

AUTHORITY CONTROL: CREATING A POLICY/TRAINING SYLLABUS

Marcia Goldberg

Description: At the University of Maryland we underwent a major restructuring of the Libraries from a hierarchical structure to a team-based one. One of the consequences in the Technical Services Department (TSD) was that instead of each person being a specialist in one aspect of cataloging (serials, monographs, all authority work) we now all had to learn to do all the work. The only staff not greatly affected were the specialists: music, audio/visual and non roman [CJK, Hebrew/Yiddish] catalogers. The library technicians also had to undergo further training to more efficiently do their work and rely less upon the original cataloging staff. Even the acquisitions department will need further training to recognize certain problems/traits of the books received to know which team needs to receive the material.

Marcia Goldberg is the Hebrew/Yiddish Cataloger at the University of Maryland. She also serves on the Authority Coordinating Team. Her previous positions were as Head Cataloger at Gratz College, cataloger at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Reference Librarian at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where she received her MLS. She is a member of the Hebraica NACO Funnel. Her AJL activities include past president of Detroit and Philadelphia chapters, program chair of NYMA, and she currently serves on the AJL cataloging committee. She has spoken at Philadelphia and NYMA meetings and at a national convention.

At the University of Maryland we underwent a major restructuring of the Libraries. We moved from a hierarchical structure to a team-based one. In the Technical Services Division (TSD), there are teams within

each of the four Production Groups: Acquisitions, Adaptive Cataloging/Database Management, Original Cataloging, Preservation. In addition there are five, soon to be six, Coordinating Teams: Authorities, Cataloging Policy, Continuing Resources, Federal Documents, Planning & Leadership, Training. The Policy & Leadership Coordinating Team is composed of both Production Group Leaders and Coordinating Team Leaders. Library staff members (faculty, nonexempt and exempt) volunteer to serve a period of two to three years on each of the other coordinating teams. The coordinating teams are self-managing.

One of the consequences of restructuring TSD for all cataloging teams was that instead of having team members continue to concentrate on some one aspect of cataloging (serials, monographs, authority work, etc.), more versatility and carry through with less hand-off of materials is expected of all faculty, nonexempt and exempt team members involved in the cataloging process. In order to do it all, some need training in cataloging serials and others in monographs. Library technicians, the nonexempt and exempt staff, need to undergo even further training to more efficiently do their work and rely less upon faculty catalogers. The staff of the Acquisitions Production Group needs further training to recognize certain problems/traits of the materials in order to check in and know which team is to receive the materials next.

Team set-up

I am here to tell you about my service on the Authority Control Coordinating Team, but first a bit more background. At the time notices were sent out for volunteers, I volunteered to be on the Authorities Coordinating Team. In all five were chosen for this team. Among our first duties was to vote for a team leader. We had an outside facilitator who guided us in team building and helped us to set up a work plan for the year, meeting rules, etc. We eventually “graduated” and became a self-facilitating team, that is, on a rotating basis one of us is responsible to see that we keep on track according to the set agenda, make sure we all participate, and summarize more difficult portions of our work to help us stay focused and make sure we all understand the same thing.

One member of our team happens to be the leader of the Adaptive Cataloging/Database Maintenance Production Group. Part of this group does copy cataloging with only minor changes in the master record for local use [Adaptive Cataloging Team]. The other part [Database Maintenance Team] through their Help Desk receives complaints from all over the Libraries about problems with the catalog. The members of this team reconcile the problems themselves; or, they send the problems to the most appropriate Production Group for reconciliation. [Faculty catalogers handle/receive many bibliographic problems from the Help Desk for correction.] The AC/DM leader saw a critical need for her teams to be trained in the use of series authority records and how to apply them to the copy they see in front of them in relation to the book. The members of her teams had been trained by different people at different times and were applying, or not applying, what they knew. More and more in Adaptive Cataloging, material published in series was being passed on to faculty catalogers in the Original Cataloging Production Group even though a large portion of series entries on the records needed little or no correction. Most of the problems the AC staff had encountered were simple enough for them to confidently handle themselves with the proper training. Each time we in OCPG would get these materials with series questions and problems, we had to stop what we were doing and finish these books since many were already in the database [the result of PromptCat loads in which OCLC copy was imported with book purchase] and patrons were looking for them. The AC/DM leader therefore urged that we place series authority record use and interpretation at the top of our agenda. Since others on the Authorities Coordinating Team would personally benefit from having the load lightened, we agreed.

