

Serial Conversations

An Interview with Steve Shadle

Emily McElroy, Column Editor

with a contribution from Bonnie Parks

Bonnie Parks interviewed Steve Shadle, serials cataloger for University of Washington Libraries, in August 2002. In this interview Shadle provides a cataloger's perspective on the challenges he and other serials catalogers face in the organization and management of electronic and print serial titles. *Serials Review* 2002; 28:321–326. © 2002 Elsevier Science Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Steve Shadle is a serials cataloger for the University of Washington Libraries. He has given several workshops and presentations on serials and electronic resources cataloging at various conferences including the American Library Association (ALA) and North American Serials Interest Group's (NASIG) annual meetings. He is active in NASIG, ALA, the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), and serves on the editorial board for *Serials Review*.



Shadle has penned a number of articles that have been published in several library science journals including *The Serials Librarian* and *Serials Review*. Recently he and Les Hawkins (Library of Congress) co-authored the instructor and trainee manuals for the Serials Cooperative Cataloging Training Program's (SCCTP) Electronic Serials Cataloging workshop. Currently he is at work on a book about cataloging electronic resources. Shadle has also been asked to develop a one-credit course on e-serials for the University of Washington's Information School.

Interview

BONNIE PARKS (BP): Before we begin, why don't you tell me a little bit about your background and what made you decide to choose serials cataloging over other aspects of librarianship.

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STEVE SHADLE (SS): When I was in library school at the University of Washington (UW), I didn't know what I wanted to do. Becoming a systems librarian was a definite possibility as I had done a small amount of database development when I worked at King County Library System. I was really intrigued with the possibilities of systems applications in the library environment. While in library school, I enjoyed the cataloging courses I took from Ellen Soper. I think I was one of the few nerds who enjoyed cataloging . . . what's that saying from the Marines? The Few, The Proud, The Anal-Retentive? Dr. Soper's retired now.

BP: Right. She retired the year before I started at the UW. In fact, you taught the basic cataloging course to my class.

SS: Oh, that's right. I had only been back in Seattle for about six months when I taught that class. The library school hadn't yet hired Dr. Soper's replacement and was desperate to have the class taught. So your class was my learning experience. I apologize for that. Prior to library school, I'd done some clerical work at King County Library System in cataloging, collection development, and reference. I worked mostly part-time while I was getting my undergraduate degree. The librarians there (especially in Reference and Collection Development) were very good about involving staff in all the work of the department, so I felt I had a pretty good idea of what was involved in public library work. After I graduated, I kept working at King County while I was trying to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wasn't interested in getting a master's degree in library science because of what I perceived as the stigmas associated with the profession (low salaries, pink collar, social service work, etc.). After about a year of unsuccessfully trying to find entry-level systems processing jobs, I started questioning these perceptions and realized after reading a book titled *Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow* that I really

should consider going to library school.¹ I was also struggling with coming out of the closet about the same time and making the decision to accept my sexuality. Accepting my career choice went hand-in-hand in a weird sort of way (my coming out as a librarian as it were). This connection was only reinforced by the fact that my first ALA conference was in San Francisco during Pride weekend.

My first job out of library school was at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Washington, D.C., where I was a technical services librarian. It was a small federal agency library employing three librarians and three technicians. We didn't do extensive research, only quick reference. There was a separate research staff to do in-depth analysis. It was a good learning experience since I was doing a variety of things and the subject matter was interdisciplinary because of the varied nature of foreign assistance projects. I was always learning new things. Because I was working for a contractor, the pay and stability weren't great. Eventually I realized that I wasn't cut out to work in a special library. When I was in library school, I had interviewed for an internship at the Library of Congress (LC). I saw the opportunities at that library and what kind of institution it was. When I was hired at USAID, I had it in the back of my head that I still wanted to work at LC. When I decided to leave USAID, I started applying for any positions at LC that I was more or less qualified for. The first position I was offered was an ISSN cataloger at the National Serials Data Program (NSDP).² It was only after I was trained at NSDP that I really discovered how interesting serials cataloging was. I was being trained right at the time that the CONSER Cataloging Manual was being developed, so Pamela Simpson, another recent NSDP hire, and myself were guinea pigs for the manual.³ At LC, I really discovered how interesting serials cataloging was.

BP: What was it that you found interesting about serials cataloging?

