



Among Harvard's Libraries: Cataloging books in Widener

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Among Harvard's Libraries

CATALOGING BOOKS IN WIDENER

Kenneth E. Carpenter

The Library Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences asked to devote its April 1995 meeting to cataloging. Is this the only time in the history of libraries that a committee of faculty members has wanted to talk about cataloging? Perhaps not, but the request was certainly highly unusual.

Even librarians who are not catalogers prefer to avoid talking about cataloging, except from time to time to lament its cost, to wonder with shaking head why output is not higher, or to bemoan the existence of a backlog (pejorative word)—as if the catalogers themselves were personally responsible and consequently the cause of an insufficiency of funds for other library programs. Almost gleefully we non-catalogers pounce on an error—and the more stupid it is, the greater the sense of our superiority, and of our pleasure.

Cataloging, if seen as the organizing of books in such a manner that they can be physically and intellectually retrieved in predictable ways is, however, the preeminent achievement of librarians. Librarians can even organize millions of books. Forming collections is not inherently and exclusively the province of librarians. Cataloging is.

Whatever appears on the surface to be simple tends to be assumed to be easily carried out. Thus, the record that one used to see on a card, or now views on a computer screen, in its seeming lack of complexity, belies the processes that created the simplicity and puts that record—and the book—in a coherent whole with others. Behind the simplicity of the individual public record for the library's user is an apparatus and methodology that is designed to promote consistency, predictability, and intellectual coherence.

A catalog is not one record. It is, rather, an entity, a system—one that requires constant vigilance to keep it functioning. One of the

many aspects of the system is a methodology for keeping all works of an author, in most cases, under one form of the name, with appropriate cross references. It does not do to record some works of George Eliot under that name and some under Marian Evans. Neither does it do to record as one entry two individuals with the same name. The user of a catalog should find exactly what is wanted and all that is wanted, neither less nor more. To meet that goal, catalogers do what is known as "authority work," i.e., they determine what name and what form of a name to use. If the difficulty of doing this with personal names is not immediately obvious, a moment's reflection on the varying ways in which we often refer to an organization should make this clearer.

On the entries that appear in HOLLIS, terms providing additional access, what librarians used to call "tracings," are more visible than they were on cards. In fact, one can even use the tracings to carry out another search. Those tracings, most of them subjects, are carefully constructed so as to cover the universe of subjects on which books have been written—and by means of a controlled vocabulary. Thus, books about a topic should always be recorded under a consistent heading.

In fact, the retrospective conversion of the catalogs of the Harvard libraries sometimes results in different forms. The main reason is that each Harvard library used to maintain its own list of subject headings, that is, its own thesaurus of subject entries.

Just as the ordered subject thesaurus is part of the apparatus by which catalogers maintain a consistent and intellectually coherent catalog, so have catalogers created classification schemes that cover the universe of printed books and assign to every part of the scheme a call number. A subject classification system, combined with open stacks that facilitate browsing (or with electronic means that permit "virtual" browsing), is a powerful tool in helping the scholar identify the needed books.

Meaningful call numbers that actually help the user to browse are not a phenomenon that arose in the distant past. They are in fact an achievement of librarians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and they replace in the United States the assigning of a "shelf-mark" based on some criteria other than subject, as, for example, size or order of receipt.

The apparatus of cataloging in this country, for most large libraries, is now the work of the Library of Congress, and libraries that use the LC classification do not have to worry about maintaining local tools for subject headings and call numbers. Likewise, a library that buys English-language books, especially those readily available in the book trade (except for a few locally published works), can almost always find and download a record from a database. Without doubt there are problems from time to time, but the process is largely straightforward and one that requires what might be called "skill." The library assistant who does such work is a highly skilled worker.

The Harvard Library, in contrast to the generality of libraries, still has to be concerned about the apparatus. This is because we must do original cataloging, which requires thorough familiarity with the cataloging tools, sometimes even a contribution to the apparatus, as in the creation of new subject headings. That is part of what makes the cataloger at Harvard much more than a skilled worker. The cataloger at Harvard is a problem solver, a person who in fact solves one problem after another all day long, while other skilled staff do the "copy cataloging," i.e., matching cataloging copy to the item in hand.