Our first step was to develop a questionnaire that asked the “copy catalogers” what they already knew, what they were expected to know, and what they needed to know. We also had a questionnaire that asked faculty catalogers what they expected from the copy catalogers. Once we had the returned questionnaires, we were able to see what needed to be done. One of the most important strategies we used was to see that the faculty catalogers attended the same training sessions as the copy catalogers so the faculty catalogers would

know what was required of the copy catalogers and what was not. This also eased the tensions between the groups since the expectations of each other became more realistic.

In setting up the curriculum, we went from the simple to the more difficult and complex. We simultaneously developed a glossary to explain all terms and acronyms. The glossary terms were ultimately linked to their use in the training module when we placed the results of our work on the web.

Before we actually sat down to write the training module for series verification, we searched the web for other institutions to see what they did. Apparently we began doing this at a time when other institutions were also undergoing changes. What one of us would find one day was gone the next when we tried to print it out for comparison. This was also true when we were asked to provide a better series policy for our institution. More on this later.

We identified certain problem areas in the verification of series and listed them from the simple to the more complex. Rather than work on each part of the verification process during each of our weekly meetings we decided to assign a section to one or two members. Each was assigned a part most suited to his/her experiences and expertise. This was a great time saver. By the time we came to the meetings with a draft in hand, it was much easier to edit and polish than to begin from scratch. We were also better able to judge what was clear or ambiguous or totally confusing since we each had various levels of experience and understandings. In other words, if even one of us was not clear on what a particular section was meant to accomplish or do, we worked on it until it became clearer.

In the training module, we wanted to show: where to find the chief sources of information for series in publications, how to interpret and apply the information in a series authority records (SARs), how to interpret and apply information found on series cards in the Master File, and how to treat the series based on what was in the College Park PAC and the series authority record(s). Highlighted words or phrases in the module sections are linked to the definition of those words or phrases in the glossary. Links are also made to examples in the appendix or elsewhere in the document when appropriate.

The Training Module for Series Verification at UM Libraries is arranged in four sections and an appendix. Section I is a basic discussion of the definition of series, why series are important access points for catalog users, and the different kinds of series we encounter. Section II discusses UM series policies. Section III is a step-by-step guide through College Park series procedures. Section IV discusses exceptions to the rules and special situations. The Appendix includes a glossary of terms, abbreviations, phrases, and acronyms useful for authority

work at UM; Master File series card examples; NAF (National Authority File) series codes; NAF series treatment chart; more information about analyzed series, etc. In addition to our using the module for training, we wanted it to serve UM staff as a reference source they could meaningfully refer to afterwards.

We dealt first with the definitions of different types of series: numbered ; unnumbered ; series that are both numbered and unnumbered ; a multipart item ; and an ongoing series. We talked about series that are classed separately since they are relatively uncomplicated. We then went into series that were classed together but cataloged separately. And then the series that were both numbered and unnumbered. And, of course, the exceptions to all the rules. We showed them examples from the old catalog system since (1) it was one with which all were familiar for searching and reading the records; and (2) we were still using it and were unsure of when our new ILS system, Aleph, would be implemented since several target dates had come and gone. We also showed the same examples in Aleph since we wanted them to get used to those displays and be able to identify what they need to see.

If they had a piece that didn't fit the established criteria, they were to take it to their team leader to try to solve the problem. If she couldn't do it then, during the preliminary training, it went to the production group leader (who is on our team) and is a faculty librarian. After this initial period, each person on the Adaptive Cataloging part of the team was to be assigned a mentor from the Original Cataloging Production Group to build a working relationship and to avoid all questions from going to just one or two catalogers. Having a one-to-one relationship will also, hopefully, improve the quality of work of the technical staff and reduce the amount of time the cataloging faculty has to spend on easier problems.

