

ARL CATALOGER LIBRARIAN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Jeanne M. K. Boydston and Joan M. Leysen, *Iowa State University*

ABSTRACT

This article details the results of a 2011 study of cataloger librarians' changing roles and responsibilities at academic Association of Research Libraries. The study participants, cataloging department heads, report that cataloger librarian roles are expanding to include cataloging more electronic resources and local hidden collections in addition to print materials. They are also creating non-MARC metadata. The increased usage of vendor products and services is also affecting the roles of cataloger librarians at some institutions. The article explores what skills cataloger librarians will need in the future and how libraries are providing training for that future.

Keywords: cataloging, cataloger librarian, future, metadata, roles, skills

INTRODUCTION

The last twenty years have seen a revolution in the way in which information is sought, obtained and stored. Technological advances in scholarly communication have facilitated the shift from a paper-based medium to an electronic one. In many cases, the personal preferences of information seekers have supported and encouraged this change. The implications of this shift are particularly apparent in the academic library where the responsibilities of cataloger librarians are evolving in response to this changing emphasis. Increasingly, cataloger librarians are operating in a technologically-driven electronic environment.

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More changes are ahead as the cataloging profession explores a new bibliographic framework and implements a new cataloging standard, *Resource Description and Access (RDA)*. As cataloger librarians work with other communities and suppliers of content, collaboration is becoming more vital. These changes will require new skills, some of which are not apparent yet.

In addition to the increased emphasis on electronic resources and the internal changes to the cataloging profession, other external forces are affecting the academic library, and in turn cataloging. Three main factors that are influencing the academic library environment are: economics, increased competition and demand for accountability.¹ Economic downturns, such as the financial crisis of 2007, continue to have implications for all aspects of library operations; however, staffing is most often affected. A decreased budget may result in staff layoffs or reallocation of existing staff, hiring freezes and early retirement incentive offers. While these staff reductions are felt in all parts of the library, cuts to backroom operations such as cataloging are common.²

The library is facing competition from private vendors working both outside and inside the library world. Popular Internet programs such as Google Scholar offer scholarly information completely outside the library arena. Vendor services to the library range from shelf-ready monographs to link resolvers and resource management systems providing access to hundreds of electronic resources. Some of these vendor products and services may require minimal human mediation in the delivery of information to library patrons.

Faced with decreased budgets and the competition from vendors, libraries are forced to be increasingly accountable in terms of service and personnel costs. This need for justification affects all areas of the library, but all too often administrators fail to see the need for cataloger librarians or the costly activity of cataloging. Periodically, there is a flurry of activity on the professional forums such as

AUTOCAT, asking for aid in justifying to library administrators the need for cataloging positions and the cost of cataloging.³

This description of the changing library and cataloging environment raises some questions about the future for the cataloger librarian. For the purpose of this survey, cataloger librarians are defined as individuals who hold Master of Library Science (MLS) or equivalent library degrees and are currently employed in a cataloging position requiring that degree. This study will explore the following questions:

- What are cataloger librarians' current roles and responsibilities and how are they changing?
- What skills will cataloger librarians need in the future and how are libraries preparing them for that future?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Buttlar and Garcha reported on the changing roles of academic catalogers from 1987 to 1997.⁴ They found that catalogers were still involved in traditional cataloging activities; however, evolving roles included the cataloging of internet resources, digital documents, and audio-visual materials. They also noted catalogers are becoming more involved in activities traditionally associated with information technology departments. In more recent years, four roles have become prominent in the literature: involvement in non-MARC metadata cataloging, work with institutional repositories, creating access to unique local library collections, and reviewing vendor records for batch loading into the library's catalog. The increased availability of digital materials, user preference for online access, and digitization of local resources are significant factors affecting new roles for cataloger librarians. Boock and Vondracek's 2004 survey of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) member libraries found that 95% of these libraries were digitizing their unique print collections.⁵ In 2007 Ma reported that 99% of ARL member libraries were creating metadata for digital objects.⁶ While the creation of metadata for these digital resources is becoming an additional role for some cataloger

librarians, the amount and level of their involvement varies with each institution based on personnel, organization, and funding.

Metadata for digitization projects in ARL member libraries is being created by multiple staff with the highest percentage being catalogers (87%), archivists (72%) and metadata librarian/specialists (59%).⁷ Metadata, however, may be created in library departments other than cataloging or by the content authors themselves.⁸ Most often, technical services departments are responsible for determining the metadata structure (66%), controlled vocabularies (71%) and assigning metadata (59%) in ARL and GWLA libraries.⁹ Lopatin reported a similar finding among academic and non-academic libraries.¹⁰ Veve and Feltner-Reichert's 2008 survey revealed that in the majority (80%) of libraries, five or fewer catalogers had non-MARC metadata responsibilities and 61% spent 20% or less of their time on this activity.¹¹ Sixty-seven percent of the MLS catalogers were involved with planning and workflow issues and 50% participated in mapping between schemas.

