Business Unusual: Highlights and Discussion of the Library of Congress Bicentennial Conference on Bibliographic Control for the New Millennium

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by

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My stated role today, I see from the program, is to provide "an understanding of the role and re-conceptualization of the library catalog in providing access to digital resources and of national-level approaches to improving this access through traditional cataloging tools, new metadata schemes, and new partnerships" by reporting on the LC Bicentennial Conference on Bibliographic Control. I'm not sure you're going to get all that, but I do hope to cover some of the ideas that were raised at the LC conference, what significance they had for me, and discuss with you how we all might put some of them into practice locally, in small ways.

I've entitled my talk:

Business Unusual: Highlights and Discussion of the Library of Congress Bicentennial Conference on Bibliographic Control for the New Millennium

Before I get started, let me get a sense of whom I'm addressing:

How many of you are catalogers? Most of you. Any reference librarians? Selectors or bibliographers? Acquisitions librarians? Administrators? Instructors? How many of you are or have been all of the above? Me: I have worn all of these hats in my 23 years working full-time in academic libraries, although I'm currently the Head of the Cataloging and Preservation Department of the University of Oregon Library System. I started out in libraries as a student assistant in my college library, typing and filing catalog cards. I got the job because I was taking Russian and could read and type Cyrillic letters, not because I dreamt of becoming a librarian (the thought never entered my mind until years later) nor because I "liked books", my least-favorite answer to the question, "why are you the right person for this job?" I look back at that person 25 years ago and wonder how I ended up where I am. Somewhere along the way, I fell in love with cataloging, not because, as my husband would assert, I wanted to control the world, but because cataloging was challenging and stimulating, and, most importantly, made it easier for people to find the information they wanted. Somewhere along the way, that became my mission.

Introduction

As most of you know, as part of the celebration of its bicentennial year, the Library of Congress in November invited about 125 people to attend a conference to discuss bibliographic control in the 21st century. They invited people from technical and public services, library educators and researchers, computer and information specialists, as well as representatives from library vendors and service organizations. Some participants contributed papers and others of us simply attended and participated in on-site discussions and Topical Discussion Groups. Summaries or draft versions of every paper were available to conference participants (and anyone else who went to the Web site) well in advance of the face-to-face meeting in November. In addition, LC set up a pre-conference listserv to which anyone could subscribe for the purpose of discussing the draft papers. Participants were encouraged to read all of the papers beforehand and to be thinking about the issues that would be of interest to the particular Topical Discussion Group to which they had been assigned.

The conference organizing team continues to maintain the Web site, listed on your handout, which includes the program and full text of the papers, cybercasts of the speakers' remarks, information from the conference's topical discussion groups, pictures, digests from the pre-conference listserv, links to the *LC21* report and commentaries, and more.

How many of you have visited the LC Bicentennial Conference Web site? How many of you have read one or more of the papers or the recommendations from any of the Topical Discussion Groups? If you haven't, perhaps today you'll hear something that sparks your interest and you'll go to the site to get more information.

While some of the best and brightest theoreticians and practitioners were undoubtedly at the conference, (and then there were the rest of us), the conference suffered, I thought, from trying to cram far too much into a limited period of time. There was not enough time for reflection, formal and informal discussion among participants, and for serious consideration of the recommendations. The conference would have benefited by a bit more cross-pollination among the different points of view. A panel discussion featuring some of the presenters who seemed on the surface, at least, to be diametrically opposed would have generated some serious discussion. But, the Library of Congress is, after all, a political institution, and so the likes of Michael Gorman and Carl Lagoze were kept far apart. And as I summarize their remarks you'll see why.

The conference featured invited papers divided into five broad sections:
    library catalogs and the Web;
    current library standards;
    future directions;
    experimentation; and
    partnerships (everybody's favorite buzzword)

The stated goals of the conference were to develop—for LC, the framers of AACR2, and the library profession—

1. an overall strategy to address the challenges of improving access to Web resources, including:

  planning a national agenda for (a) resource description needs and (b) future directions for catalogs

  promoting needed changes to AACR2

  encouraging use of systems like LCSH, LCC, and DDC for Web resource organization and discovery

  collaborating with metadata communities and supporting interoperability *(the single favorite buzzword of the conference)*

  developing and promoting standards that take Web users' needs into account *(what a radical idea)*

  fostering software development to automate resource description

  addressing training issues and needs

  facilitating interfaces between catalogs and other metadata sources

2. attainable action plans to carry out the overall strategy, including new projects and partnerships

Not too bad for a 2 ½ day conference. I'm not sure it accomplished that but it certainly planted some seeds and lit some fires underneath a few people.

