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Cataloging Reform: An Overview for Academic Law Librarians

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Mr. Thomas explains the issues involved in cataloging reform and suggests methods for streamlining procedures without destroying quality, with particular reference to academic law libraries.

I. Introduction

In recent years, the library world has begun to question many of the long-standing assumptions and practices underlying the work of catalogers. An argument for radical change has even been advanced in a *Library Journal* cover story.[1] Most of the arguments for change center on the need to get more information to patrons more quickly. That goal, whether stated explicitly or merely intimated, translates into policies that favor speed over the traditional attributes of good cataloging: accuracy, completeness, and adherence to national cataloging standards.

These conversations have taken place against a background of general dissatisfaction, or at least uneasiness, with the role of traditional cataloging in an automated environment. The model code used for cataloging, the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition* (AACR2), has been roundly criticized as a standard suited best to the card catalogs that began to die out just as AACR2 was being implemented.[2] A continued focus on Charles Ammi Cutter's famous objectives[3] has led catalogers to

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1. Dorothy Gregor & Carol Mandel, *Cataloging Must Change!*, LIBR. J., Apr. 1, 1991, at 42.

2. *See generally* John J. Boll, *The Future of AACR2*, CATALOGING & CLASSIFICATION Q., Vol. 12, no. 1, 1990, at 3.

3. 1. To enable a person to find a book of which either
   A. the author }
   B. the title } is known
   C. the subject }
   2. To show what the library has
   D. by a given author

concentrate on publishers' packages of locally housed physical volumes instead of what Patrick Wilson calls "the available stock of information"[4]—whether that stock is in the local library, across town, on the other side of the world, printed in a book or journal, or existing as bytes in a database or as laser pocks on a compact disc. In addition, the usefulness of the "main entry" concept as a vital element in cataloging has come under increasing attack.[5]

Law catalogers should feel a particular interest in these criticisms. Legal researchers have both a compelling need for immediate access to time-sensitive materials and a significant reliance on materials housed outside the local library. But before jumping on the "simplify, simplify" bandwagon and accepting the premises of those who demand cataloging reform, catalogers should assess what it is that needs to be simplified. This article deals not with what types of materials law libraries should be cataloging, but with the cataloging methods employed.

Cataloging, as it is practiced in academic law libraries, is not a monolithic enterprise. Differences in staff size, expertise, level of automation, and volume of work, along with local practices of varying historical development, contribute to a multiplicity of approaches to the problem of getting bibliographic information to library patrons. The reformers concentrate partly on these variegated local practices and partly on the national standards to which most libraries, and certainly most academic law libraries, profess at least some adherence.

II. National Standards and the National Databases

National cataloging standards were not invented as part of the technological advances of the past twenty years, but pressure to comply with the standards has increased in recent years. The most convenient and obvious example is the continuing dissemination of Library of Congress

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E. on a given subject
F. in a given kind of literature
3. To assist in the choice of a book
   (G) as to its edition (bibliographically)
   (H) as to its character (literary or topical).
CHARLES A. CUTTER, RULES FOR A DICTIONARY CATALOGUE 8 (3d ed. 1891).

4. Patrick Wilson, *The Second Objective, in* THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGING 5, 6 (Elaine Svenonius, ed., 1989).

5. For a pithy history of the demise of main entry cataloging, see Michael Gorman, *Yesterday's Heresy—Today's Orthodoxy: An Essay on the Changing Face of Descriptive Cataloging*, 50 C. & RES. LIBR. 626 (1989). In addition to the numerous articles on this topic, there is much informal debate. An interesting discussion of the matter occurred in the fall of 1991 on the electronic bulletin board AUTOCAT: Library cataloging and authorities discussion group (AUTOCAT@UVMVM.BITNET).

