Why catalog?
Tennessee Library Association Spring 2008
Mary Charles Lasater

The past year has been a good for cataloging. The report of the LC Working Group was very positive about authority control and the cooperative efforts of the librarians through NACO. This was in direct opposition to the Calhoun report issued in 2006, which seemed to say 'Why bother'. In fact for several years catalogers have heard that they are dinosaurs and the work that we do can be done by computers… just as the printing press took work from the monks transcribing texts in the 1500's. So it was with great relief that I read the Working Group report which endorsed authority control and indicated that machines are not yet ready to do this work. However it was not so kind to Library of Congress Subject Headings. It wasn't as harsh as the Calhoun report, but it did recommend: LC: Transform LCSH into a tool that provides a more flexible means to create and modify subject authority data.

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The most controversial recommendation was to stop work on RDA, the next cataloging rules now under development, until more research. I have mixed feelings about RDA and since it is still being written I'm not going to talk about it.

ALCTS responded to the draft of the Working Group report and I gave a few remarks about that response in January during Midwinter. ALA reaction is mainly positive. Points that ALCTS made include: Funding. The Working Group worked under the assumption that LC would not be getting lots of additional funding. ALCTS commented on Funding in their overview "It is professionally disempowering to accept this implication as an immutable truth. It is important that current economic conditions not be seen as unchangeable.

Staffing: Recommendation 1.2 mandates a more inclusive, cooperative model and will require some libraries to reconsider their disinvestment in professionally qualified staff. Professional catalogers are needed more than ever to achieve the goals of the report… this will be a major reversal. ALCTS goes on to comment: The WG report does not acknowledge the multiple impacts of years of budgetary decisions, frequently made above the department level that have devastated libraries ability to make the needed contributions (read that as fewer catalogers in libraries outside of LC to do the work)

Incentives: These statements have changed some from the draft to the final form but it is still not clear what incentives will 'overcome' the problem of too few catalogers to do the cataloging and share with LC. There also seems to be an underlying assumption that all libraries are or could afford to be OCLC participants.

I certainly agree with the ALCTS comment: We applaud the LCWG's affirmation of the continuing importance of authoritative forms of access points. There are many NACO contributors. This report recognizes and endorses that work.

Enhance Access to Rare and unique materials: This is underway in many libraries often in conjunction with digital library initiatives. Diversity of approach is partiallly driven by seeking the least expensive form of bibliographic control… ALCTS notes "there is tension caused comparing the cost of describing unique objects to that of cataloging non-unique objects that can be processed far more cheaply"

In the conclusion ALA thanks the LC Working Group for their incredible effort in fulfilling their charge. The extent of change outlined by the report is overwhelming and will take time for our professional colleagues to fully absorb.

Since the Working Group report, the CPSO position paper on LCSH and strings was released. Thomas Mann, Reference Librarian at the Library of Congress and defender of LCSH wrote a very strong answer to the Working Group report. Jim Weinheimer, has replied to that and Autocat has been very busy. Since all of these people or groups have answered the question "Whycatalog?', I'll just make a few points from all this.

Thomas Mann concludes his 38 page document with a call for ALA to act and a. insisting, contrary to the Working Group's recommendation that maintenance of LC's cataloging operations must be regarded as a much higher priority for all of the nation's libraries than is the digitaization of LC's special collections..

James Weinheimer, Director of Library and Inforation Services, The American University of Rome "I wish to emphasize that we are both in agreement concerning the overarching point that high-quality, human-created cataloging (or metadata) are absolutely necessary and will continue to be necessary into the foreseeable future. 1. I agree with the importance of browsing subject headings… (but then he disagrees)

So since the 2006 Calhoun report which was interpeted by many as: 'Why bother' we now have multiple documents, the LC Working Group report, Thomas Mann's support of LCSH, CPSO paper on LCSH and strong comments all in support of cataloging, authority control and subject analysis for today's library user and/or information seeker. We have tremendous calls to action from all of these to continue and expand what we are doing.

What I have been involved in at Vanderbilt the last two years is our implementation of Primo, Ex Libris's next generation catalog. It is a new 'front-end' combining our catalog and other databases. In the first version it combines

the library's catalog and TV News Archives. It does several 'things' to records from our catalog. It combines duplicated records and it FRBRizes the records. Inconsistencies affect patron retrieval when they 'click' and affect deduping and FRBRizing so the example below has two corporate author entries that need 'clean up' to maximise the potential of this new front end.

Inconsistencies in cataloging make it much harder to make databases work together. On the eve of this next generation why would we abandon consistency? The business model of the Calhoun report is not an appropriate model for our libraries. We do need to move into the future, but we need to do so understanding how we can do things better. We should not abandon our users.