So many of the people who work in Harvard's cataloging departments are problem solvers, because Harvard's libraries acquire large quantities of unique books, or at least books not cataloged into the databases from which records are downloaded. (We are, unfortunately, in a situation in which libraries postpone cataloging and wait for another to catalog it, thereby reducing costs for the library that waits.)

Anyone who has worked with early books does not think of them as straightforward: they are often anonymous or pseudonymous, issued with false imprints, or undated, just to mention a few of the problems. Yet modern books are often even more complicated, at least those that go into a research library. Consider, for instance, the number, seemingly increasing, that grow out of conferences. In every case the cataloger has to record

the name of the conference in such a way that it is findable by the researcher, while also determining whether the conference is one in a series so that the various volumes of proceedings are linked together in the catalog. Or, think about the large number of learned books that are issued as one of a series, all too often, however, without clear indication of the series. Or, recall that Widener's stacks have large numbers of serials issued by obscure organizations and perhaps so little known that there is no record as to when the serial ceased publication. Such publications constitute the stock of a research library.

A library that is international in its coverage has particular complexity, given the languages of the material. An international library also has particular challenges in bringing out for the user the subjects of books. It is sometimes not even enough to use the subject headings; sometimes fields have to be created that can be searched by keyword. Thus, a book on the Merv Oasis crisis needs to be findable under that phrase, even though it does not appear in the title. It is catalogers whose knowledge of languages, of subjects, and of cataloging methodologies (including computer technology) makes available the books that Harvard acquires each year.

Technology is now greatly helping librarians to produce ever more useful catalogs for the scholar, but for many years, the computer did not speed production, or so it seems to this writer. Users who now search HOLLIS by author, title, language, language and date, subject, etc., are able to do so because the elements of the catalog entry have been entered into fields. Thus, the place of publication into a field with the designation 260 and the subfield delimiter "a"; the date is entered into the 260 field, but with the delimiter "c". Librarians refer to the numbers of the fields as "tags," and it is sometimes said that catalogers "talk in tags."

Initially, catalogers had to learn to talk in tags, and doing so, like developing other skills with the computer, means extensive work that only later pays off. (This is one of the reasons why ongoing training and education has become so important in libraries.) Moreover, creating electronic records, when libraries first started to do so, brought little benefit, other than saving the cost of typing subject headings and other added entries on additional cards. That librarians used the computer to create a central database of cataloging records was an act of faith, one that has paid off handsomely.

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LI812--HOLLIS CATALOGING XN1A

HU FMT: B ENCL: d C/DT: 04/21/86 U/DT: 03/11/95 STAT: m LGD: am DCF: x CHK: 4
 LCMRC: 0 LCCLAS: 0000 VENDOR: PDTYP: r PDT1: 1980 PDT2: 1869 CNTRY: mau
 LANG: lat ILLUS: I/LEV: REPROD: CNTNT: b GOV: CONF: 0 FEST: 0
 INDX: 1 FICT: 0 BIO: MODREC: CATSRC: d

035/1:0 : |a 13458953
 035/2:3 : |a 0631864-9
 040: : |a HMM |c HMM
 130:0 : |a Monumenta Germaniae historica. |p Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi.
 245:10: |a Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicis separatim editi.
 246/1:3 : |a Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi.
 260:0 : |a Hannoverae : |b Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, |c 1869-
 300: : |a v. ; |c 23 cm.
 490/1:1 : |a v. 3 [bis], 12: Monumenta Germaniae historica. Leges ; |v 8
 500/1: : |a Vol. 2 has imprint: Vimariae : Boehlau.
 500/2: : |a Change of title, 1980- : Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi.
 504/3: : |a Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

Info: Alt-Q

Cornell Telnet 1.88 # T 1360 1360

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LI812--HOLLIS CATALOGING XN1A