Reporting on the views of cataloger librarians, Veve and Feltner-Reichert found that most catalogers liked non-MARC metadata work and felt it was an appropriate position responsibility.¹² Fleming, Mering and Wolfe found that technical services librarians perceived their role in non-MARC metadata to be an "advisory" one.¹³ At some libraries, the cataloging of digital materials has been phased into the responsibilities of all catalogers and viewed as part of a regular workflow.¹⁴ In Reimer's view, cataloger librarians could participate in a broader range of activities in metadata including "...figuring out how data elements, schemas, and controlled vocabularies can best be used in nascent projects, analyzing inherited metadata for batch actions that can give it valuable context when it is shared; planning and managing digital library projects; mapping across schemas; strategizing for the repurposing of metadata; and offering metadata consultations to members of a campus community."¹⁵

An examination of the qualifications for cataloger and metadata librarians in position announcements provides further evidence of the growing importance of non-MARC metadata responsibilities in the work of cataloger librarians.¹⁶ Chapman identified collaboration, research, education and development as the four key roles that appear in job descriptions for a metadata librarian position in a traditional technical services or cataloging department.¹⁷ Park and Lu analyzed AUTOCAT listserv job postings that included the words “metadata,” “electronic,” “digital,” and “e-resources.”¹⁸ Fifty-three percent of the job titles that included these terms also included the terms “catalog,” “cataloger,” and “cataloging”, suggesting that traditional cataloging skills are still valued in these new positions. Metadata creation was a primary responsibility in 73.8% of the positions and 65.4% of the positions continued to include traditional cataloging responsibilities. Han and Hswe compared job descriptions for cataloging librarians with those of metadata librarians from 2000-2008.¹⁹ Both positions required or desired knowledge of MARC cataloging and metadata standards; however, metadata librarian positions were more likely to require “knowledge of emerging technologies.” These findings are comparable to those reported by Ma.²⁰

The growing focus on institutional repositories provides another potential opportunity for cataloger librarians and technical services staff to apply metadata skills and experience.²¹ In some libraries technical services has significant involvement with the institutional repository. At Ohio State University for example, “Rights issues, metadata definition and creation, item input, and quality control of the KB [Knowledge bank] have become the responsibility of TS.”²² Connell and Cetwinski’s study of institutional repositories found that “negotiating workflows”, “assigning metadata”, and “defining descriptive metadata standards” were performed in technical services in over 80% of the ARL libraries in their study.²³ They also reported that 86% of the technical services positions participating in institutional repositories are not new positions. These institutional repository tasks have either been

absorbed into existing tasks or have replaced former responsibilities. Wu found that 30% of cataloging departments are involved in institutional repository work.²⁴

Many libraries are focusing on the cataloging of their unique or “hidden” collections. These collections, often held in Special Collections or Archives Departments, may be comprised of many different types of materials and formats, including print, photographic scans, maps and oral histories. Some hidden collections can be cataloged using the MARC format, while others are better suited to a non-MARC schema such as Dublin Core.

Panitch’s 1998 survey of ARL member special collections disclosed the lack of access to these collections.²⁵ This study revealed that 15% print, 24% cartographic, 27% manuscript, and 29% computer file resources were unprocessed or uncataloged. Approximately 31-37% of archives, video, graphic and audio materials remained uncataloged as well. For most of these materials, only 50% were accessible through local means such as the card catalog or finding aids. Twelve years later, Dooley and Luce reported limited progress had been made in the cataloging of these materials.²⁶ Only 12% more print materials, 15% more archival materials and 6% more maps had an online record. However, archival online finding aids have increased from 16% in 1998 to 52%. Digitization of local collections will only increase these numbers. Cataloging of hidden collections continues to be considered a high priority by the Association of Research Libraries and the Library of Congress.²⁷

Staffing for special collections cataloging in ARL member libraries is limited. In 45% of these institutions, less than one full-time equivalent (FTE) professional librarian is assigned this cataloging.²⁸ The organizational structure in ARL libraries varies but cataloging for these items is primarily split between cataloging and special collections departments or subunits of these departments.²⁹ Other authors have suggested that a higher priority needs to be assigned to special and hidden collections and the focus on traditional cataloging may need to change.³⁰

Reviewing vendor-supplied MARC records for batch loading into the catalog is another emerging responsibility for cataloger librarians. Many libraries are now acquiring MARC cataloging record sets from vendors for titles in electronic collections or packages, especially for e-books. Research has shown increased discoverability and usage of these resources when these record sets are loaded into a library's catalog.³¹ Mugridge and Edmunds reported in 2008 that 14% of Pennsylvania State University's catalog records had been batch loaded since 2001.³²

In 2010 Mugridge and Edmonds surveyed directors of eighteen large research libraries located in the United States and Canada.³³ They found that the management of batch loading activities is distributed among library units, with cataloging being mentioned most often. However, a relatively small number of librarians are involved in this activity, ranging from 0.0 to 5.0 (FTE) or an average of 1.7 FTE. Most of the positions were created by restructuring existing positions to add batch loading responsibilities. Over two-thirds of the respondents to their survey anticipate more staffing for batch loading activities in the future but the level of staffing was not defined.

Some other studies discuss cataloger review of records and batch loading workflow at specific institutions but provide little in-depth discussion of staffing.³⁴ At Pennsylvania State University, responsibilities for batch loading activities are shared by members of the BibLoad Working Group led by a cataloging and metadata specialist.³⁵ Sixty-five percent of large libraries have reported they are not satisfied with their current workflow for loading bibliographic records.³⁶ Some libraries have explored using an e-resource knowledgebase and MARC e-book subscription service to manage at least some of their e-book collections.³⁷ Although non-MARC metadata cataloging, institutional repository work, providing access to local collections, and reviewing vendor batch loaded records are prominent cataloger roles and responsibilities mentioned in the literature, few studies have examined how widespread these and other roles are occurring among ARL member institutions.

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the questions posed by this study, the authors decided to survey the heads of cataloging departments at ARL academic member institutions in the United States. The ARL was chosen as its membership is comprised of mostly large research libraries which are often on the cutting edge of trends and issues that affect the library profession. The authors felt that the heads of cataloging departments would be aware of profession-wide trends, while at the same time understand the local situation within their library.

Individuals within the survey population were identified by examining the library's web page. It was a challenge to build the survey population using this method. At some libraries, technical services and cataloging had a very clear web presence. Yet, at other libraries, it was virtually impossible to access any department other than public services. Once the Cataloging Department was located, identifying the department head or comparable position presented a problem due to variant job titles. If the position of department head was vacant or impossible to discover, another appropriate individual on the next staffing level was chosen.

