

Preface

*Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.*¹

FRBR, FRAR, FROR, FRVRR, FRANAR, FR SAR . . . What are these abbreviations? In a profession that lives and breathes abbreviations and acronyms, do we really need more? Apparently we do, because these are the new boys (or girls) on the block.

There is an information revolution on the horizon. Actually, it is going on right now. Libraries no longer have a monopoly on information. As library professionals, we are challenged by publicly traded companies—such as Google and Amazon—with billions of dollars in resources. They provide the consumer with easy-to-use Web interfaces, a single-search box that belies the complexity of indexes and programming beneath, and add-on features that have become extremely popular with users who now expect them to be available on the library’s online public access catalog (OPAC) and databases.

It has become apparent to library administrators the current organizational arrangement and division of operations of technical services and public services is not sustainable either financially or organizationally. The clear imperative is: libraries need to be able to morph, change, reengineer, and strategically invest and train personnel and resources toward a future in which information is no longer controlled or held by the library, but by a large number of publishing and service conglomerates for whom there is little incentive to think about issues, such as persistent access, preservation, or standardization of digital objects. Since the advent of the Internet, the library catalog has become a little-used resource, almost a relic of a bygone era when the library held reign as the information repository of recorded world knowledge.

In the last year, three major reports/white papers have challenged and questioned the current workflows and priorities of library technical services—and of libraries in general—as they relate to information organization

and description. The first, *Rethinking How We Provide Bibliographic Services for the University of California*, is the final report of the Bibliographic Services Task Force (BSTF) for the University of California Libraries.² Because the University of California Libraries comprises a large ten-campus system and thus must allocate resources and reduce redundancy as much as possible, the UC Libraries are often at the forefront of change in academic libraries. Task force members took the monumental leap of actually questioning the validity and efficiency of what is currently being done in UC academic library technical services. Although the survey and its results, conclusions, and core recommendations met with mixed results in the UC Libraries System, the report has become a focal point and wake-up call for change and the restructuring of not only the library catalog, but also for librarianship as a whole. Short- and long-term priorities related to the conclusions of this report are currently under way in the UC system. (See also Thomas W. Leonhardt’s analysis of this report in “Rethinking Bibliographic Services” in the May/June issue of *Technicalities*.³)

The Changing Nature of the Catalog and Its Integration with Other Discovery Tools, the second major document, was the final report by Karen Calhoun of the Cornell University Library, which she prepared for the Library of Congress (LC).⁴ The objectives of this study are related to Action Item 6.4 of LC’s Bicentennial Conference on Bibliographic Control, which states: “support research and development on the changing nature of the catalog to include consideration of a framework for its integration with other discovery tools.” The report has many options for LC, including a blueprint and vision for change, an examination of the future of research library catalogs, and next steps related to moving forward in organizational change and renewal.

Finally, Indiana University's task force on the future of cataloging within its libraries issued a white paper in the time period between the above-mentioned reports were issued.⁵ *A White Paper on the Future of Cataloging at Indiana University* focuses on the cataloging operations of this one major member of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and was prepared by a task force comprised of twelve library staff members. They were charged to survey the landscape and identify current trends that will directly impact cataloging operations and to identify new roles for cataloging staff and the online catalog. Their conclusions denote the need for cataloging expertise in the future, but they also assert that there should be newly expanded roles, involving scholarly communication, information technology, and publishing.

At this time, there are many calls within the profession for the wholesale abandonment and demise of the library catalog; there are just as many calls for the evolution and re-evolution of the library catalog; and there is a whole lot of confusion and questioning in between these poles.