505/4:1 : |a v. [1]. Determinatio compendiosa de iurisdictione imperii / Tholomeo Lucensi -- v. [2]. Edictus ceteraque Langobardorum leges -- v. [3]. De ordine palatii / Hincmarus -- v. 3 [bis] Hincmarus De ordine palatii. (Editio altera) -- v. [4]. Leges Saxonum et Lex Thuringorum -- v. [5]. Leges Visigothorum antiquiores -- v. [6]. Lex Ribuarum et Lex Francorum Chamavorum -- v. [7]. Defensor pacis / Marsilius von Padua -- v. [8]. Sachsenspiegel -- v. 9. Die Ordines f"ur die Weihe und Kr"onung des Kaisers -- v. 10. Donation of Constantine. Das constitutum Constantini -- v. 11. Die goldene Bulle Kaiser Karls IV vom Jahre 1356 -- v. 12. Lex Frisionum -- v. 13. Die falschen Investiturprivilegien -- v. 14. Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis / Hinkmar von Reims.
 651/1: 0: |a Germany |x Constitutional law |x Early works to 1800.
 830/1: 0: |a Leges ; |v 8.
 830/2: 0: |a Monumenta Germaniae historica. |p Leges 8.
 LOC/1:8c: |i wid |b Ger 70.5 |f Photocopy |h v. 1-14 in 13 |h Copy A=v.3 bis & 6; Copy B=v.3 bis & 6 |n All but copy B of v. 6 are original printed ed. |x analyzed
 MD: 03/25/94 H-2 5 ITEM RECORDS XN-001-01 AN-002-01
 LOC/2:9c: |i mmf |b Film Mas |b C1329 |f Microfilm |h v. <6>
 MD: 04/21/86 H-1

A cataloging records in non-public form with tags, that is, the numbers on the left of some lines. This one is for a multi-volume set.

For instance, some 70 percent of the records for Harvard's pre-1976 books, those formerly represented by cards, could be converted to electronic records without rekeying. Users also reap the benefit of electronic records, both in cost savings that can go into other library purposes and in having searching capabilities that did not heretofore exist.

Librarians—and those who pay for cataloging—also see the benefit of technology in ongoing cataloging, since records exist for so many of the currently received publications. Librarians are also taking advantage of electronic technology for more efficiently identifying the needed records, for managing the books awaiting cataloging, and for more efficiently carrying out the task of original cataloging.

Two librarians in Widener, with the encouragement of Jane Ouderkirk, head of the Cataloging Services Department, have made

particular contributions in these areas. Michael Kaplan, a Harvard Ph.D. in Classics, who moved over into the library side of academia, has recently been on the road to speak about and demonstrate the cataloger's workstation that he has been instrumental in developing. He has, in effect, replaced the computer terminal that was once only useful for cataloging, with a machine with word processing and other capabilities that assist in the cataloging. Thus, a cataloger can now use macros to put in repetitive elements of information, which saves keystrokes.

Bill Hays, who had completed course work for a degree in musicology, took advantage of the Tuition Assistance Program to study computer science in the Harvard Extension School. A final project for a course led him to write a program to identify for the cataloging teams—organized in Widener by language groups—relevant books among those uncata-