The questions in the survey instrument came from many different sources. They were developed from the literature search, current trends and issues, and the authors' own observations. Several open-ended response questions were included to collect more detailed information from participant institutions and account for variability among libraries. SurveyMonkey was used to develop the survey because of its ease of use and its ability to track and analyze the resulting data.³⁸ The survey was administered to a pilot group of colleagues as a check for confusing language or questions, typographical errors or omissions. The survey instrument, cover and follow-up emails were submitted to the authors' University Office of Responsible Research, Institutional Review Board (IRB). The survey was sent via e-mail on September 26, 2011. A copy of the survey appears in the Appendix.

FINDINGS

Ninety-two surveys were sent and 32 surveys were returned. All of the returned surveys were usable, resulting in a response rate of 34.7%. While this response rate represents slightly over one-third of the survey population, it is not a majority and, consequently, makes it difficult to draw solid conclusions. The results, however, offer some insights into current and future roles for the cataloger librarian.

The majority of respondents were employed by public institutions (68.8%) as opposed to private (31.3%). Most of the libraries had more than 2 million volumes in their collections (90.6%). The position titles of the respondents varied greatly. "Cataloging" or "catalog" appeared in 31.2% of the titles, while the term "metadata" only appeared in 9.3%. The terms "cataloging" and "metadata" were found together in 25.0% of the titles. The remaining position titles consisted of terms denoting bibliographic control or technical services responsibilities.

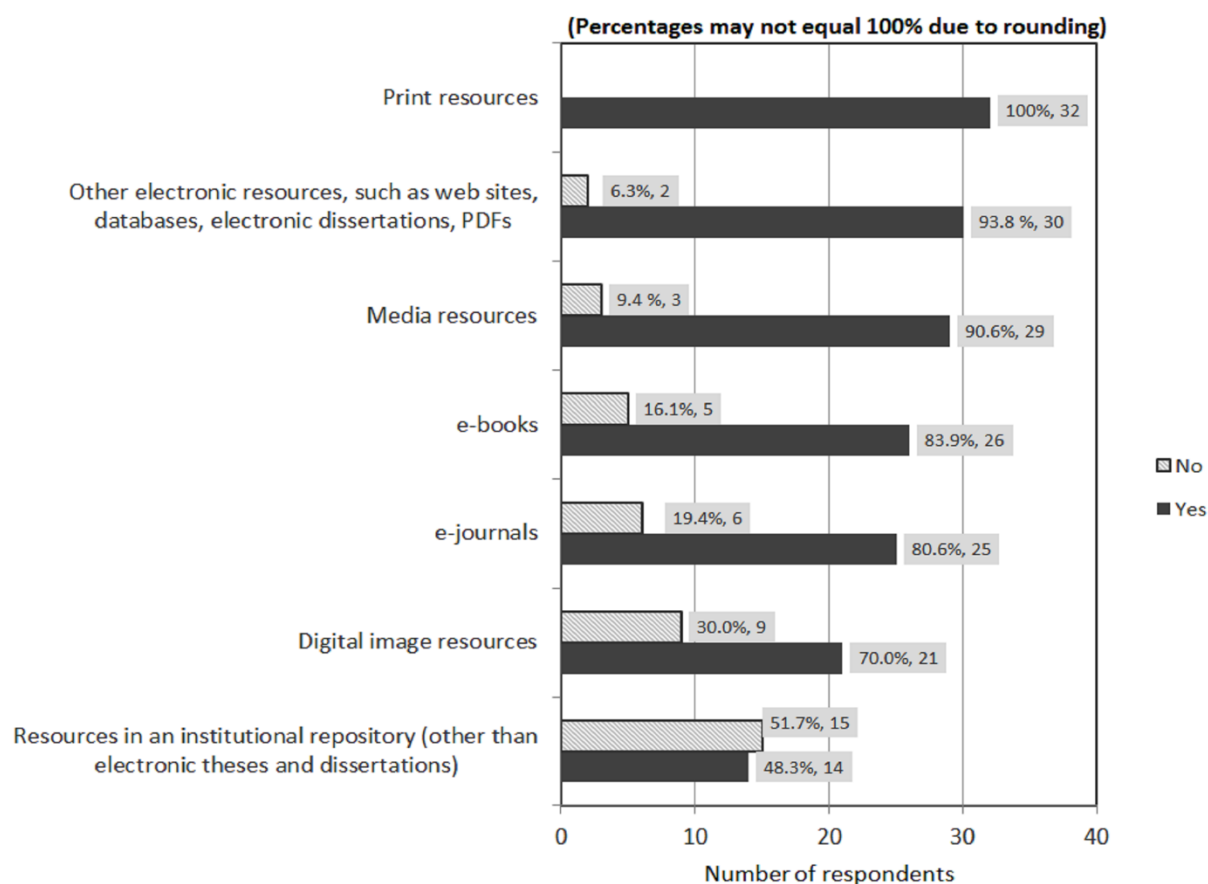
In light of present day budget reductions and the resulting implications for cataloging staff, the total number of cataloger librarian positions at the respondents' institution was addressed. The number of FTE cataloger librarians employed at institutions in the survey population ranged from 1 to 41. The average was 8.4; however, this number was skewed by six larger libraries that employed over 10 FTE cataloger librarians. When these six libraries were removed from the sample, the remaining libraries averaged 5 FTE cataloger librarians each. A slight majority (62.5%) reported that the total number of cataloger librarian positions differed from that of two years ago. Of these respondents, 1.11% had added cataloger librarian positions at their institutions; however 60.71% indicated that positions were eliminated. Budget, reorganization and retirements were the top three reasons for eliminating those positions. Twelve respondents (27.5%) indicated that the levels of staffing for cataloger librarians have not changed in the last two years.