Rule Interpretations (LCRI) to AACR2 and to its 1988 revision.[6]
Announcements for cataloging jobs in academic libraries, including law
libraries, usually convey expectations that the successful candidate will
apply AACR2 standards, as interpreted by the Library of Congress, to the
cataloging done at the hiring institution. Although AACR2 is the code,
LCRIs have become the annotations without which the code cannot be
properly interpreted. Ben R. Tucker, formerly Chief in the Office for
Descriptive Cataloging Policy at LC, helps to clarify why in earlier eras
these internal Library of Congress interpretations were unnecessary for
other libraries:

> These documents were primarily for the purpose of creating a national
> record worth distributing to other libraries. Other libraries did not have
> such a responsibility and so were free even to promote specialized
> policies at variance from the national ones as they attempted to be
> responsive to the needs of local users, rather than be all things to all
> people, as attempted by the Library of Congress.[7]

The situation changed not with AACR2, but with OCLC, the first of
the national online bibliographic databases. Using OCLC, if one cataloged
a book for which no record existed in the national database, that new
record would become a cataloging record for use by other libraries. Under
the circumstance, one would want that record to be as much like a Library
of Congress record as possible. This brings us to the heart of the need for
standardization, to the place where OCLC and AACR2 intersect.

The main advantage of subscribing to a national bibliographic database
such as OCLC has always been seen as economic. Original cataloging is
required only once for any title that appears in the database. A library
making use of an existing record for its own cataloging has less work and
spends less staff time. The few local changes that are necessary take
minimal time and expertise, and the result is a record for an item at a great
savings.[8]

To make the best use of that record, it should be entered according to
standards that all member libraries could accept. The Library of Congress,
which produced the MARC records that formed the basis for these national
databases, had been printing cards for libraries since the turn of the

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6. For the sake of convenience, and in imitation of colloquial practice, I will use "AACR2" to
refer to both the original second edition and the 1988 revision.

7. Ben R. Tucker, *Ask Me No Questions and I'll Write You No RIs, in* THE CONCEPTUAL
FOUNDATIONS OF DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGING, *supra* note 4, at 45, 48.

8. *See generally* Tom Delsey, *Standards for Descriptive Cataloguing: Two Perspectives on the
Past Twenty Years, in* THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGING, *supra* note 4, at
51.

century. Its standard was *the* standard in cataloging. With the rise of the national databases, however, no longer was the Library of Congress the only creator of records for national use; OCLC, RLIN, and WLN libraries were doing the same thing.

In addition, computer records, unlike paper records, demand a greater internal standardization. "[T]he level of tolerance for variations in format and for literal and logical inconsistencies within the catalogue was radically diminished."[9] On a 3 x 5" catalog card, a new paragraph or a new entry was simply entered. The MARC format, however, demanded much greater attention to logical formulations of bibliographic data. Searchability (or potential searchability in the early years) required that each field and subfield have a precise meaning, and, often, a precise relationship with other fields in the record. Whereas one could quite easily "promote specialized policies" in local cataloging on paper records, the rigidity of MARC demanded rigid adherence to consistent principles.

III. The Cataloging Record

If the goal is to input high-quality bibliographic records into the national databases with all member libraries using the LC-interpreted AACR2 standard, what sort of record should one expect? Mary K. Bolin offers a subjective description:

> A high-quality cataloging record is one that identifies the item and puts   .
> it together with others of its kind. It analyzes the contents, provides as
> many access points as necessary, and is accurate—i.e., all headings are
> authorized or established correctly, there are no typographical errors or
> misspellings, the prescribed punctuation is correct, and all the MARC
> tags, indicators, and subfields are correct.[10]

Of course, if every record entered into the OCLC database met this standard, there would probably be little discussion of cataloging reform. Adding the records locally would require no work beyond the assignment of a locally consistent call number (perhaps) and a quick check for other local variations.