There were 24 papers and discussion documents prepared for the conference, about 12 respondents and 11 topical discussion groups. I'm not going to summarize or even touch on all of them. You can read the papers and get detailed reviews of the whole conference in several publications. I'm also not going to go over in detail the recommendations that came out of the conference because you can read all of those on the Web site, listed on your handout. I am going to 1) go over some (11) of the papers that were of particular interest to me because they contained what I consider the keys to the future; 2) discuss what impact attending this conference has had on me (and thus my department) and, 3) where I think we can all go from here in the attempt to provide bibliographic access to any library's selected resources, digital or print or something in between, in the new millennium. In my opinion, the issues raised at this conference go to the heart of what constitutes modern librarianship, not just cataloging. How do we provide extra value to Web-based and other digital resources? Do we have a role in organizing these resources and can the technology take care of all user needs without our intervention? If we (or our users) think that the technology can take care of it all, then I don't think we have a future. I personally think it's an illusion that the technology can take care of all user needs.

Attending the LC Bicentennial Conference had the feel of deja vu, to some degree, - and not just because I'd read the papers beforehand. Actually, the sense of deja vu hit me as I read the papers and discussed some of them with my catalogers in the months leading up to the conference. Although I hadn't necessarily heard or read all of the ideas or concepts expressed in just the way they were for the conference, once I heard them, once I read

them, they had the ring of familiarity, of stating something that I'd always known, of stating the obvious. These are issues, after all, that we've all been grappling with.

I took away two key mantras from the conference:
>Bibliographic Control Is Not Just for Catalogers Anymore!   And
>Cataloging is not just AACR2 and MARC any longer!

Both of these statements strike fear – and probably a good bit of loathing - into the hearts of catalogers and non-catalogers alike. They imply dramatic changes to traditional roles and relationships; the sense of stepping off into empty space, uncharted territory. We're still afraid that we might fall off the end of the earth if we take that step. Maybe the world really is square. I don't know about you, but I've reached the edge and there are strong forces driving me to take that leap into uncharted waters.

The first topic covered at the conference was:

Library Catalogs and the Web

There were three statements from conference speakers regarding library catalogs that, at first glance, appear to be at odds with one another. They are:

"real cataloging" involves controlled vocabularies and adherence to the standards that have evolved in the past 100 years -- Gorman

the traditional catalog is unsustainable economically, if extended to the Internet -- Lagoze

the boundaries between the resource and the catalog are blurring;
catalogs are themselves Web resources, in addition to providing descriptions of other Web-based and traditional resources -- Delsey

These statements for me form the crux of the matter. I believe they are all true and that we must find a way to incorporate the essential truth of each of them in order to create a catalog that has value for today's libraries and – more importantly – for today's students and researchers. I'd like you to keep them in mind as I summarize some of the key points from the presentations.

The conference began, appropriately I thought, with a keynote address by Michael Gorman. As you know, Gorman is the editor of AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, second edition) and the Dean of Library Services at Cal State Fresno, among many other things. He is also my personal favorite iconoclast, and an eloquent speaker, particularly when annoyed, as he was throughout much of this conference. The irony is that he is now an iconoclast by virtue of defending tradition. Mocking the "end of history alarmists" and those who believe that "digital documents will, mysteriously, catalogue themselves," Gorman characterized metadata as "a fancy name for an inferior form of cataloging."   He characterized most of the Internet as a vast wasteland, and urged libraries to identify and catalog the worthwhile resources there using "real cataloging,"

He described ours as a "culture in chaos – a time of beleaguered learning and of threats to the records of humankind." One of Gorman 's main points was that standards are important for communication and that existing cataloging codes represent a greatly superior form of communicating information about resources, whether digital or print, to any of what he called "generally ill-considered proposals that are advanced as answers to the wrong question." The question as he framed it is not *how* we should catalog digital resources but rather *which* of them are *worth* preserving and cataloging. On that note, I'd like to recommend an outstanding article by someone not at the conference, describing principles for selecting materials to be digitized, an article by Paula De Stefano in the January 2001 issues of College & Research Libraries. The citation is on your handout.

