EDITORIAL

Human as the Loop

Michael Fernandez and Rachel E. Scott

Although there are many perks of editing an American Library Association (ALA) Core division journal, one of the best may be the press passes we are provided to attend the ALA Annual Conference and Core Forum. Engaging with poster presenters and speakers and encouraging them to submit to *Library Resources & Technical Services* (*LRTS*) is truly an honor and a pleasure. It was similarly wonderful attending the Library Research Round Table Chair's Program to applaud *LRTS* authors Blair Solon, Margie Montañez, Liz Cooper, Amy Jankowski, Glenn Koelling, and Laura Soito on their 2026 Jesse H. Shera Award for Distinguished Published Research.

Unsurprisingly, many sessions during this year's conference grappled with and explored the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Of particular interest to *LRTS* readers were those that reported on AI tools for cataloging and metadata work. We've all heard the expression "human in the loop," but in the session "AI Assisted Metadata Creation: Real-World Applications, Ethical Questions, and Practical Lessons," presenters Anna Oates Schlaack and Casey Mullin both reiterated the importance of human *as* the loop.

Mullin presented his work to develop ErgoCat, an app that automates cataloging workflows with minimal typing and mouse clicks. Mullin wrote in his Substack that he started reframing his question around "how the human can deploy generative AI to automate the aspects of cataloging work that a machine can do faster and just as well (if not better) than a human can. It's not about replacing a human's effort, it's about redeploying the human mind and freeing their physical body from the drudgery of data entry."[1] Mullin coined the phrase "Cataloger in the Loop," but his app ensures the centrality of the cataloger throughout the workflow.

Schlaack, presenting on behalf of herself and colleagues Stephanie M. Luke and Ayla S. Kenfield, described a case study conducted with digital collections at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The team identified several failures of the tools for the task at hand. One of my takeaways from their presentation was the importance of articulating the limits of an AI tool for a given task. Librarians are increasingly asked to test and use AI tools for their work. While concern and skepticism toward AI tools are incredibly valid, it will likely be more compelling to point out specific reasons that AI might not be up for the task at hand.

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The next issue of *LRTS* will be our themed issue on the topic of change management. We received a resounding response to our call for papers, and the issue is shaping up to be something special. Libraries are responding to change in novel and creative ways. In the meantime, this issue of *LRTS* presents timely case studies and compelling new research on topics ranging from paper shelflists to ebook accessibility.

Communications on Practice

In "When Everything Changes: Reimagining Structure, Process, and Community in Collections," Amanda Bugbee, Denis Shannon, Jamie Markus, Cynthia Hughes, Elyse K. Johnson, Amber R. Lotspeich, and Shannon M. Smith discuss how employee turnover and an integrated library system migration forced quick and meaningful change at the University of Wyoming Libraries. The Collection Management department leveraged change management strategies to rebuild the department from the ground up, creating a structure that met the needs of library workers and their work.

Evan Peebles and Ari Romero relate their considerations and experiences in "Better Together: Implementing a Shared Inbox for Electronic Resource Licensing." Working together to establish a new Licensing and Accessibility Unit highlighted the importance of timely access to information and context for all parties. They requested and implemented a shared inbox and have found it facilitates their planning, agility, and open communication.

In "The Vanishing Newspaper, Academic Libraries, and Our Withering Democracy," Steven Shapiro discusses changes in the news industry and considers the implications for academic libraries as advocates for and consumers of newspapers. Shapiro argues that librarians contribute to an educated citizenry through information literacy and have an important role to play in news literacy, newspaper readership programs, training the next generation of journalists, and digitizing and hosting student newspapers.

Features

Elizabeth Hobart shares results from a 2024 survey in "The Paper Shelflist in the 21st Century." Guidelines have historically directed special collections libraries to maintain a secure paper shelflist, but this instruction was removed in 2023. Hobart reports on the status of paper shelflists in rare books, archives, and special collections, investigating why librarians maintain them and exploring the effects of continuing or ending the practice.

In "Approaches to Rare Books Cataloging and Reducing Backlogs of Hidden Collections: A Review of the Literature," Mary Burns examines the literature to consider librarians' methods and approaches to reduce cataloging backlogs of rare books. Burns finds evidence of minimal-level and phased cataloging approaches, as well as cross-departmental collaboration and the adoption of technology tools, and explores the application of AI and the implications of linked data.

Adina Mulliken presents an "Accessibility Analysis of Academic Library EPUBs." The study investigates EPUBs from four vendors and eleven publishers to assess linking, alt text and extended descriptions of images, heading structures, MathML for mathematical content, specification violations, publisher-provided accessibility metadata, and alignment between publisher metadata and observed accessibility features. Mulliken reports inconsistencies between the potential, actual implementation, and reported metadata surrounding EPUB accessibility.

Notes on Operations

In "To Weed or Not to Weed? Undertaking a Large-Scale Print Serials Withdrawal Project," Jylisa Kenyon, Ramirose Attebury, and Jeremy Kenyon detail their iterative approach to weeding serials. Their case study outlines how a previously weeding-averse library ramped up from small- to large-scale serials weeding work by leveraging data and applying a formula that weighed various criteria for weeding.

Book Reviews

Books reviewed include *Compact Copyright: Quick Answers to Common Questions,* Second Edition by Sara R. Benson, *Library Technical Services: Future Forward* edited by Mary Beth Weber and Melissa De Fino, and *Working with Library Collections: An Introduction to Technical Services for Support Staff*, Second Edition by Hali R. Keeler.

Notes

1. Casey Mullin, "Welcome to Cataloger in the Loop!," *Substack*, https://catalogerintheloop.substack.com/p/welcome-to-cataloger-in-the-loop.