The Emergence of the Metadata Cataloger: Are Cataloging and Metadata Two Separate Fields?

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Presentation Format

1. How the topic of this session came about

2. Brief overview of cataloging

3. Advent of metadata

4. Current research study

5. What does this mean for cataloging?
Personal Background and Experience

- Graduation with MSIS in May 2016
- No cataloging classes; two classes on classification and metadata
- Looked for cataloging specific jobs, found very few; many more metadata/digital repositories and resource management positions
- Started at Binghamton; read the article that started our research

**QUESTION:** Is there a lack of able catalogers or a lack of cataloging jobs?

**ANSWER** lies with Metadata
Starting at the Beginning

- Cataloging is an older discipline/profession
  - Have existed in any conceivable form since the first library, about 4,000 years ago

- The book as catalog
  - 1600s: printed catalogs instead of handwritten
  - By 1900s most catalogs were books themselves:
    - Very large
    - Immediately out of date; still had to add new additions by hand

- Panizzi’s 91 Rules and standardization
  - Standardization continues in 1908

- Lubetzky, the LOC, and the Paris conference of 1961

- Online systems
The Advent of Metadata as a Separate Idea

- Cataloging has been using metadata for years

- Digital objects make metadata (which we have been using all along) a conscious idea, rather than something used but not discussed
  - Started a conversation about what metadata is, encompasses, how to use it

- Seems to have grown into its own field because:
  - Unlike books, digital objects and their needs are continuously changing because of their environment
  - Digital projects are often separate entities and require different things each time
  - Digital objects require different types of metadata:
    - Documentation of legal access (the internet makes this easy)
    - Hardware and software documentation
    - Preservation documentation
Arising Questions

- The idea of metadata as a field has started to change cataloging:
  - What does the term “cataloging” actually mean?
    - Libraries vs. museums

- What do libraries do with this split?
  - Do they hire a metadata librarian? What does this position look like?
    - Traditional repository librarian or coding librarian?

- If libraries start to hire positions based on metadata, what does this mean for cataloging positions?
  - We are doing research to try and find out.
Beginning the Research

- Article by Paul L. Anthony and Jill A. Garbs from 2005, basically agreeing with former studies about the state of cataloging recruitment
  - This contradicted Binghamton’s experience in looking to hire for my position
  - Questions and suggestions from the article inspired us to conduct our own research
    - The article focused on older literature and studies

- Started our own research by looking at existing literature
  - Focused on literature published after 2000
    - Metadata was a new and interesting theme
Gathering the Data

Initially, ran a search on AUTOCAT listserv for cataloging jobs from 2014-2016.

- Looked for:
  - Academic libraries
  - Excluded jobs that had “cataloging” in the title, but didn’t require this in the actual duties (supervisory roles)
  - Had to require cataloging experience
  - MLS required
  - Full time, non temporary
  - Rejected metadata without cataloging job postings

- After looking at the data and reading the articles, we decided to run more searches in AUTOCAT for jobs from the same period, but substituted “catalog” for “metadata”

- Ended up with three sets of search results: cataloging positions, metadata positions, and cataloging and metadata positions
AUTOCAT Search Results

- 197 jobs found for the time period either pertaining to cataloging, metadata, or both

- 90 of these were strictly cataloging (by this we mean no metadata)
  - 46% of postings

- 51 of these were metadata
  - 26% of postings

- 56 of these were cataloging and metadata
  - 28% of postings

If we combine these two, since they both involve metadata, they surpass the number of cataloging jobs, but if we combine the cataloging jobs (90) with the cataloging and metadata jobs (56), this is the majority of the posts
Survey and Hypothesis

- Created a survey, which will be distributed to the libraries that posted the jobs we have gathered

- Separate survey for each job category

- Will analyze the results to see differences and similarities

- **Hypothesis:**
  1. Despite the literature, libraries do not have that difficult of a time finding qualified applicants for cataloging OR metadata jobs if they are entry level; difficulties arise because of one of two things:
     1. The more specific a job is (i.e. serial cataloger, must know python) the more difficult it is to find a good applicant pool
     2. As experience requirement increases the number of qualified candidates decreases
  2. “Cataloging and metadata jobs” will attract the most applicants

- **Justification:**
  - Decline of cataloging positions means more competition for these, while metadata is a growing trend
  - Schools are focusing more on metadata and less on cataloging, so cataloging experience is lacking
  - Entry level, broad jobs don’t require much prior knowledge or extra skills
  - With “cataloging and metadata jobs” having the broadest appeal, they will attract the most applicants
What Does this Mean for Cataloging

- Cataloging Librarian positions will probably continue to decline and get folded into other jobs.

- So, embrace the metadata trend; who better to do metadata than catalogers?

- We have many of the necessary skills already.

- Digital resources are a major cause of metadata integration into catalogers’ jobs, and we are already adapting to this:
  - Have e-resource catalogers

- LOC wants cataloging to move in the direction of linked data anyway (BIBFRAME)
  - Metadata is the middle point of this switch.
Metadata Catalogers Indeed

- Metadata as expansion of cataloging field
  - Literature shows that cataloging and metadata jobs overlap and are placed in same departments
  - The data set already shows the need for people who work with metadata, and some of these positions include cataloging as well
  - Of the cataloging jobs found, many of them are not strictly cataloging (the field is expanding naturally)

- Research article hypothesis:
  1. Despite the literature, libraries do not have that difficult of a time finding qualified applicants for cataloging OR metadata jobs if they are entry level; difficulties arise because of one of two things:
     1. Specificity of the job: the more specific a job is (i.e. serial cataloger, must know python) the more difficult it is to find a good applicant pool
     2. As experience requirement increases the number of qualified candidates decreases
  2. “Cataloging and metadata jobs” will attract the most applicants

- One field, not two