Gorman was followed by Sarah Thomas, University Librarian at Cornell University, former head of the LC Cataloging Directorate and one of the founders of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging. Hers was a soothing transition. In her talk "The Catalog as Portal to the Internet," she began to build a bridge between the disillusionment of the traditional cataloger and the full-text, self-cataloging vision of the information manager. She did an outstanding job, I thought, of outlining the pluses and minuses of the library catalog, noting that, on the positive side, it is selective, predictable, familiar, and brings with it the expectation of future availability. I consider this a key concept that reflects a basic paradigm shift between the world that most of us grew up in and the world that we are entering, like it or not. On the downsides, she pointed out that the library catalog is often not up to date, and its records are labor-intensive to create. She contrasted the catalog with Internet portals. As she conceived it, a library portal would gather a variety of information resources into a single, one-stop shopping center, helping users to avoid "infoglut". The advantages of a portal would be quantity, currency, variety of materials, ease of use, depth, ability to customize, and trendiness. The pitfalls would be overwhelming and incomplete results, dead ends, dubious authenticity, a lot of time spent by the user sifting through its layers and the results, and no guarantee of current or future access to the materials. Thomas was the first to sound a theme that was heard repeatedly throughout the conference—the need for librarians to be more tolerant of dissonance in user search results. This is a phrase that I'm finding crops up in more and more of my conversations these days and I hope we can explore this in some discussions following my remarks.

Tom Delsey (Director General of Corporate Policy and Communications of the National Library of Canada), author of a model for restructuring AACR2, discussed the library catalog in the networked environment, noting, as I mentioned to you before, that catalogs are themselves Web resources. Delsey discussed how libraries' data management practices have become more complex; they are now more dependent on the practices of others. (another key concept that we'll be returning to). Delsey discussed how, with the card catalogue, we had remarkable similarity of structure (the same data elements displayed basically the same way in libraries around the country); now we have a multitude of catalog structures with the same data being indexed, organized, and displayed in many different ways. He also talked about the change in the proprietary relationship, from one of acquisition to licensed access, and the effect that has had on catalogs: we are now negotiating legal as well as bibliographic links. He said that

libraries need to redesign their interfaces to provide a better representation of the relationship between resources than they have done so far. Delsey concluded by emphasizing that quality control in data creation is still important but we need to make better use of technology to make it less costly. Echoing a theme of Michael Gorman's, he acknowledged the need for the wide-scale adherence to standards and for selectivity of coverage to support the needs of defined user communities.

I always find this to be an interesting discussion between the proponents of not cataloging Web resources and those who think they should be cataloged. The issue is often phrased from the standpoint of it being impossible to catalog the Web because it consists of x million pages and grows by x thousand more pages day. Well, of course, that's impossible. But who ever said it was desirable or needed? No one seriously suggests that we should catalog the entire Internet. At our library, as I'm sure at many of yours, we have collection development principles in place for Internet resources that mirror those that we use for selecting print resources. The same is true for deciding what to digitize – content and appropriateness . Not all materials have equal value. *Worthless materials are still worthless, even when they're in electronic form.* Materials that are inappropriate for a particular library's collection are inappropriate, no matter their physical form.

In responding to Tom Delsey's paper, Jennifer Trant, Executive Director of the Art Museum Image Consortium, saw the concept of cataloging the Web as an oxymoron. She agreed with Delsey that the boundaries between the resource and the catalog are blurring. She asserted that a catalog represents an opinion and not a fact and she compared it to a publication process, noting that my data could well be someone else's metadata. She suggested that libraries have a lot to learn from other communities, for instance we can learn about restriction issues from the archival community and about interpretation of data from museums. She noted that other communities see these different kinds information needs as facts of life, not as problems, and have developed mechanisms to deal with them. We have been too long philosophically blind to what users do with the data .