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LTHU MORE
ART3754
LI812--HOLLIS CATALOGING XN1A
HU FMT: U ENCL: d C/DT: 11/19/93 U/DT: 04/20/95 STAT: n LGD: bc DCF: a CHK: 5
LCMRC: R LCCIAS: 0000 VENDOR: PDYTP: i PDT1: 1738 PDT2: 1896 CNTRY: md
LANG: eng REPROD: a MODREC: CATSRC: d
020/1: : |a 1556554648
043: : |a n-usu--
245:00: |a Slavery in ante-bellum Southern industries. |n Series B, |p
Selections from the Southern Historical Collection, University of North
Carolina, Chapel Hill, |f [1738-1896 |h microform / |c [editorial adviser,
Charles B. Dew ; associate editor, Martin Schipper].
300/1: : |a ca. items.
520/1: : |a Primary material on the issues surrounding industrial uses of
slave labor, including: Brevard and McDowell family papers ; Bryan and
Leventhorpe family papers ; William G. Dickson papers ; George Phifer Erwin
papers ; Waightstill Avery papers ; Gold Hill Mining Company records ; Hawkins
family papers ; Washington Mine account book ; Silver Hill Mining Company
ledger ; Louisa Furnace account book ; Ridwell Furnace day book ; Shenandoah
County (Va.) account books ; Fisher family papers.
555/2:0 : |a Guide / compiled by Martin Schipper (xi, 44 p.).
650/1: 0: |a Slavery |z Southern States |x History |x Sources.
650/2: 0: |a Slave labor |z Southern States |x History |x Sources.
Info: Alt-Q Cornell Telnet 1.88 # T 2529 2531
LTHU SAME
ART3754
LI812--HOLLIS CATALOGING XN1A
650/3: 0: |a Industries |z Southern States |x History |x Sources.
700/1:1 : |a Dew, Charles B.
700/2:1 : |a Schipper, Martin Paul.
710/3:2 : |a University of North Carolina. |b Library. |b Southern Historical
Collection.
830/1: 0: |a Black studies research sources.
LOC/1:9c: |i mic |b Film A 740.2 |h 38 microfilm reels |l akb2555
MD: 11/22/93 OCLC H-1
LOC/2:9c: |i mic |b INDEX Film A 740.2 |n = Guide
MD: 11/19/93

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A non-public cataloging record for a microform.

logged in the basement of Widener. Formerly, someone on the German team, for instance, went down to the shelves in the basement and hunted for German books to catalog. Then, with the books in hand the library assistant would return upstairs, would await access to a computer terminal in order to search for cataloging copy, and, if none was found, often return the book to the basement shelves. With the program of Bill Hays, the German books can be readily identified; but, even without the books in hand, a search can be carried out for cataloging copy. (Also, thanks to the effort of the Librarian of Harvard College to provide the necessary tools to librarians, every cataloger now has a computer.)

Before Kaplan and Hays, the library assistant pulled up the record in OCLC, one of the central databases of cataloging on which libraries rely. Then, the cataloger prepared a worksheet, a clerk keyed in the record, and the cataloger proofed it. Now records are usually transferred automatically from OCLC to the HOLLIS database.

Such uses of technology obviously save enormous amounts of time. One benefit is that catalogers can devote themselves more fully to cataloging the books at Harvard for

which no cataloging copy is available, and thousands needing original cataloging are acquired each year.

Original cataloging is what initially drew so many catalogers to the work. Catalogers readily express the joys of problem solving for one book after another, all within the framework of a set of rules and all with the goal of helping people, above all users, to find that the library has a given book. It is a problem solving that draws on everything one knows. Catalogers find it fascinating to determine for book after book its subject, the proper subject headings, and the appropriate call number. To figure out that a book is about the goldweights of the Akan people—and to create the proper subject heading—can be highly satisfying. Far from it being boring to sit and catalog all day, day after day, many catalogers become thoroughly engrossed in the task at hand.

Original cataloging can be particularly challenging when the cataloger works in a number of different languages. In fact, the need for language knowledge is another of the factors that has often drawn catalogers to their work. Bruce Trumble, for instance, left working for a stockbrokerage house to catalog books in German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, and

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LI812--HOLLIS CATALOGING XN34

HU FMT: B ENCL: c C/DT: 02/08/95 U/DT: 04/20/95 STAT: n LGD: am DCF: R CHK: 2
 LCMRC: R LCLAS: DK 0949 VENDOR: PDTYP: s PDT1: 1994 PDT2: CTRY: ir
 LANG: per ILLUS: abth I/LEV: REPROD: CNTNT: b GOV: R CONF: R FEST: R
 INDX: 1 PICT: R BIO: R MODREC: r CATSRC: d

