruitful idea advanced at the Bicentennial Conference, but there is a lot of wishful thinking here. For one thing, we will have to wait many years before telecommunications and client-server technology is powerful enough to support such approaches at a reason-

able speed. For another, one hesitates to trust the design of such a complex system to library systems people who currently cannot figure out how to provide access to authority records for users who do keyword-in-record searches within a single file. (No current online catalog software can do this.) For “semantic interoperability” to work without confusion to the user, it is essential that the user’s preferred form for a sought author, work, or subject appear everywhere that author, work, or subject is identified for selection by the user or offered as an ostensible match for his or her search, whether it be in single record displays, multiple-record displays, or heading displays. That would require complex software design indeed, especially if the user’s preferred form is being drawn from an authority record across the world from the catalog being searched!

In the meantime, LC action plan 2.1 is to “define requirements for a common interface for searching, retrieving, and sorting across a range of discovery tools.” If the resultant interface does not find and display together the editions of a work, the works of an author, or the works on a subject, we will wind up with “portals” that cost a good deal more money than Web search engines and don’t provide any added value. Educated users would be likely to prefer the catalog (if it is still available for searching separately) to such a portal because of the catalog’s greater precision and predictability.

Other notable developments at the Bicentennial Conference include the recommendation that LC make the Library of Congress Classification and Library of Congress Subject Headings available at no cost on the Internet (which is now LC action plan 2.5). Sally McCallum provides a valuable delineation of the principles behind MARC and a clear explication of the issues involved in a possible future migration of our bibliographic

data from MARC to XML. Thomas Mann supplies his usual clear-headed description of the myriad ways in which heading displays that include syndetic structure (cross references) drawn from authority files help users and reference librarians navigate through the catalog; as always, he provides many concrete and illustrative examples of real research questions posed to real catalogs. He also includes a delightful discussion on the importance of seams.

And finally, discussion group 4A recommends that systems work out methods to separate records at the global level but combine them for display at the local level, in order to solve the multiple versions problem in a way that supports our current methods of sharing cataloging and at the same time helps catalog users select among all the available manifestations of a particular expression of a work. Accordingly, LC action plan 2.4 is to “define functional requirements for systems that can manage separate records for related manifestations at the global level and consolidate them for display at the local level.” As chair of a CC:DA task force that recommended that AACR2 solve the multiple versions/Rule 0.24 problem as a record-display problem without regard to the number of separate records that actually underlie the display (similar to Melissa Bernhardt’s 1988 recommendations for the solution of problems users have with successively entered serials), I find this action plan from LC most encouraging.

Discussion group 4A also recommends that AACR2 and MARC 21 be restructured to support display of hierarchical relationships between records for a work, its expressions, and its manifestations, which LC has adopted as action plan 3.4. Panizzi lives!—*Martha M. Yee (myee@ucla.edu), UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles*

Works Cited

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Sorting Out the Web: Approaches to Subject Access. By Candy Schwartz. Westport, Conn.: Ablex, 2001. 169p. \$32.95 paper, (ISBN 1-56750-519-8); \$72.50 hardcover, (ISBN 1-56750-518-X). LC 00-22370.

The World Wide Web has been compared to a library where all the books are in a pile on the floor. Librarians have long sought ways to bring the Web, or at least parts of it, under the same kinds of bibliographic control that they have for their print collections. Schwartz presents an overview of the various methods that are available and in use today for providing subject access to material on the Web. The first area she considers is metadata. This chapter is a valuable survey of various metadata projects and how they relate to one another. In the chapter on classification, she begins with a bit of classification theory and then describes and analyzes a number of projects that organize Web resources according to various classification schemes. While the use of classification to organize information appeals to a librarian’s sensibilities, it can be a labor-intensive