Not everyone adheres to national standards, however. This tells us that another standard is at work in the library community—one that is placed above adherence to the principles of AACR2, the LCRIs, and strictures of the MARC format. This other standard is attributable to economics. A cataloging record that does not conform to LC/AACR2 prescriptions (and

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9. *Id.* at 55.

10. Mary K. Bolin, *Make a Quick Decision in (Almost) All Cases: Our Perennial Crisis in Cataloging*, 17 J. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 357 (1991).

proscriptions) often has been input either by someone who does not know the rules (perhaps a nonprofessional cataloger) or by someone who has too much to do and must therefore input a substandard record. In the first case, the inputting library will not or cannot hire an appropriate professional to do the job correctly or to see that it is done correctly by competent paraprofessionals. In the second case, the person responsible for the cataloging is not supported properly by additional staffing.[11]

The cataloging reformers insist that the need for higher quantities of cataloging (ultimately, an economic consideration) must take precedence over considerations of quality. Peter S. Graham begins his article "Quality in Cataloging: Making Distinctions" with the assertion: "Quality in cataloging is inversely proportional to cataloging productivity."[12] This is obviously true at the fundamental level: the lowest quality cataloging (none) will cost the least amount of money (also none). Since that level is clearly unacceptable, what level is minimally acceptable and how much will it cost?

IV. Acceptable Cataloging

Graham suggests that a title-page transcription of author, title, and a shelf mark could be the minimal level. "This level of cataloging allows patrons to make all further distinctions as to edition, content, and suitability to their purpose by consulting the item itself. But without these, patrons can do nothing."[13] This record could then be augmented as desired; if such a standard were once approved as minimally acceptable, however, then one would expect that many records would be entered under these guidelines. This represents a radical departure from the cataloging practices of the past. If Cutter's objectives describe eight capabilities of the ideal catalog, a catalog made up of records at this level would provide reliable access only for objective "B."[14] No doubt, there has been an unnecessary faith placed in Cutter's objectives, but eliminating most of its underlying principles would make our catalogs less than adequate tools for providing access to bibliographic collections. Redesigning catalogs on the medieval model (that is, one line per item with a shelf designation) departs

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11. No doubt there are other reasons and combinations, and even (we must admit) cases of cataloger indolence, to explain such results.

12. Peter S. Graham, *Quality in Cataloging: Making Distinctions*, 16 J. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 213 (1990).

13. *Id.* at 216.

14. *See infra* note 3. "D" could be found if there were no variations in an author's name on the title page. "A" could also be found, although Gorman insists that it "makes little or no sense." Gorman, *supra* note 5, at 628. By knowing an author's name only, one has no assurance that the book found by that knowledge is *the* book wanted.

too significantly from the ideal of the catalog to serve as a useful research tool. Sophisticated users of academic law libraries, who generally must master complicated online databases and looseleaf services, expect to get much more information from catalog records.

There is, however, a level of minimal cataloging below the LC/AACR2 standard that could still provide suitable access much of the time. Where to draw the line is a local decision, which is why one sees such a variety of quality standards being applied to online cataloging records. Those local decisions are made at least partly with reference to the volume of work to be done. Graham reminds us that the volume of materials is increasing both in quantity and scope of material (software, videocassettes, etc.). The increase in scope places an extra burden on cataloging departments that have not had much experience with formats other than books and serials. The increase in volume and the resulting backlogs in many libraries frame Graham's question: "Which is better, more cataloging at level A, or less cataloging at the presumably higher level B?"[15] He employs an analogy to explain these different cataloging levels, using as symbols the Volkswagen Beetle and the Mercedes-Benz of the 1960s. "Both cars fulfilled the objective of motor transportation: they got their passengers to their destination reliably. Both cars provided excellent craftsmanship (accuracy), but differed considerably in their functional range (extent). . . . [F]or the cost of constructing one Mercedes-Benz, several Volkswagens could have been built."[16]