043: : Ca e-ur-uz Ca e-ur-tk Ca ac-----
 100:1 : Ca Ghafour, Muhammad Alai Khan.
 245:10: Ca Rouznomah-i safar-i Khvazarazm / Cc Muhammad Alai Khan Ghafour ;
 bi-koushish-i Muhammad Hasan Khan Kavousci Iroaqi va Muhammad Nodir
 Nazsiri Muqaddam.
 246/1:15: Ca Kharazm travel account's newspaper.
 250: : Ca Chrap-i 1.
 260: : Ca Tihroan : Cb Daftar-i Mustala'at-i Siyosai va Bayn al-Milalai,
 Vizarat-i Umur-i Kharijah, Cc 1994.
 300/1: : Ca 35, 106, [1] p., [2] p. of plates : Cb 2 col. ill., 42 facsim.
 (1 col.), map ; Cc 21 cm.
 440/1: 0: Ca Mab'ahi+s-i Asiya-yi Markazi va Qafqaz ; Cv 7
 500/1: : Ca "Muskah-i khat-tai-i Rouznomah-i safar-i Khvazarazm": p. [55]-
 99.
 504/2: : Ca Includes bibliographical references (p. [27]-31 (1st group)) and
 index.

Info: Alt-Q

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LI812--HOLLIS CATALOGING XN34

600/1:10: Ca Ghafour, Muhammad Alai Khan Cx Journeys Cz Uzbekistan Cz
 Khorezmskadiia oblast°.
 651/2: 0: Ca Khorezmskadiia oblast° (Uzbekistan) Cx Description and travel.
 651/3: 0: Ca Khorezm (Kingdom)
 651/4: 0: Ca Uzbekistan Cx Description and travel.
 651/5: 0: Ca Turkmenistan Cx Description and travel.
 651/6: 0: Ca Asia, Central Cx Description and travel.
 600/7:10: Ca Ghafour, Muhammad Alai Khan Cx Manuscripts Cx Facsimiles.
 650/8: 0: Ca Manuscripts, Persian Cx Facsimiles.
 700/1:2 : Ca Kavousci Iroaqi, Muhammad Hasan.
 700/2:2 : Ca Nazsiri Muqaddam, Muhammad Nodir.
 710/3:1 : Ca Iran. Cb Vizarat-i Umur-i Kharijah. Cb Bayyaganai. Ck
 Manuscript. Cn Majmu'ah-i safarnomah'ha ; 6
 LOC/1:4c: Ci wid Cc Harvard Depository Ca DK949.K49 Cb G45 1994x Ck med Cn
 Consult Circ. Desk for HWJGD4
 MD: 02/08/95 OCLC RLIN 1 ITEM RECORD ZN-001-01

*A non-public cataloging record of par-
 ticular complexity.*

Danish. Danish is a language that he is studying at this point. John Emerson, in the Middle Eastern Division, catalogs Persian books, but he must also know German and Russian, because so many of the tools are in those languages. Jeffrey Beall does Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, and Galician.

Catalogers obtain satisfaction, as well, from a sense of the importance of their work. In the days of cards the cataloger's work had primarily local significance; now the record goes into a cataloging database and can be drawn on by catalogers elsewhere. The OCLC database is also a tool used by researchers, and scholars around the world are using the Internet to search HOLLIS. Thus, catalogers have an increasing sense of partnership in a vast intellectual enterprise. They know that on the quality of their work depends the scholar's access to books. Clearly, we all have a stake in their work.

Although cataloging itself is what drew catalogers to the work, many must contribute in various other ways to the process. Supervision often becomes part of the task of those

who originally saw themselves primarily as line-catalogers. Others concentrate on highly important support activities. Two who focus on technology to increase efficiency have been mentioned. A library as large as Widener needs another kind of specialist, a person who becomes an expert on subject headings and on cataloging rules. At Widener that person is Peter Lisbon. He arrived at Harvard knowing French and Latin. Then he studied German, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish, with Danish and Dutch self-taught. He works training new catalogers at Harvard, for library school alone does not make a cataloger; he sees himself as something of a teacher at heart. He also answers questions on subject headings and contributes to the ongoing process of making them consistent. From the Library of Congress there may arrive a 300-page manual, and it is Peter Lisbon who digests it and informs catalogers of the relevant portions. Ly-Anne O'Dwyer provides similar functions with respect to descriptive cataloging.