Only eleven respondents (34.4%) indicated that their libraries had actually recruited for a cataloger librarian position in the last two years. In these few cases, the position responsibilities were mainly for digital resources or language expertise. While many of these searches were successful, a few respondents indicated problems that arose in the recruitment process. The most commonly mentioned issue was not a lack of potential candidates, but a lack of qualified candidates to fill the available position. Several respondents noted the need for either specialized or a broad base of experience that spans both the traditional cataloging formats and the newer digital formats. This problem may be further evidence of the transition of cataloging from a paper base to digital medium.

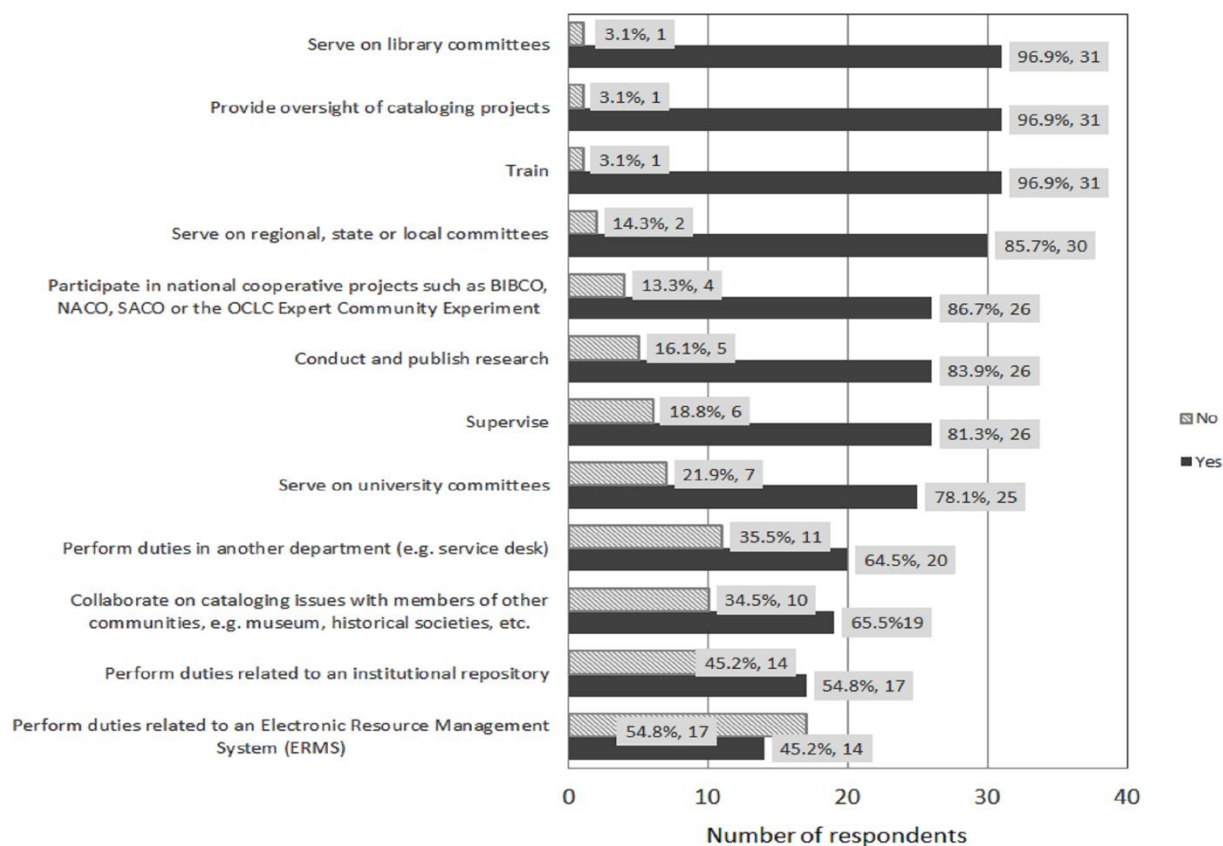
Current Roles and Responsibilities

To study possible cataloger librarian responsibilities for the future, it is useful to determine their current responsibilities. When asked what types of materials cataloger librarians cataloged, 100.0 % of the respondents indicated print resources, followed by other electronic resources (93.8%), such as web sites, databases, electronic dissertations and documents in Portable Document Format (PDF). Media resources were mentioned by 90.6% of the respondents. Digital image resources were part of the cataloger librarian's responsibilities in 70.0% of the respondent libraries. Electronic books and journals were mentioned by 83.9% and 80.6% respectively. Almost half (48.3%) of the respondents reported that the cataloger librarians at their respective institutions catalog resources in an institutional repository. The institutional repository is a relatively new service and may not be present in all libraries or involve cataloger librarians. The written responses indicated a variety of other materials cataloged, such as special collections' manuscripts and oral histories. For full results of materials cataloged, see Figure 1.

Figure 1 Current Cataloging Responsibilities



Cataloger librarians have many other responsibilities in addition to cataloging. Training, oversight of cataloging projects, and serving on committees were mentioned most often. The majority of respondents (83.9%) indicated that cataloger librarians conduct and publish research. Less often, cataloger librarians are involved in electronic resource management (ERM) systems, institutional repositories, and collaboration with outside entities on cataloging issues. The complete range of non-cataloging responsibilities is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Non-Cataloging Responsibilities**(Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding)**

In response to a question on whether cataloger librarians are contributing to academic library decision making, 68.8 % replied they are often included in this process. An additional 21.9% responded that they are “sometimes” involved and 9.4% are “rarely” involved.