This analogy helps in considering the types of changes that can be made locally to increase productivity without compromising quality unacceptably. The key distinction is between *accuracy* and *extent*. As Graham insists, accuracy should not be sacrificed in a cataloging record. This should be a fundamental principle in any cataloging reform decision. Accuracy itself places a financial burden on the cataloging unit of a library. Accuracy for any individual element in a cataloging record requires a responsible adherence to the standards governing that element. If compromises with perfection must be made (and they must be made by most libraries with significant backlogs or unconverted records), let those compromises be in the extent of cataloging records. Catalogers can leave out notes that require research, series that are too complex to decipher, and even subject headings if nothing appropriate can be found immediately. They need to be certain, however, that what is in the record is accurate and that false information is not being disseminated.

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15. Graham, *supra* note 12, at 213.
16. *Id.* at 214.

V. Receiving and Providing Quality Cataloging

This brings us back to the inadequacies of the database. Ideally, one would hope to find records usable "as is" from one's bibliographic database, yet, this has never been the case in practice among OCLC libraries. As Michael Gorman put it with typical clarity, "In the early days of OCLC, there was kind of a mass delusion that only LC and one's own library could do cataloging satisfactorily. . . ."[17] Law catalogers perhaps took this a step further since LC only relatively recently began to assign "K" classification numbers to legal works. This "delusion" placed (and still places) a large burden on libraries that operated at least informally under its influence. Even if local standards allowed for easy acceptance of LC cataloging, unwillingness to accept "member copy" records as fully cataloged required virtual recataloging in some libraries. A compromise position was taken in others: check the details in member copy records for accuracy and presume correctness for those things which could not be verified. Even this method required a good deal of time.

To use a national bibliographic database as a true source of cataloging, libraries will have to return to the original vision of the database. If some libraries are inputting low-quality records, must we assume that all member records are suspect? Is there any standard we can use to equate another library's cataloging with our own and LC's?[18] RLIN has an advantage over OCLC in this, since RLIN permits its users to see the cataloging records of each holding library, while OCLC users must rely on a single "master" record.

A recent study by librarians at Cornell's Albert R. Mann Library compared Library of Congress cataloging to that of "preferred [RLIN] member libraries."[19] These preferred members came from an informally compiled "white list" of libraries whose cataloging was known to be quite good. For the elements being tested at Cornell, this study "showed that there was no significant difference between recent copy from LC and the best of the member libraries."[20]

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17. *Interview [with] Michael Gorman*, OCLC NEWSL., July/Aug. 1991, at 25, 25 [hereinafter *Interview with Gorman*].

18. This issue was first brought to my attention in an unusual circumstance. I found an OCLC record for an unconverted record in our collection. The record was originally input by me while I was cataloging at a different institution some years before. According to our local practices, I should have questioned most of the cataloging decisions made by the original OCLC inputter, since the record originated at neither the Library of Congress nor the Notre Dame Law Library. In that case, having perhaps an unwarranted trust in the original cataloger's expertise, I accepted everything as it stood.

19. Janet McCue et al., *An Analysis of Cataloging Copy: Library of Congress vs. Selected RLIN Members*, 35 LIBR. RESOURCES & TECHNICAL SERVICES 65 (1991).

20. *Id.* at 74.

For such an analysis to have any effect on local cataloging routines, at least two conditions must be met. First, there must be a procedure for treating Library of Congress cataloging differently from member cataloging. If LC cataloging is treated exactly as that of other members, there is little point in identifying which other libraries are comparable to LC in cataloging quality. At the Mann Library, for example, support staff handled current LC copy, while original catalogers handled member-contributed copy.[21] In smaller departments, where support staff members often handle both kinds of copy, a distinction must be made in the amount of work done to verify the cataloging performed. For example, one might let LC copy go through with only a quick check to verify the correctness of the title and the call number. Member copy might require extensive authority checking and verification of the descriptive elements, with frequent references to AACR2 and the LCRIs.