Another specialist is Ruth Haas, who is an expert in a format: serials. In the future, there

will no doubt be specialists in cataloging electronic formats. Serials are always changing. They retitle themselves, absorb others or are absorbed, start new series, etc., etc. With serials, as with books, there is an effort to carry out cooperative work, which is known as CONSER. The complications of serials has led to task forces, one of which, on format integration, Ruth Haas has chaired. The very complexity of the task of recording information so that the user can understand it is part of what fascinates a serials cataloger. The morning newspaper also becomes especially interesting to the serials cataloger, who knows that the name change of a country is going to be reflected immediately in cataloging work.

Catalogers love their work, but they do feel a great deal of pressure. Pressure is, of course, relative, but catalogers are in the position of having a measurable output: titles cataloged. This makes the job, for many, much more than 9 to 5, especially with respect to increas-

ing their knowledge. Rarely, however, do catalogers at Harvard write for publication, though catalogers acknowledge, as one would expect, that use of the library does make for better cataloging. It seems that catalogers are above all generalists, who tend to prefer to add a new skill, most often a language, rather than to burrow more deeply into a problem or subject.

Perhaps, though, we are seeing a changing world, in which catalogers must increasingly become specialists in a language and/or subject, as well as specialists in an aspect of the application of technology. The financial pressures on libraries lead to a desire for all possible efficiency, and cataloging is the most labor-intensive area in which measurements of productivity can be applied. The irony is that efficiency requires ever more knowledgeable people. That is, at least, one of the many things this non-cataloger thinks he has learned about cataloging and catalogers.

FROM WORKSHEET TO WORKSTATION:
*Technical Services Workstations in
Harvard College Library's
Cataloging Services Department*

Michael Kaplan

MICHAEL KAPLAN is Head, Database Management, and Coordinator for OCLC/RLIN Operations in the Harvard College Library.

Library automation, viewed historically, has not proceeded in a direct course. Rather, there have been periods in which one aspect—technical services, reference, or public access—has surged forward. This is likewise true of automation associated with the library's technical services—acquisitions, collection development, and cataloging.

In the late 1960s library automation pioneers developed the MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging) format. That was followed in the early- to mid-1970s by the birth and growth of regional and national (now international) online bibliographic utilities (OCLC, RLIN, WLN, and UTLAS, this last now called ISM). In the early years, libraries used the bibliographical utilities, including the Library of Congress, primarily to order printed catalog cards. A by-product of the card-purchasing process was the development of MARC records. As libraries compiled large databases of MARC records, they began to utilize them in their local online public access catalogs (OPACs). Now, in the mid-1990s, we are on the verge of developing massive

networks of client-server systems, that is, powerful interactive systems through which many individuals are able simultaneously to use software and data. These systems, stored both locally and at remote sites, will be tied to and available over the Internet. Client-server systems will replace terminal mainframe systems in most library automation environments, and libraries will be mounting their catalogs on client-server systems. This will be particularly true when the front-ends for library catalogs are WWW (World Wide Web) browsers.

When the Harvard University Library first brought up HOLLIS, its online catalog, in 1985, it was not for the public, but for staff to use in acquisitions. The public catalog came later, in 1988. The terminals used to access HOLLIS were accordingly in acquisitions and collection development departments. Only a few terminals were located in cataloging departments in those days.

On the one hand, this was curious, because it was the cataloging departments that had introduced the modern era of automation by use of the MARC format and of OCLC and RLIN. On the other hand, there was much to be gained by coordinating the collection activities at Harvard University, which took place across a highly decentralized environment: doing so reduced the rate of duplicate acquisitions.