SS: I think the reasons I prefer cataloging serials to monographs is the variety of materials and presentations and the amount of judgment that is required. As Pamela Simpson once told me, cataloging a serial is like studying a gazelle as it bounds across the savannah; cataloging a monograph is like doing an autopsy. I used this analogy once at a basic serials cataloging workshop, and I'll never use it again. I think I alienated a few people. First, serials tend to have non-standard presentations so there's judgment involved there. And then because of their changing nature, there's more judgment involved in terms of describing how a serial changes. Oftentimes, you have to guess what a serial might do in the future based on the facts in hand and these days an e-mail to the publisher. Identifying relationships between the title in your hand and other serial titles adds another aspect to the work. I feel especially fortunate to have been trained at NSDP because of the variety of serials one catalogs there. Every serial title published in the United States that is assigned an ISSN is cataloged by NSDP. The variety of materials I saw on a daily basis was greater than anything that would be held in one individual library, including the

Library of Congress. NSDP cataloged it all, everything from *Hustler Busty Beauties* to academic journals to grange newsletters to popular magazines. I even helped catalog a serial t-shirt: each issue had a short story printed on it. Like all serials, it changed its title—from *Tee Shorts* to *The Cotton Quarterly*.

It was in NSDP that I also started cataloging computer files. At that point, it was mostly diskettes, but by the time I left in early 1995 there were enough e-serials being published that there was talk of establishing conventional practices beyond what little was specified in AACR.

BP: So you didn't have any serials experience when you took the job?

SS: No, I didn't have any serials experience other than serials acquisitions when I was at USAID. Ellen Soper taught a serials class at UW that I hadn't taken. Serials were not on my radar when I was in library school. If someone had told me in library school that I would end up as a serials cataloger, I'd be rolling on the floor. I'm not sure what Julia Blixrud and Regina Reynolds saw in my interview, but apparently they liked something since they hired me. I think the reason they feel comfortable hiring people without serials experience is that the training at NSDP is very thorough. What's most important to them is that they hire people who will be good catalogers. NSDP quickly provides them with serials experience. NSDP is sort of a cataloging boot camp in some ways. You're always thinking about production because a lot of those publishers want their ISSN yesterday and you've got this wide variety of serials to catalog and everything you do is reviewed for at least six months, if not a year. I had many conversations with my reviser (thank you, Les Hawkins, for your patience), and it was in those conversations that I really began to understand what aspects of serials cataloging came from the rules and what was cataloger's judgment.

BP: And now you're a serials cataloger at the UW. Why an academic library?

SS: Serials cataloging in a large, academic library was a natural progression from ISSN cataloging. At the time I left NSDP, ISSN catalogers only did original descriptive cataloging. If they were working with copy, they would verify subject headings, but they wouldn't assign subject headings or do authority work. When you're expected to assign an average of two ISSN an hour, you don't have time for the niceties of subject headings. Besides, NSDP's work really isn't that of a library. NSDP is part of an international serials registration system assigning ISSN as a standard identifier. I understand that NSDP catalogers are now actually cataloging for the Library of Congress collection and are doing full-level cataloging. Cataloging for a large academic library was a natural next step in my career.

BP: What are some of the biggest challenges you encounter when cataloging serial titles?

SS: I think the most challenging thing really is electronic serials, not only in terms of cataloging, but also in terms

of resource and collection management. I think the most common cataloging challenge is that there are no standard presentations of bibliographic information. Often within a particular package or aggregation you might have a standard way of presenting information, so that if you are actually creating records for an entire package, after you've done the first few, then the rest of them are like, "I know where to get this information." But across the board there are so few standards.

Cataloging serials generally is difficult because the presentations are inconsistent, but they are even more so with e-serials. It's also more difficult to navigate an electronic serial. With a print serial you can flip through the pages to find the information you need. With an e-serial, you have to click, click, click everywhere to find the information necessary for cataloging. I think, in that respect, it's a little more challenging and a lot more time consuming. Also, and I say this a lot in workshops, one of the problems we have that really hasn't been dealt with very well in terms of the *Anglo American Cataloguing Rules* (AACR2) Chapter 12 changes is the fact that with tangible serials (print serials or any other tangible formats) each issue has to self-identify for the whole system to work. In order for the publishers to know what they're sending out, in order for the receipt staff to know what they're receiving, in order for the acquisitions staff to know what they've ordered and need to claim, in order for a user to find a citation, and in order for the binding people to know what they have, every issue needs to self-identify. So you're going to have some kind of a chief source that the cataloger can use on every issue. Well, you don't have to do that in the electronic world. In the electronic world, what people care about is the article, the content. It's like the publisher has cut out the articles of all of the issues and they've put them in one place on the Web space, and then they've taken one copy of the cover, masthead and the editorial information and they've put that in another place on the Web space, so what happens is that we can't as easily rely on the issue to identify the bibliographic information that is used for identification and description. In successive entry cataloging we have to rely on individual issues because we compare from issue to issue to identify where a title change or a major change happens. If the information is no longer on each issue, this absence really presents a challenge. Another challenge is the link maintenance issue—the location (URL) of the resource changes.