The majority (75.0%) of the respondents indicated that their libraries have not ceased doing any specific type of cataloging. The written comments from the respondents indicated that certain types of print materials, such as print theses and dissertations, are no longer cataloged since they are submitted electronically. The other 25.0% of respondents stated that a lack of staff and budget difficulties were the reasons they ceased certain types of cataloging.

Evolving Roles and Responsibilities

Slightly over half (58.1%) of the respondents reported that new types of cataloging were added in the past two years. Streaming media cataloging and e-book cataloging were noted multiple times. Special collections materials cataloging including manuscripts processing, the creation of finding aids, providing digital metadata, and work with oral histories were also mentioned by several respondents. A number of respondents mentioned batch loading of record sets and processing of e-book records. The cataloging of electronic theses and dissertations, cataloging of PDF documents, federal documents, and print and electronic cartographic materials were also stated. “Text mark-up ... in support of a digital library program” was a cataloger librarian activity at one institution and another respondent added working with “data sets.” Newly acquired electronic materials, user and staff requests, and providing improved access to existing collections were the reasons why these new types of cataloging were added.

The majority of respondents (71.9%) reported cataloger librarians’ responsibilities in their libraries have changed in the last two years. While cataloger librarian responsibilities varied among libraries, some similarities emerged. Most of the libraries (78.1%) noted more emphasis on cataloging local and unique collections while 21.9% stated the emphasis has remained the same. Non-MARC metadata creation, e-book cataloging and management, cataloging of digital collections, and more cataloging of electronic resources and new formats were those responsibilities mentioned most often. One person commented that more work is done in collaboration with “public services librarians and subject specialists as well as researchers and faculty outside the library.” Several respondents clarified that these new roles were assigned to only one or two catalogers. These responsibilities included cataloging electronic theses and dissertations and journal articles for an institutional repository, working with a new discovery system or ERMS, and creating crosswalks from MARC to Dublin Core.

Work with vendors and vendor products such as reviewing and loading batches of vendor records were also noted as a new responsibility for cataloger librarians. Two respondents reported little impact from vendor products and services or that they were not using vendor products and services due to budget reasons. Another respondent mentioned the absence of vendor records for some of their foreign language and non-book materials. Several libraries commented that their work has just shifted from data creation to data management. Cataloger librarians are spending more time on mass data maintenance and cleanup projects. They also communicate with vendors regarding the library's needs. Class Web, OCLC Tech Pro, Marcive and MarcEdit were specific products and services being used in their work. Contracting out cataloging services such as those provided by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and purchasing MARC records from vendors such as MARCIVE were other cataloging products and services used by catalogers.³⁹ MarcEdit, free software developed by Terry Reese for batch editing and processing of MARC records, was also mentioned.⁴⁰

Training

Another means of gauging the changing roles and responsibilities of cataloger librarians is to examine the types of training they have received and training plans for the future. Figures 3 and 4 show specific training cataloger librarians received in the last two years or whether training is planned in the next six to nine months.

Figure 3 Training Provided in the Last Two Years

(Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding)

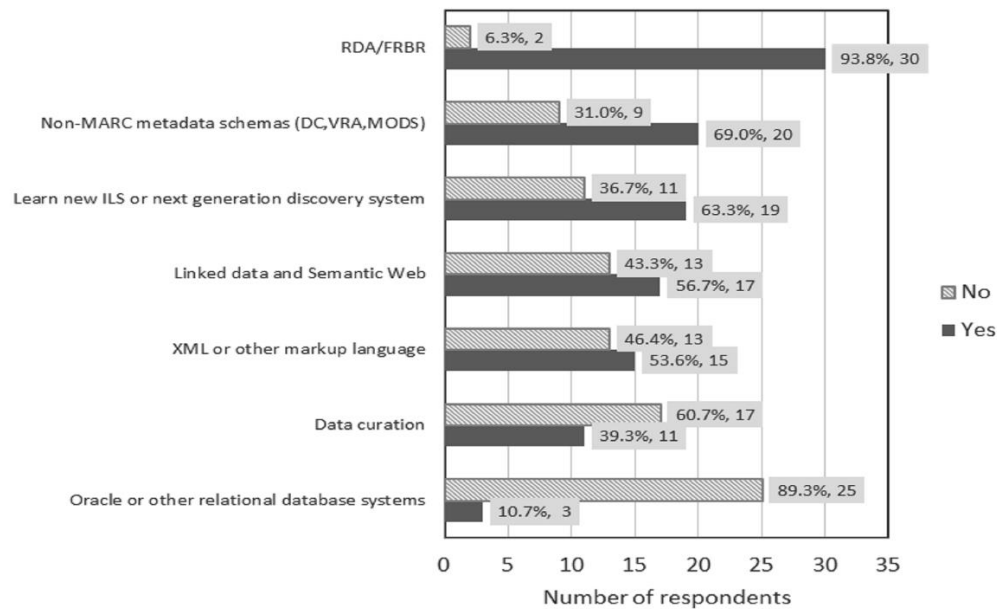
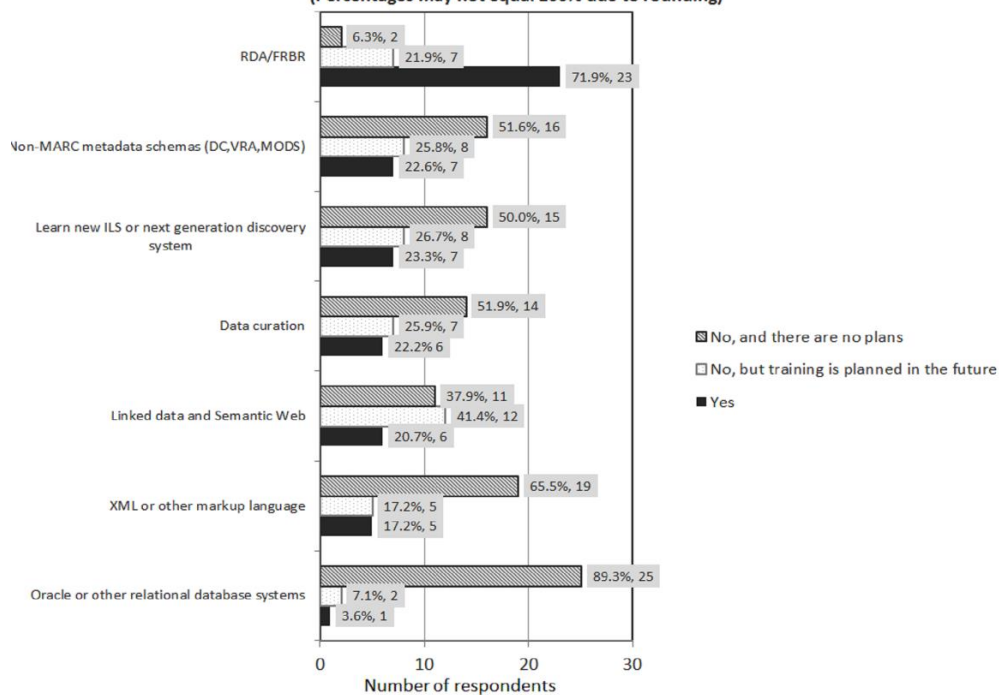