Many "next-gen" librarians feel that continually updating, upgrading, and re-engineering the library catalog is "like putting lipstick on a pig," to quote Andrew Pace from the North Carolina State University (NCSU) Libraries. And just to prove his point, in January of this year, the NCSU Libraries announced a new interface to their online catalog, an interface based on software purchased from Endeca Technologies, Inc. The new interface uses the structured metadata inherent in the library catalog, yet it has many of the add-ons currently available in Amazon, giving the user a "new view" of the information contained there. For example, there is spell correction, the "Did you mean?" function. In addition, users of the NCSU Libraries' Endeca-powered catalog have the ability browse and refine searches by LC Classification; sort results by "most popular" (which items have circulated the most) function; access links from the full record display to "More titles like this" and/or "More by this author"; and much more.

North Carolina State University Libraries Online Catalog

www.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/browse.html

"On Competition for Catalogers" by Karen Calhoun

www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/CalhounPresentationALAMidwinter2006.pps

In addition to three major reports identified previously, there are a few other articles and papers that indirectly contribute important information on future directions.

The first is a chapter in *Metadata and Digital Collections: A Festschrift in Honor of Thomas P. Turner*.⁶ In the chapter by Karen Calhoun, "Being a Librarian: Metadata and Metadata Specialists in the Twenty-First Century," the main gist is that the cooperative cataloging model, although helpful, is now becoming less affordable. Traditional cataloging practice has become isolated from communities outside librarianship, many of which use metadata. Of especial interest is her use of the business term "marketing myopia"—which is the nearsighted viewpoint that focuses on products and services rather than on the needs of the customer for whom the products and services are provided—to describe this situation.

Calhoun provides some hope for catalogers to become metadata specialists in the future, noting that the chief challenges are to "get out of library back rooms, become familiar with the larger world of university knowledge communities, and develop primary contacts with the appropriate domain experts and IT specialists." (See her recent PowerPoint presentation for the Program for Cooperative Cataloging group at the ALA 2006 Midwinter meeting in San Antonio related to this topic at www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/CalhounPresentationALAMidwinter2006.pps.)

More general articles related to this topic include Scott Carlson's "Lost in a Sea of Science Data," which appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Carlson specifically mentions librarians and their expertise as one approach to manage the huge data sets currently being compiled in the sciences.⁷ Changing the academic library is discussed by Jerry D. Campbell in a recent *EDUCAUSE Review* article, in which he indicates that we need a new mission, one that focuses on providing quality learning spaces, creating metadata, offering virtual-reference services, teaching information literacy, choosing resources and managing resource licenses, collecting and digitizing archival materials, and maintaining digital repositories.⁸ The differences between today's users and today's libraries are detailed in a paper by Chuck Thomas and Robert H. McDonald, who not only illustrate the disconnects in technology, policy, and opportunities, but also postulate that ownership of sole copies of locally published digital content (not accessible elsewhere) may soon be the primary distinguishing feature between libraries.⁹ Roy Tennant's columns in *Library Journal* have always provided interesting reading (especially his "MARC Is Dead" columns), and a recent column on the new cataloger supports many of the assertions by others given above.¹⁰ Finally, the speech that has produced the most response and comment—due to what is currently happening at LC—is Deanna Marcum's address, "The Future of Cataloging," to the EBSCO Leadership Seminar on January 16, 2005.¹¹ Although it received mild response when it was first delivered, its contents have come under more scrutiny since LC's recent decision on series authority records.

While attending the Big Heads (Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries) meeting at ALA Midwinter (January 2006) in San Antonio, a light bulb went on in my head. Recently, technical-services departments have been shrinking in personnel, while workflow with new formats and metadata standards has increased exponentially. Most of this personnel shortage has been attributed to a variety of factors: shrinking budgets, fewer catalogers from library-school programs, and retirements by long-term baby boomers. As I listened to the discussion among these directors, one other factor I had never even considered before became apparent to me: the deliberate decision by these people to NOT repost or refill positions in traditional cataloging. Why? Because the current model of spending the majority of library resources constructing and maintaining a database used by a minority of the users just wasn't viable or logical in the foreseeable future. Talk about a zinger!