Another key paper for me was presented by Priscilla Caplan (Assistant Director for Digital Library Services at the Florida Center for Library Automation) who gave an insightful overview of several metadata schemes. Caplan pointed out that the newer metadata schemes were easy to apply but interoperability between them was difficult. She noted that the simplicity of a particular metadata scheme was often complemented by the complexity of using it, *(a point which can also be made about many things that appear to be very simple on the surface but that actually turn out to require a higher degree of sophistication for people to use effectively, such as keyword searching based on full-text).* She also talked about the publishing industry's metadata schemes, such as ONIX, that have a great deal in common with our library catalogs, but also have some significant differences, such as including information about rights of access, supply, order and sale, and promotional information. She felt that we could learn from and possibly integrate some of these other data elements into our own vision of a catalog. The lesson that we have to learn through an examination of other metadata schemes are that metadata schemes differ because resource description needs differ. Going back to

Jennifer Trant's point about being philosophically blind to the way people use the data, we can no longer afford this blindness. We don't call all the shots anymore. We'll either pay attention to what our users need or they'll go somewhere else. Also, metadata has a life of its own – it is never what its designers anticipated it would be. She pointed out that metadata without content rules (like MARC without AACR2) are not very useful. Many of the newer metadata schemes provide structure without any definition of appropriate content. She concluded by noting that we are moving into an environment of increasing interaction and we must look to other cultural institutions for help and support in our quest to provide effective bibliographic control.

I'm only going to summarize one of the papers outlining current library standards, because I'm assuming that's the area that we're all the most familiar with.

Current Library Standards

Matthew Beacom (Catalog Librarian for Network Information Resources at Yale University) began the second plenary session by speaking to the adequacy of AACR2 for cataloging electronic resources. He identified some major characteristics of electronic resources that confound the cataloger trying to use AACR2 to create records: things that we have all struggled with:

1)their dynamic nature;

2) "multiple versions" (i.e., multiple formats for the same intellectual content);

3) changes in publication or distribution patterns including the growth of aggregator services and databases;

4) accessibility via the Internet and the issues of rights and delivery management;

5) and changes in ownership patterns and the effects of licensing agreements.

AACR2 was designed for a stable world – one that had followed predictable patterns for hundreds of years. Beacom argued for the need to make comprehensive changes to AACR2 that will provide coherent resource description and position library catalogs to integrate with other resource discovery tools. He made twelve recommendations for changes to AACR2, including a proposal to customize views of multiple manifestations so that they could be "split" or "lumped" as needed at the point of display in system interfaces. I agree with Beacom. However, since I serve on CC:DA, the Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access, the ALA's body charged to recommend changes to AACR2, I wonder about our ability to make the necessary changes in a timely fashion. The deliberations of that body seems sometimes glacial but are still faster than the interactions between all of the constituent bodies in the Anglo-American cataloging community and the Joint Steering Committee. The difficulty comes not because catalogers are anal (at least, not just for that reason), but rather because we're still trying to serve the needs of our users who continue to rely on the still-predominant print resources. I don't know if we can make the changes to the cataloging code fast enough for us to be able to save it.

Future Directions

What were some of the future directions that conference participants identified?

Ann Huthwaite (Bibliographic Services Manager of the Queensland University of Technology Library and chair of the Joint Steering Committee of AACR2) addressed the role of AACR2 in the digital world.   She noted many of the same problems with AACR2 as Beacom outlined. She wondered aloud:
> Is cataloging metadata? Yes.
> Is metadata cataloging? No, not really.
> Can one be converted into the other? Yes, but only with human editing *OR* the loss of precision.

While she felt that it is in need of some updating, she believes that AACR2 has several key advantages over other metadata schemes: it's an established standard and has consistent record structures;   it has established procedures for authority control (and another theme of the conference is that authority control is a good thing);   it is not reinventing the wheel;   it is deployed with existing library system software and should not be discarded lightly. The way forward, as she described it, is to continue to support and develop AACR2, to develop a two-tiered approach and make use of other metadata schemes as appropriate to develop collection development policies for Internet resources; and to encourage sharing and cooperation between the schemes.