Figure 4 Planned Training for the Future

(Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding)



The majority of respondents (93.8%) reported their cataloger librarians received training in RDA/Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR). This is not surprising since RDA records were starting to appear in OCLC at the time of this study. Most libraries (71.9%) plan to continue training for RDA/FRBR in the next six to nine months. One respondent noted that while no formal training was provided, cataloger librarians have attended webinars and kept current via discussion lists. Recognizing the need for non-MARC metadata, 69.0% of libraries reported their cataloger librarians have been trained in other metadata schemas. The findings also show that 63.3% of libraries are providing training in other systems, either an improved Integrated Library System (ILS) or a next generation discovery system. Extensible Markup Language (XML) or other markup language training has occurred in 53.6% of libraries. ERMS, Resource Description Framework (RDF), a framework for describing and linking relationships between objects, and Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard were other training activities that had occurred.⁴¹

Libraries are also providing training on emerging issues. More than half of the libraries (56.7%) reported that cataloger librarians received training on linked data and the Semantic Web, topics that have drawn increased interest at library conferences and in the professional literature. In addition, 20.7% of libraries plan to offer training in this area in the next 6 to 9 months and 41.4% indicated training is planned for the future. Only 39.3% of the respondents indicated cataloger librarians have received training in data curation. One respondent also mentioned training in MarcEdit; Encoded Archival Description (EAD), a standard used in coding archival data such as finding aids; and TEI as training topics planned in the next six to nine months. Another respondent added project management as a training topic for the future. One respondent commented that training will be offered as the library undertakes new projects. This survey did not ask about the nature of the training such as the length of the training, how many cataloger librarians attended, or if attendance was required.

Cataloger Librarian Skills for the Future

A final group of questions asked survey participants to comment on the future for cataloger librarians including cataloger librarian contributions to the library, their skills, and other factors that will affect that future. When asked what contributions cataloger librarians make to the library, the majority of respondents focused on the cataloger librarian's role in facilitating patron access to information resources. As one respondent summed up, "They make information visible." Participating in faculty governance and promotion and tenure discussions, conducting research, representing the library to outside groups, and serving as liaisons to faculty were additional activities mentioned. Other respondents pointed out cataloger librarians also make contributions by staffing service desks, managing projects, and working with large quantities of data. One respondent noted that cataloger librarians bring a unique point of view to these activities as "They are also often the only ones to see the data stream all the way through multiple systems-OPAC, WorldCat, and Discovery tool and make sure that connections are made." Cataloger librarians are also "a resource for educating public service librarians and staff in understanding the catalog's search, indexing and display functions." Another person commented, "The library would lose an important voice and perspective without catalog librarians."

Multiple respondents indicated data management skills and working with large data sets as specific skills cataloger librarians will need for the future. As more metadata is supplied by vendors, metadata management and record loading were also noted. Another respondent mentioned that cataloger librarians should be "able to work with interoperable systems, web scale discovery tools, digital repositories and resources." Only a few respondents referred to any specific programming or markup languages such as XML, SQL or Perl scripting. Knowledge of and flexibility with metadata schemas, developing cross walks, digitization standards, and preservation metadata were also listed as

cataloger skills needed in the future. One respondent added, “outreach to researchers and collaborate with them as partners” and another stated “work with people (e.g. faculty) to determine metadata needs (description, appropriate thesauri) for institutional repositories.” While acknowledging the need for non-MARC metadata knowledge, one respondent commented, “there is no shortage of materials at my library to catalog in the ‘traditional’ way.” Many of the specific skills mentioned are traditional cataloger librarian skills such as analytical, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills, in addition to foreign language, subject expertise and authority control.

Respondents were asked what other factors, aside from technology and economic issues, will have an impact on the future for cataloger librarians. They expressed many viewpoints on possible future influences. Some echoed the statement that technological and economic issues as well as changing user needs will have the greatest impact. A number of respondents emphasized that the perceived value of cataloging held by the library administration and others will be a major influence on the future. One respondent questioned, “Whether the value that catalogers can bring to the library through their skill sets and aptitudes will be worth enough to the library to continue.” Other respondents expressed concern over the attitude that automation or vendor-supplied records can completely replace traditional cataloging. Ultimately, as one respondent notes, a key issue for the future is “Whether or not library users continue to depend on librarians for information, or whether the information marketplace succeeds in direct marketing of information products directly to users.” Two respondents noted the future of cataloging courses in library school education is another factor.