Second, there should be criteria for identifying those other institutions that consistently apply good cataloging records to the database. In OCLC, for example, one might initially note which records have been entered by libraries that have earned the "Enhance" status. Enhance libraries can "upgrade" master records in specified formats and are granted the status only after OCLC has carefully reviewed each library's cataloging for acceptability. Similarly, Cooperative Online Serials (CONSER) libraries are responsible for upgrading and entering high-quality serial records.[22] Perhaps the best way to come up with such a list would be to note those libraries with noticeably good records and cataloging that agrees with national standards at the same (or higher) level than one's own cataloging. It would be especially valuable to have a list of other academic law libraries whose records are known to be superior when one encounters works that require a good deal of legal analysis.

Once a determination has been made as to which other libraries are "equivalent" to LC for cataloging purposes, records input by those institutions would be edited locally only to the extent that LC records are. In an ideal world, one could treat every record in the national bibliographic database as a perfectly cataloged record. In the real world, a very high percentage of Library of Congress records and records input by certain other institutions should be cataloged to high enough levels of accuracy and completeness that only minimal work will have to be done to make those records one's own.

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21. *Id.* at 65.
22. See *Special Report*, OCLC NEWSL., Sept./Oct. 1990, at 16, 16-19 for listings of CONSER and Enhance libraries.

VI. Policies and Politics

Harder questions arise when we try to address the need for reform in original cataloging. If a record in the database can be used for a particular item, there are several ways to treat that record to reduce cataloging expenses. If there is not a record in the database, how should the cataloger approach the difficulty presented by the need to adhere to national standards vs. the need to produce records quickly? This is at the heart of the reform issue and is where much of the criticism aimed at cataloging and catalogers is concentrated. Lingering over rules, agonizing over arcane distinctions, and indecision exist here most of all. Why worry over what the main entry should be if main entry is a defunct concept?[23] Why formulate LC Subject Headings when a simple keyword search finds every pertinent entry? Is the consistency one gains from following AACR2 worth the time it takes?

·Michael Gorman complains that AACR2 was created by a committee, unlike the earlier codes, which were formulated by individuals.[24] This gave it a more political nature than the earlier codes. In the cataloging world, political opinions are directed toward policies that individual catalogers perceive as being good or bad within cataloging records. Interest groups must have their say when organizations attempt to reach agreements.

The debate over main entry is one example of the ongoing struggle that catalogers and all librarians face in trying to adapt the traditional ideals of the library to the automated environment. For example, one might favor the main entry concept, even in the age of online catalogs, because it facilitates the sensible formulation of single-entry lists of bibliographic records. Without a main entry, would everything go under title? Would everything go under the first-name entry in the record, whether author or editor? On the other hand, should catalogers debate endlessly over which of the numerous access points should come first in a record? Cannot a catalog user find the same record by looking for any of the access points? Shouldn't we have a code that concentrates more on authority for names and less on where the names should go?

Subject analysis is also a controversial area in online cataloging. Whereas one can decide to accept most of the subjects on a member record, original cataloging requires original interpretation of the item's contents and, normally, the assignment of an appropriate Library of

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23. Gorman remarks that the main entry "still lingers on as, in the family of catalogers, the mad uncle in the attic that everyone wishes would go away but stays, in apparent good health, as an embarrassment to one and all." Gorman, *supra* note 5, at 630.

24. *Interview with Gorman, supra* note 17, at 26.