As a cataloger, I thought about all of the standards, features, and services the OPAC provides and are the basis of much of what is taught in library school. But as a library administrator, this decision made perfect sense. The advent of the Internet has meant that libraries no longer have a monopoly on information and that librarians must now learn to think and act like business professionals, strategically positioning ourselves by identifying our niche advantages; marketing ourselves and our skills whenever we can; and learning to take risks in new endeavors, products, and services. Continuing to follow the traditional models of librarianship and information organization just doesn't work in the new worldwide, online marketplace.

So the "Big Heads" are either repositioning and retraining their staff members and their focus toward new models and new metadata standards, or they are slowly allowing the traditional cataloging and OPAC model to deconstruct and fade away by reallocating and moving resources into more focused, desirable, and observable tools and services our users need and want.

LC has already begun this strategic repositioning, although many are not happy with it and do not see the long-term "writing on the wall." LC has never been the "National Library of the United States," despite the desire for it. The Library of Congress is funded by its main user, the United States Congress, and LC's mandate comes from that very visible, very political structure. With the popularity of the Internet, Congress seized on a unique opportunity to digitize and make publicly available all of the resources hidden away from the general public at LC. Congress has done this by providing millions of dollars to LC for digitization, metadata, and services related to the American Memory project and the numerous online exhibits that previously were only available by physically going to Washington, D.C., and trying to discover these wonderful treasures through LC's OPAC.

The American Memory project has become a popular educational discovery and research tool well beyond anything that Congress had envisioned. At the same time, the focus on cataloging at LC is no longer of importance in Congress's short- or long-term objectives to make all information at LC available online. The recent decision regarding series authority work at LC is only the beginning of a long process to give up and/or outsource various aspects of LC cataloging, especially authority work. This will become more obvious in the future.

Finally, for those who have yet to hear of it, the Taiga Forum held in March 2006 is perhaps the most exciting event to take place within librarianship in recent memory.¹² Bringing together invited ARL directors, technologists, and guest speakers to discuss future directions for libraries, the most intriguing item is the pre-program document distributed prior to the forum, which includes fifteen provocative statements all to be prefaced with "Within in the next five years. . ."¹³ These exciting, provocative statements were not just discussed and pondered during the forum; almost all of them were accepted, and many agreed them to be relevant and to be roadmaps for where the profession needs to go into the future.

The best advice that I can give readers of this report is: examine these controversial statements, make them a mantra to be recited every day, and then you will understand that we must make a commitment to change our workflows, our priorities, and even our attitudes if we are to survive. We have neither the money nor the market dominance that companies like Google, Amazon, and eBay have in the new information environment; we must change, and we must change NOW! FRBR and its subsequent follower abbreviations and/or acronyms may be able to provide the marketability and viability towards this new direction. Only time will tell.

When I first thought about writing this report, I thought that I would be able to approach it from the viewpoint of an expert, so as to help others to understand the morass of detailed explanations and vague graphs and charts related to this topic. In my mind, this approach was immediately dashed when a letter to the editor from Barbara Tillett appeared in a recent issue of *Library Resources & Technical Services*.¹⁴ Tillett, in my opinion, is one of the world's leading authorities on FRBR, and in her letter, she pointed out many errors and misconceptions related to FRBR by Ed Jones in his article, "The FRBR Model as Applied to Continuing Resources."¹⁵ In the very long, four-page letter that Tillett composed, perhaps her most important statement is this: "I was disappointed to find so many errors and information presented in a misleading fashion that could have been so well addressed through editorial review working with the author."¹⁶

After reviewing all of the literature, PowerPoint presentations, symposium lectures, and other informational paraphernalia related to FRBR, I have come to the

conclusion that there are very few people out there who really understand what FRBR is and supposedly will do. In my opinion, there are a whole lot of people that don't understand FRBR at all, not, however, for a lack of trying. It is surprisingly simple in its prototype applications, but highly complex in its explanations. Why this is, I am not quite sure.