Several of the respondents mentioned flexibility and the willingness to adapt to a changing collaborative environment will continue to be needed in the future. Cataloger librarians will also need to develop skills to market themselves outside traditional cataloging. Some of the abilities and skills mentioned for cataloger librarians in the future included an ability to learn and adjust quickly to new

arenas, and adopt a positive attitude toward change. Others noted the value of making contributions to the library outside of cataloging such as outreach and publishing.

Twelve respondents provided additional comments relating to cataloger librarian positions and responsibilities. Some mentioned the difficulty in preparing for new roles when the roles are not yet defined and the future is uncertain. Others conveyed interest in participating in new expanding opportunities and initiatives; however, they were concerned about maintaining current workflows and immediate activities such as planning for RDA. Some respondents expressed that cataloger librarian skills will continue to be needed; however, another respondent expressed that the numbers of cataloger librarians will decrease as “the responsibility for bibliographic data creation shifts to publishers and vendors.”

DISCUSSION

The data from this study suggests that cataloger librarian responsibilities are evolving and have expanded to include electronic resources such as e-books and non-MARC cataloging. In addition, the cataloging of print materials continues. The survey results also suggest that there is more emphasis being placed on providing access to hidden collections and special cataloging projects.

Non-cataloging responsibilities mentioned included training, oversight of projects, supervision and participation in national cooperative projects, such as Name Authority Cooperative (NACO). Collaboration with members of other communities on cataloging issues, duties relating to an institutional repository, and to a slightly lesser degree, duties relating to an Electronic Resource Management System (ERMS) were also reported. While some of these activities are fairly recent developments in the library, they appear to be growing in significance.

Digitized materials, streaming media, and e-books were the new types of cataloging reported most often as well as the cataloging of local or unique collections. Cataloging digital images and institutional repository work were mentioned by several respondents as emerging areas for cataloger librarians. In addition to creating metadata, some cataloger librarians are also managing the metadata supplied by vendors. Whether these changes in responsibilities will become routine is uncertain at this time.

Most institutions have lost positions due to budget issues, retirements or reallocation of the position to other parts of the library. In those libraries that have not eliminated positions, cataloger librarians may have been assigned to new or different responsibilities. The few respondents that were able to fill cataloger librarian positions hired individuals with special skills such as expertise in language or cataloging format. This echoes Simmons-Welburn's comment, "Most of the desired bibliographer and cataloger positions were for either highly specialized areas (East Asian, music, maps) or digital-related resources."⁴²

Libraries are providing cataloger librarians with the training needed for assuming new responsibilities. Almost all libraries have focused training on RDA. This finding is comparable to Wu's report that over 80% of libraries have conducted training in RDA and 63% have started working on implementation.⁴³ Well over half of the libraries have provided training for cataloger librarians to learn a new ILS or discovery system. Those libraries that have not provided this training may be satisfied with their current system or are waiting for the next wave of products which Breeding terms "library services platforms."⁴⁴ These include OCLC's WorldShare Management Services, ExLibris' Alma, Innovative Interfaces Sierra, and Serials Solutions Intota.

With the growth in digital resources and digitization projects, it is not surprising that the training in non-MARC metadata schemas has occurred. However, the creation of non-MARC metadata may take

place in units of the library other than cataloging. This is a possible explanation for the lack of training for cataloger librarians in some libraries. In other cases, the library may be planning to hire new staff with these skills. Many respondents, however, emphasized the importance of broadening cataloger librarian skills to meet the challenges of the future. Data management and working with large data sets, knowledge of metadata schemas, developing cross walks and knowledge of digitization and preservation metadata were mentioned most often in this survey. Work with digital repositories, interoperable systems, web scale discovery tools, and knowledge of XML were activities also noted. According to Calhoun, librarians and metadata specialists “must move beyond basic computer literacy to ‘IT fluency’.”⁴⁵

Libraries have also provided training opportunities for cataloger librarians to learn about emerging trends such as linked data, the Semantic Web and data curation. Although linked data and the Semantic Web are topics mentioned with growing frequency in the profession, the application of these concepts is mostly limited to large scale projects such as the Virtual International Authority File and the future Bibliographic Framework Initiative.⁴⁶ Those libraries that provided training on these topics did not supply any examples of cataloger librarian activities associated with these trends. Similarly, there is little evidence from the responses that cataloger librarians are involved in data curation. Yet, as Ogburn points out, “Working with data ... will require librarians to reimagine our roles as knowledge managers, stretch our existing skills, recruit new kinds of staff, and assume new responsibilities possibly without additional funding.”⁴⁷ Whether this is an area that will affect catalogers is uncertain.

Technological advances and economic issues will continue to affect the future of the cataloger librarian. Users’ changing needs, the value of cataloging, cataloger librarian attitudes, and the increased role of vendor systems and services were also identified as factors affecting that future.

CONCLUSION

The primary focus of this study was the cataloger librarian working in large academic libraries. It explored the current roles and responsibilities, how they are changing, what skills the cataloger librarian will need for the future, and how libraries are preparing them for that future. Staffing issues were also briefly addressed.

Cataloger librarian roles and responsibilities are expanding to include more electronic resources such as e-books and digitized materials; yet, print material cataloging is continuing. Cataloger librarians are creating non-MARC metadata and more emphasis is being placed on the cataloging of local hidden collections. The increased usage of vendor products and services is also affecting the roles of cataloger librarians at some institutions. Libraries are providing training for immediate needs and in anticipation of future needs.

The limited survey population and modest return rate make it difficult to conclude that these findings are universal across the majority of ARL institutions or academic libraries as a whole. An additional examination of these and other academic research libraries, focusing on the library's budget and staff composition within cataloging and metadata units, would provide a more complete analysis.