Congress Subject Heading (LCSH). A *Library Journal* article on cataloging reform offers this observation: "Overly refined distinctions among closely related subject terms should be eliminated. If a term requires a long scope note to distinguish its meaning, certainly users will not be able to make the distinction and catalogers will be inconsistent in doing so."[25] This bald condemnation serves as a caution for us not to go too far in our criticism of controlled vocabularies. Some of those "overly refined distinctions" serve specialized clientele, such as the clientele of an academic law library, particularly well. For instance, the distinction between "Human rights" (referring to fundamental, inalienable rights) and "Civil rights" (rights guaranteed by legal means) may be especially important to some researchers in law libraries. Assigning a single heading to cover all such items would be too broad for law libraries, although perhaps not for other libraries. If a library decides to eschew a specific heading in favor of a general one, a slippery slope can result. One might not end up with 100,000 titles under "Law—United States," but for those researchers relying on the thesaurus of logical (if perhaps arcane, sexist, and outmoded) topics, generalization does no good. The more time-consuming problem for original catalogers is the case of an item that covers a specific subject not obviously represented in LCSH. In such cases an original cataloger is probably better off assigning a more general heading as soon as it becomes clear that LC has not yet tackled the topic.

VII. Costs

What savings will accrue for a library that abandons time-consuming cataloging for "quick and dirty" cataloging? Cataloging costs are never clear. Even the costs of using the national bibliographic databases which form the heart of our work are open to interpretation. "We exploited the central data resource for interlibrary lending, shared resources, cooperative collection development—but we funded it by charging for its use as a cataloging tool."[26] Trying to compare local costs for doing high-quality original work vs. the costs to other libraries for performing local upgrades on low-quality original work is probably not feasible, but it is, perhaps, relevant. If catalogers could convince an administrator that they spend more in the long run eschewing high-quality original cataloging, they might be able to change local practice and increase the library's investment in catalogers. If the economics worked the other way, one would have to

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25. Gregor & Mandel, *supra* note 1, at 47.
26. James Michalko, *Costly Boundaries: Costs, New Technologies, and Bibliographic Utilities*, 8 TECHNICAL SERVICES Q., Vol. 8, No. 1, 1990, at 29, 34-35.

make an argument on the grounds of morality and ethics, which no doubt would be less persuasive.

Local economic realities demand that cataloging be done more cheaply; local political realities demand that cataloging be done more quickly; cataloging theory and the ideals of a national bibliographic database require high-quality cataloging. Practicality generally favors the short-term solution, and this frequently conflicts with long-term goals. For most libraries, despite ideals, economic and political realities will take precedence. In many of those places, cataloging will be low in quality. But if we can streamline the cataloging process and keep the high-quality ideal in mind, perhaps a decent compromise can be hammered out.

VIII.   Perfect and Imperfect Cataloging

Just as Graham distinguished two qualities in cataloging (accuracy and extent), Osborn has distinguished types of catalogers—the Legalist, the Perfectionist, and the Pragmatist.[27] By combining these concepts, we can conveniently divide the cataloging world into two camps: those who practice perfect cataloging and those who don't. The trouble with this division is that there are no true representatives in the first group. A "perfect" cataloger would be one who provided a cataloging record of impeccable accuracy and absolutely complete coverage. There is always something more that could be put into a cataloging record. So all of us, to a degree, fit into the "imperfect" category, and it is there that we should concentrate our efforts.

But what about perfect cataloging? Who should be performing that? Can we rely on the Library of Congress? If many of us feel the pressure to streamline our cataloging, what can we expect from LC, with its backlog of forty million items? Even for LC, the perfect cataloging record must now hold the place of an ideal to which no one is expected to aspire entirely, but which always provides guidance for those who want to go beyond more cursory efforts. The LCRIs, the LC Subject Cataloging Manual, the OCLC Bibliographic Input Standards, the CONSER editing guide, secondary treatises on cataloging applications and many more sources all serve to define the ideal to a great level of precision. It is up to each library to decide how far to go in the application of those rules.

Imperfect cataloging still requires the traditional attributes of a good cataloger: attention to detail, enough perfectionism to prefer the right to the wrong, and a sometimes grudging loyalty to Emerson's "hobgoblin of little minds" consistency. These attributes can give catalogers a bad name,

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27. *See generally* Andrew D. Osborn, *The Crisis in Cataloging*, 11 LIBR. Q. 393 (1941).

but in moderation they are essential no matter what level of cataloging one is performing. Another attribute, just as necessary and rarely recognized in catalogers, is decisiveness. Especially in a world where speed is as essential as accuracy (that is, in a world of *efficient* cataloging), agonizing over a decision when there are a couple of equally reasonable options is an unconscionable waste of time.