For me, one of the more interesting papers of this section was presented by Sally McCallum (Chief of the Network Development and MARC Standards Office, LC). It was so interesting not just because she spoke well and presented worthwhile ideas, but also because of the contrast between the way she looked and the title of her job and what she had to say. She looked the part of the stereotypical librarian, complete with hair in a bun and being very soft-spoken. Her role as Chief of the MARC Standards Office might also lead you to expect her to be somewhat traditional and conservative; she is, after all, the official guardian of MARC21. Yet she was fairly critical of MARC and presented a number of points for extending MARC to meet new challenges of bibliographic control. 1) Standards are important. They need to be stable but continually open to change. They have to account for new types of material as well as added functionality. 3) There are important reasons to look at new ideas. She cited as one example the potential to unite cataloging with the resources themselves.

 McCallum admonished us to consider different levels of control for different resources, to review the requirements for descriptive cataloging, and to devote attention to the exchange record structure. 4) MARC is structure and content and markup. It is not cataloging. It is simple, driven by standards, and parses data for semantic relationships to support multiple uses. 5) MARC has never been used monolithically for controlling all materials, citing A & I databases, EAD finding aids, and Web crawlers as some examples of non-MARC bibliographic control. Not all Web material is research quality. Self-cataloging by authors is appropriate for some Web material. 8) MARC content could be simplified. It suffers from over parsing, too many subfields, too many data elements. It needs new techniques for retrieval of electronic documents.

In reacting to McCallum's paper, Paul Weiss, Manager, Conversion and Database Services of Innovative Interfaces *(and for many years before that a reputable librarian)*, commented on the intellectual capital in the various standards we have developed. MARC has value in content, structure and markup. How do we share this intellectual capital? He asserted that it's not either/or with respect to metadata schemes, it's MARC and XML, MARC and DC.

Now on to the paper for which I named this presentation *(which doesn't mean that it's the one I understood the best, or agreed with the most)* Carl Lagoze (Dept. of Computer Science, Cornell University) presented the paper entitled: Business Unusual: How Event-Awareness May Breathe Life into the Catalog. He discussed sustaining and disruptive technologies. In his view, libraries represent a sustaining technology and the Web environment with various types of metadata represents "disruptive technologies," as described by Clayton Christensen in his popular management book (also listed on your handout). These disruptive technologies threaten the catalog's – and the library's - viability. According to his analysis, the "rapid growth of the Internet and the revolutionary transition from physical to digital artifacts jeopardize the role of the catalog and the library institution itself". Lagoze was clearly one of the "end of history alarmists" of whom Michael Gorman spoke in his keynote address. He maintained that the traditional catalog is *un*sustainable economically, if extended to the Internet. The economics of cataloging make it impossible for libraries to ignore the cost savings possible by leveraging descriptive information supplied by metadata from external organizations. Although new types of metadata are admittedly less functional than traditional cataloging, it has the potential to substantially lower costs. Lagoze urged some radical changes in the current descriptive cataloging model. The changes would include a move to "relationship-centric modeling" and "event awareness" in the catalog (to cope with the fluid and dynamic nature of networked digital information) and libraries' promotion of the catalog as an interoperability mechanism among distributed, diverse resource descriptions. Lagoze stressed the need for incorporating some of the new descriptive domains, and especially focus on ways to record the lifecycle of digital objects. He suggested that a "useful approach is to enthusiastically accept descriptive diversity and adopt a role as mediator." Move from controller to mediator.

Experimentation

In the session on experimentation, Karen Calhoun (Head of Technical Services at Cornell University), explored the potential for moving from today's highly centralized model for cataloging to an iterative, collaborative, and broadly distributed model for electronic resource description. She urged participants to consider the potential value of team-based efforts and new workflows for metadata creation. In her experimental service model for e-resource description, metadata could come from selectors, public service librarians, information technology staff, authors, vendors, publishers, and/or catalogers. Pointing to experiments at Cornell, Brown, the National Agricultural Library, Yale, and elsewhere,

she argued for a new level of cross-functional and cross-professional collaboration and creative problem solving.