Staff was also taught how to read the authority records, e.g., when to trace and when not to trace the series. We generally follow LC practice in tracing series but there are instances when, primarily before MARC format, we established our own Master file of local practice regarding series. This card catalog, started before 1940, is still maintained. It was used to register and control all series and serials present in all UM public card catalogs. The Master File is still used today to control some series in our integrated library system (ILS). Local series decisions are filed for series lacking national series authority records (SARs); for series with SARs treated somewhat differently locally; for analyzed monographic series; for Series-like phrases. Decisions are also filed in the Master File on how to handle Supplements that are not series and Special Issues. Series cards dated 1980 and later reflect series decisions made according to AACR2 cataloging rules. Series cards dated prior to 1980 reflect series decisions made according to earlier cataloging rules and are therefore not as reliable. The Master File is consulted regularly by Copy Catalogers when there is no national SAR; when SAR indicates series is analyzed and there is no Parent record for series in the ILS; when the SAR classification practice differs from what is seen in the ILS,

e.g., classed together vs. classed separately and vice versa. (Only rarely is the Master File now consulted for serials information as all UM serials have been converted to machine readable (MARC) form.)

We also devised "cheat sheets" to aid both the novice and experienced cataloger. The "cheat sheets" for the authority records are good not only for the non-librarian to understand what they are seeing and how to use it, but also for the cataloger, especially those of us who are creating new authority records. I had sent the links to some colleagues who did the NACO series training with me (they were from South Africa) and they said that it was very helpful for them. As we speak, we are working on another to describe the differences between major and minor name changes in series/serials.

We handed our first draft to the Cataloging Policy Coordinating Team [CPCT] and the Planning & Leadership Coordinating Team [PLCT] for critical comment. The TSD director made a number of sweeping comments that caused us to totally revamp our document. Again we parceled out parts of it to those of our team who were most expert in that section. I got the glossary of terms to create for the novice. We even explained terms that were "self explanatory". When we finalized the document we had several library technicians review it for clarity and refined it according to their suggestions. The same was done for the glossary. We then sent it to the CPCT & PLCT for final approval. While waiting we had one of our Graduate Assistants [GA] mark up the document for placement on the web with links to the glossary and the rest of the appendix. We went through a couple of rehearsals as a team teaching group and finally conducted the class.

The course was given to the AC/DM and OC Production Groups. Our primary audience was the Library Technicians (LT) of those groups; but we also invited OCPG's Graduate Assistants and faculty librarians. After the initial review period ends, each LT will be assigned a faculty mentor for cataloging questions/problems.

After the training, we thought we were done with series work. But the TSD director also wanted a policy and not just a procedure, even though it seems that other universities had a combination of both. So we had to dig up our old series policy, study it, start afresh and come up with a newer, more effective policy, one that met the needs of our institution, works with cataloging procedures of our new ILS, and gained the approval of the Planning & Leadership and Cataloging Policy Coordinating Teams. Writing the policy after our team had done the series training in a way was a big plus. We really knew what needed to be written into it. Yet all this may undergo further change once we acquire the authorities module, hopefully by the end of this calendar year.

Not all the production group teams took the training module on series verification so we are now making some adjustments in the training to fit the staff of the Acquisitions Production Group. Ideally, they should know where to direct

materials published in series when the materials leave Acquisitions and they should also be able to recognize changed series titles. Series training will also be useful to Acquisition staff in handling of serial publications because many of the new AACR2 rules for both are very similar.

All of our web pages may be found by accessing the Library's web page at < <http://www.lib.umd.edu> > Click on library staff, then technical services, then, under groups, the Authority Control group.

Training module:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/TSD/ACT/seriesintro.html>

Glossary:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/TSD/ACT/glossary.html>

Series Treatment Decision Chart:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/TSD/ACT/serieschart.html>

Series Authority Record (SAR) Codes:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/TSD/ACT/sarcodes.html>

University of Maryland Series Policy:

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/TSD/ACT/serpol.html>