The truly significant break from perfect cataloging should be in the amount of information supplied on each individual record, that is, the extent or completeness of a record. This does not mean that we should be creating brief, stripped-down records. We should put in local notes, quoted notes, or contents notes if, for example, we would like to increase the effectiveness of keyword searching. But we should also develop a good sense of proportion about which elements in a cataloging record require extensive outside research before they can be added with confidence. A point of diminishing returns for that level of completeness is reached early on.

Original catalogers are required to analyze and catalog esoteric, "difficult" items which, by their very nature, require much time. How can this process be streamlined? Mary K. Bolin helps put this into perspective:

> Some of us may want to argue about whether or not it is possible to rapidly catalog legal materials in Urdu or Martian music scores, but that is beside the point. If we specialize in such things, there is no excuse for not being good (i.e., fast) at it. We all get the occasional weird and ugly thing to catalog; that is not an excuse for being unable to catalog the garden variety items speedily.[28]

IX. Conclusion

As the reformers have put it, the dilemma is whether we should provide access to more items at lower quality or to fewer items at greater quality. In many libraries, the question of whether more records will be added to the database more quickly is not open to debate: the requirement to add the records is a given. The question for catalogers in such cases is: how can we add more records and not adversely affect quality? .

If quality is defined both as accuracy in each detail and as completeness of presentation, then quality will suffer as quantity goes up. If, however, quality is defined on terms of accuracy, and completeness is eschewed, records will still accurately reflect holdings, although an individual record will not have every bit of information a patron may desire. What we must

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28. Bolin, *supra* note 10, at 358.

sacrifice is quantity within individual records to increase overall quantity in the database.

None of these decisions can be made by catalogers in a vacuum. A librarian who toured eleven PACNET libraries "known to support quality cataloging" made the following observation: "[A]ll of the quality control procedures employed by the cataloging departments in the eleven libraries visited are supported by the libraries' administration although the level of support is inversely proportional to the size of the backlog."[29] This brings to mind two vital ingredients in local policy changes: administrative support and local needs. An administration that feels strongly about cataloging policy will require convincing arguments before effecting changes. Any differences from past policy that will significantly alter workflow, costs, availability of items, and access must be discussed before any changes are implemented. Local needs include the size of the backlog, ongoing conversion projects, vendor cataloging services. At some point, sheer volume may overwhelm any quality considerations; in better circumstances, volume may allow more attention to a level of refined cataloging not possible in other libraries.

What about the patron? There have been numerous user studies over the years, so there is a more scientific basis for patron analysis than for that of catalogers. One should be careful in adapting practice to fit the perceived person-on-the-street methodology of the library user, however. The computer catalog may invite not just different types of searching, but different types of searchers. The computer literate expect to find useful information at their terminals and are often willing to spend time figuring out how a system works. We should resist the temptation to pare down our cataloging records to the absolute minimum: "If you end up with simple records, you end up with a simple database."[30] To make any further determinations about what level of quality is needed in cataloging records, we will have to back away from our tendency to discuss the attributes of a good cataloging record and focus instead on the ultimate beneficiary of our work, the catalog user—specifically, the online catalog user in a law library. We will then be able to determine with greater accuracy just what makes a good record.

29. *Technical Services Report*, Technical Services Q., Vol. 7, No. 4, 1990, at 67, 69 (Ann Hope, reporting on a study conducted by Louise Saylor to the RTSD/CCS Head of Cataloging Discussion Group, American Library Association Annual Conference, June 1989).

30. *Interview with Gorman*, *supra* note 17, at 30.