Partnerships

In the session on partnerships, several vendor representatives spoke, as well as key library professionals. *The theme of this session was largely that the tasks of bibliographic control in the expanding universe of knowledge are too enormous to go it alone.*

Michael Kaplan (long in technical services at Harvard and then AUL for Tech Services at IU for several years before moving on to Ex Libris USA) identified several challenges to libraries that are forcing them to change. To avoid being overwhelmed by aggregator services, for example, he felt that libraries must require that vendors provide standardized catalog records and maintenance updates, and this requirement must be included in vendor contracts. He proposed an enhanced descriptive record, which would be dynamic and multi-faceted. Kaplan pictured this record as a series of concentric circles with bibliographic description at its core, surrounded by secondary or ancillary data such as table of contents, book reviews, hooks to text, and so on

Regina Reynolds (National Serials Data Program, LC) suggested two ways to get more useable metadata to catalogers. One is to ask that resource creators and producers supply useable metadata through templates. A second is to re-purpose metadata created for other purposes. In either approach, she proposed a hierarchy of catalog records from "hand-crafted" to records containing automated description, some cataloger review, and automated authority control. Reynolds identified some agencies creating metadata records for specific management functions: the U.S. Copyright Office, the Cataloging in Publication program, and the National Serials Data Program (NSDP and the ISSN center). All use publisher-supplied metadata in registration forms. Citing results of a study done with metadata supplied to NSDP, Reynolds suggested that re-purposing metadata is feasible and practical.

Outcomes

Were the conference goals met? The goals were to identify an overall strategy to address the issues outlined here and develop attainable action plans to make them happen. It's really too soon to say if the conference was successful as far as the Library of Congress is concerned. Achieving such goals will require a lot of commitment, ongoing planning, a great deal of collaboration, and a lot of experimental projects. The recommendations that came out of the Topical Discussion groups were not earth shattering and there is no overarching strategic plan that has come out of it. The recommendations ranged from the mundane, such as the admonition for catalogers to "refocus on intellectual access instead of agonizing over description" to the more ambitious having the "Network Development and MARC Standards Office … pursue standardized mechanisms for supporting component records" to the hopeful "create cross-profession teams (system

designers, librarians, etc.) to develop mechanisms for creating metadata standards and new record structures to the practical "encourage coordination of metadata schemes for instance by establishing or monitoring registries of metadata schemes and by promoting the consistent labeling of fields to what to my mind is the nearly impossible recommendation to "restructure AACR2 & MARC21 to support display of hierarchical relationships between records for a work, its expressions and its manifestations." (– *I say this is nearly impossible because of the pace at which the bodies that govern AACR2 and MARC move and our real need to make radical changes more quickly*)

Were my personal expectations for the conference met? Yes, because I went with the expectation only to have my mind stretched and be stimulated. So, What did I bring away from the conference? Well, the conference was 4 ½ months ago. Outside of co-authoring an article on it two months ago, I hadn't consciously thought about it in the intervening months. But as I have looked back over my notes and the papers to prepare for this presentation, I realize just how much what I heard and discussed at the conference has strengthened some of my beliefs, challenged others, and caused me to think "outside of the box", as we like to say these days.

To recap, these are some of the key ideas I brought away from the conference:

On the topic of Cataloging/selecting Web resources:

Michael Gorman's statement that:
> The question is not "how should we catalogue digital resources but rather which electronic resources should we catalogue and how shall we preserve them?"

On the topic of Metadata:

Again, Michael Gorman's warning that:
> Schemes without content are useless: one either puts in quality at the beginning or one has assemblages of random data

Priscilla Caplan's observation that:
> metadata schemes differ because resource description needs differ

Paul Weiss's contention that:
> it's not either/or with respect to metadata schemes, it's MARC and XML, MARC and DC

Sally McCallum's reminder that:
> MARC has never been used monolithically for controlling all materials

Ann Huthwaite's belief that:
> we need to develop a two-tiered approach and make use of other metadata schemes as appropriate

On the topic of a new vision of bibliographic control:

Jennifer Trant's chastisement that:
> We have been too long philosophically blind to what users do with the data

Sarah Thomas's plea that:
> there is a need for librarians to be more tolerant of dissonance in user search results

Regina Reynolds' observation that:
> we need a hierarchy of catalog records from "hand-crafted" to records containing automated description, some cataloger review, and automated authority control

Sally McCallum's belief that:
> we must consider different levels of control for different resources, to review the requirements for descriptive cataloging, and to devote attention to the exchange record structure

and her observation that:
> there's a potential to unite cataloging with the resources themselves

On the topic of new working relationships:

Karen Calhoun's vision of:
> the potential for moving from today's highly centralized model for cataloging to an iterative, collaborative, and broadly distributed model for electronic resource description

Regina Reynolds' recognition that:
> there are a multitude of sources for bibliographic data that can be captured for library catalogs through the formation of strategic partnerships with the publishing, systems, and information communities

and Priscilla Caplan's observation that:
> we are moving into an environment of increasing interaction and we must look to other cultural institutions for help and support in our quest to provide effective bibliographic control

Local efforts

How have these concepts begun to play out at the U of O?