This study focused on heads of cataloging as the survey population. Comparisons with earlier studies are difficult due to different survey populations and varying cataloging environments. Further studies, with an expanded survey population, could confirm and build upon the findings of this study or identify other trends in cataloger librarian roles and responsibilities. Other studies, such as an update to the Buttler and Garcha study of catalogers, could provide additional data.⁴⁸

Advancements in technology have been and will continue to be a significant factor in the future. Cataloger librarians will need to develop new skills or expand upon existing skills, especially a higher

level of technology skills, to be part of emerging trends and communicate effectively with internal and external partners and communities. More specific data is needed on the level of technology skills necessary for the future and the best means of obtaining training in these skills. Whether libraries will train existing cataloger librarians and/or hire staff that have these new skills remains to be seen.

These are exciting times for libraries and cataloger librarians. “Whether catalogers are invited to participate in these and other digital projects or have to be proactive in seeking involvement, it is important that they begin to view this activity as inherent to their role within the library.”⁴⁹ Although Simpson is commenting on digital projects, her statement is relevant to the evolving future of the cataloging profession. Cataloging departments and cataloger librarians will need to continue to adapt to this changing environment.

NOTES

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APPENDIX: CATALOGER LIBRARIANS' RESEARCH STUDY

1. Is your institution public or private?

- ☐ Public
☐ Private

2. What is the size (number of volumes) of your library?

- ☐ Fewer than 100,000
☐ 100,000 to 499,999
☐ 500,000 to 999,999
☐ 1 to 2 million
☐ More than 2 million

3. How many FTE cataloger librarians does your library have?

4. What is your position title?

5. Do the cataloger librarians at your library have responsibilities for cataloging the following materials?

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Print resources | | |
| e-journals | | |
| e-books | | |
| Other electronic resources, such as web sites, databases, electronic dissertations, PDFs | | |
| Media resources | | |
| Digital image resources | | |
| Resources in an institutional repository (other than electronic theses and dissertations) | | |
| Other (please specify) | | |

ARL Cataloger Librarian Roles and Responsibilities

6. Do any of your cataloger librarians perform any of the following activities?

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Supervise | | |
| Train | | |
| Provide oversight of cataloging projects | | |
| Perform duties related to an Electronic Resource Management System (ERMS) | | |
| Perform duties in another department (e.g. service desk) | | |
| Perform duties related to an institutional repository | | |
| Conduct and publish research | | |
| Serve on library committees | | |
| Serve on regional, state or local committees | | |
| Serve on university committees | | |
| Collaborate on cataloging issues with members of other communities, e.g. museum, historical societies, etc. | | |
| Participate in national cooperative projects such as BIBCO, NACO, SACO or the OCLC Expert Community Experiment | | |
| Other (please specify) | | |

7. How often are cataloger librarians involved in library-wide decision-making processes (e.g. determining appropriate metadata for digital projects or advising on indexing and display of bibliographic data)?

- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

8. Has your library CEASED doing any specific type(s) of cataloging in the past two years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No [IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 11]

9. If you answered yes to question 8, what types of cataloging has your library STOPPED doing?

10. If you answered yes to question 8, why are these types of cataloging no longer done?

11. Has your library added any NEW types of cataloging in the past two years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 14]

12. If you answered yes to question 11, what types of cataloging has your library added?

13. If you answered yes to question 11, why were these types of cataloging added?

14. How has the emphasis on cataloging local or unique collections in your library changed in the last two years?

- ☐ More emphasis
- ☐ Same emphasis
- ☐ Less emphasis
- ☐ No emphasis

ARL Cataloger Librarian Roles and Responsibilities

15. Have any of your cataloger librarians received training on the following topics in the last two years?

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| RDA/FRBR | | |
| Non-MARC metadata schemas (DC,VRA,MODS) | | |
| Oracle or other relational database systems | | |
| Learn new ILS or next generation discovery system | | |
| XML or other markup language | | |
| Linked data and Semantic Web | | |
| Data curation | | |
| Other (please specify) | | |

16. Are training sessions planned in the next 6 to 9 months for the following?

| | Yes | No, but training is planned in the future | No, and there are no plans |
|---|-----|--|----------------------------|
| RDA/FRBR | | | |
| Non-MARC metadata schemas (DC,VRA,MODS) | | | |
| Oracle or other relational database systems | | | |
| Learn new ILS or next generation discovery system | | | |
| XML or other markup language | | | |
| Linked data and Semantic Web | | | |
| Data curation | | | |

ARL Cataloger Librarian Roles and Responsibilities

Other (please specify)

17. What specific skills unique to cataloging will cataloger librarians need for a viable future?

18. Is the total number of cataloger librarian positions (FTE) at your institution the same as two years ago?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19. How many cataloger librarian positions (FTE) have been ADDED at your institution in the last two years?

20. If question 19 is greater than 0, what are the responsibilities of the new position(s)?

21. How many cataloger librarian positions (FTE) have been eliminated at your institution in the last two years?

22. If question 21 is greater than 0, what were the reasons for eliminating the position(s)?

23. Have the responsibilities of any cataloger librarian at your institution been changed in the last two years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 25]

24. If you answered yes question 23, please describe the change in responsibilities.

25. In the last two years has your library recruited cataloger librarians?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 27]

26. If you answered yes to question 25, please describe the problems, if any, your library has faced with those recruitments.

27. How has the increased availability of vendor-supplied products and services affected cataloger librarian responsibilities?

28. What contributions do you feel cataloger librarians make to your library?

ARL Cataloger Librarian Roles and Responsibilities

29. Aside from technological advancements and economic issues, what other factor(s) will have the greatest impact on a viable future for cataloger librarians?

30. Please provide any other comments you have relating to cataloger librarian positions and responsibilities.