As a result, I have shifted my focus from trying to be an expert on FRBR (because I'm not, nor do I want to be) to being a vehicle for providing concise, readable, and hopefully understandable abstracts on the variety of resources available related to FRBR. If this report helps to supplement the large and continually updated and valuable FRBR bibliography currently available to anyone and everyone, then I feel that I will have achieved my goal.¹⁷

Notes

1. King Whitney, Jr., "Quotations by Author," The Quotations Page, www.quotationspage.com/quotes/King_Whitney_Jr (accessed September 13, 2006).
2. University of California Libraries' Bibliographic Services Task Force (BSTF), *Rethinking How We Provide Bibliographic Services for the University of Southern California*, BSTF Final Report (California: University of California Libraries, December 2005), <http://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/sopag/BSTF/Final.pdf> (accessed September 13, 2006).
3. Thomas W. Leonhardt, "Rethinking Bibliographic Services," *Technicalities* 26, no. 3 (May/June 2006).
4. Karen Calhoun, *The Changing Nature of the Catalog and Its Integration with Other Discovery Tools*, a report commissioned by the Library of Congress (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, March 2006), www.loc.gov/catdir/calhoun-report-final.pdf (accessed September 13, 2006).
5. Jackie Byrd, et al., *A White Paper on the Future of Cataloging at Indiana University* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, January 2006), www.iub.edu/~libtserv/pub/Future_of_Cataloging_White_Paper.pdf (accessed September 13, 2006).
6. Elaine Westbrook and Keith Jenkins, eds., *Metadata and Digital Collections: A Festschrift in Honor of Thomas P. Turner* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005).
7. Scott Carlson, "Lost in a Sea of Science Data," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52, no. 42 (June 23, 2006), <http://chronicle.com/free/v52/i42/42a03501.htm> (accessed September 13, 2006).
8. Jerry D. Campbell, "Changing a Cultural Icon: The Academic Library as Virtual Destination," *EDUCAUSE Review*, 41, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2006): 16-31. www.educause.edu/apps/er/erm06/erm0610.asp?bhcp=1 (accessed September 13, 2006).
9. Chuck Thomas and Robert H. McDonald, *Millennial Net Value(s): Disconnects between Libraries and the Information Age Mindset* (Tallahassee: Florida State University D-Scholarship Repository, 2005), <http://dscholarship.lib.fsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=general> (accessed September 13, 2006).
10. Roy Tennant, "The New Cataloger," *Library Journal* (April 15, 2006), www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6321736.html (accessed September 13, 2006).
11. Deanna B. Marcum, "The Future of Cataloging" (address to the Ebsco Leadership seminar, Boston, MA, January 16, 2005). www.loc.gov/library/reports/CatalogingSpeech.pdf (accessed September 28, 2006).
12. Taiga Forum Conference, Chicago, IL, March 27-28, 2006, www.taigaforum.org (accessed September 13, 2006).
13. Taiga Forum Steering Committee, "Taiga Forum Provocative Statements" (document distributed at Taiga Forum Conference, Chicago, IL, March 27-28, 2006). www.taigaforum.org/docs/ProvocativeStatements.pdf (accessed September 28, 2006).
14. Barbara Tillett, "Letters to the Editor" (letter addressing Ed Jones's article, "The FRBR Model as Applied to Continuing Resources") *Library Resources and Technical Services (LRTS)* 50, no. 3 (July 2006): 152-6.
15. Ed Jones, "The FRBR Model as Applied to Continuing Resources," *Library Resources and Technical Services (LRTS)* 49, no. 4 (October 2005): 227-42.
16. Tillett, "Letters to Editor."
17. FRBR Review Group, *FRBR Bibliography* (The Hague, the Netherlands: International Federation of Library Associations, Div. IV, Cataloging Section, 2006). http://infoserv.inist.fr/wwsympa.fcgi/d_read/frbr/FRBR_bibliography.rtf (accessed September 28, 2006).