In August, all UO Library department heads and the library administration had a daylong strategic planning retreat, at which we identified four or five initiatives for the Library as

a whole to focus on for the coming year. One of those initiatives was to look at physical and bibliographic access to the Library's collections and identify ways to strengthen and improve that access. I was asked to serve as Facilitator for the Group. We've been meeting since that time, addressing the various aspects of our charge and recently completed an internal discussion document on bibliographic access. As I look over that document, I have no doubt that my attendance at the LC conference influenced the direction that we took with this document. It outlines a model of bibliographic access emphasizing the principles of an iterative, collaborative, broadly distributed model for all resource descriptions, not just for electronic resources. If you take a look at the document and the rest of our Web site, you'll see the principles of reaching out, accepting greater dissonance, building on the work of other groups to develop effective bibliographic control. We state at the end of the document that we do not believe there is a single right way to provide bibliographic control.

While we are still working within existing technical frameworks and haven't made any startling leaps forward, we have clearly established the principles that different levels of access are appropriate for different materials, that records can come from multiple sources, that records can reside in multiple databases – from the online catalog to standalone databases, to finding aids, to Web lists. There is greater interest in finding new ways to provide bibliographic control and stretching the limits of our existing system, from loading Ebsco-produced records in order to provide title-level access to journals to which we have access through full-text databases, to working closely with various collection-development initiatives to expand the concept of the Orbis union catalog. The key thing is that we are open to experimentation, to collaboration, to relinquishing absolute control. *We are trying, as Carl Lagoze suggested, to act as mediators.* One of our current efforts is a subgroup charged to examine various metadata schemes and recommend a list of core data elements (without requiring the use of any particular metadata scheme) that should be present in all UO-sponsored bibliographic databases, whether they be the online catalog, a Web list, or a locally produced database.

Another effort influenced in part by my attendance at this conference has been the development of an outreach initiative with the Head of Access Services and the Head of Collection Development. We have proposed a variety of ways the UO Library could provide or assist in the provision of bibliographic control to materials not owned by the Library but by various programs and academic departments. We have identified one group for a pilot project using one of the models we outlined and hope to have an entire suite of options available for anyone on campus to choose from.

There are a lot of little efforts and projects that have been given a jump-start by the ideas presented and discussed at the LC Conference.

I feel that we are on the first leg of a very long voyage. We have set sail. The waters are still uncharted but we're setting out anyway. Along the way, we'll develop the maps, chart the routes, record our observations. Hopefully, we won't drown in deep water or be lost to unexpected storms.

Questions:

Which of these three statements do you most agree with? Do you see them as being mutually exclusive or diametrically opposed?

"real cataloging" involves controlled vocabularies and adherence to the standards that have evolved in the past 100 years -- Gorman

the traditional catalog is unsustainable economically, if extended to the Internet -- Lagoze

the boundaries between the resource and the catalog are blurring;
catalogs are themselves Web resources, in addition to providing descriptions of other Web-based and traditional resources -- Delsey

Do you agree with Michael Gorman that the question is not *how* we should catalog digital resources but rather *which* of them are worth preserving and cataloging? Are there characteristics of digital, particularly Internet, resources that render them uncatalogable or not worth cataloging?

What does Sarah Thomas' statement that we need to be more tolerant of dissonance mean to you? Do we lose something essential if we do that?

What projects are you all involved in planning or implementing that go beyond the traditional MARC, AACR2-based online catalog?

Do you agree with Michael Gorman's statement that:
The question is not "how should we catalogue digital resources but rather which electronic resources should we catalogue and how shall we preserve them?"

Do you agree with Carl Lagoze's statement that: the "rapid growth of the Internet and the revolutionary transition from physical to digital artifacts jeopardize the role of the catalog and the library institution itself"?