BP: That's a problem faced by anyone who catalogs Web resources. I understand you're involved in a CONSER project involving the use of PURLs (Persistent Uniform Resource Locators) to assist in maintaining links for freely-available e-serials.

SS: Right, the CONSER PURL Pilot. Funny you should focus on the PURL project. Our contribution has been pretty minimal. We've only contributed forty-six PURLs to date. So to make up for it, we've hosted the project discussion list. It is my little contribution, plus it was a good learning experience. Stephanie Sheppard, another serials librarian at the UW, and I are the only catalogers who are assigning PURLs here at the UW. PURLs can also be as-

signed to resources currently cataloged as monographs, but our e-resource catalogers have been so busy that they haven't had time to do more than read up on the project. We haven't assigned PURLs for more e-serials because we've been spending our copious spare time on figuring out how to incorporate Serials Solutions data into our workflows and how to integrate that with Innovative Interfaces' new WebBridge and e-serials holdings software. We haven't had a lot of new non-commercial titles to catalog recently and I haven't had the time to retrospectively identify e-serials that can use PURLs.

BP: Who else was involved in the pilot project and how does it work?

SS: University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) was the primary contributor of PURLs (nearly 900 of 2047). Valerie Bross at UCLA has done an absolutely fantastic job of managing the project. The process isn't difficult. It is basically a two-step process of searching the PURL database to confirm your URL hasn't already been assigned a PURL, then filling out a simple form to assign a PURL for that URL. Until PURLs can be automatically generated from an OCLC Passport or Connexion session, it is an extra step in the process (one which I think is well worth the benefit). For the thirty-four PURLs we're responsible for, maintenance has been minor, only one or two titles at most on the weekly link maintenance report. More information about the project is available from the CONSER home page.⁴

BP: This sounds similar to the process used by the Government Printing Office (GPO).

SS: It's exactly what GPO is doing; only the records are directly maintained by a single organization like GPO. Because GPO has a mandate for cataloging U.S. government publications, it makes sense for them to be responsible for that area of the world. And in some respects it probably makes sense for CONSER to be responsible for maintaining e-serial access since there is an organizational commitment to describe and provide access to serials. As you know, the scope of the CONSER PURL Pilot is freely-available e-serials which are not U.S. government publications. The GPO PURL server controls U.S. government publications.

BP: But it sounds like a project with a great deal of potential, especially in a cooperative environment.

SS: I definitely believe that a cooperative PURL maintenance program is one effective solution as long as the database is large enough to be seen as a useful resource, for example, one with the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). Because PURLs are becoming more commonplace, I've seen a number of institutional-based PURL servers, which in some respects defeats the purpose of having a PURL server. Unless there is some coordination between PURL servers or perhaps some very clear, commonly acknowledged scopes among PURL servers (i.e., GPO covers U.S. governmental publications), it seems like there is the potential for redundancy among PURL servers.

If you're going to have a PURL project that a lot of people are going to take advantage of, it's got to be cooperative, it's got to be opened up. Like with the success of OCLC, if you do have people who are willing to contribute and maintain, there is some real potential. I still don't think it's a final solution because you still have to have a person find out that a link is broken and maintain it. However, instead of being maintained in thousands of library catalogs and Web pages around the world, it's only maintained in one place. There's a lot of savings there, but it still requires a person to go in and identify that the link is broken.

BP: So is CONSER considering designating someone as a link maintainer?

SS: In the CONSER project, the institution that makes the original PURL assignment is responsible for maintaining the PURL in the resolution table. OCLC runs link validation software on a weekly basis. The institutional coordinator then gets weekly error reports showing not just 404 errors, but a number of conditions, including the number of redirects. So if the original URL is now a redirect, you get notified. The final report available through the CONSER home page gives a good idea of the scope in terms of the number of PURLs needing maintenance and other statistics.

BP: You mentioned earlier that the serials department at UW is looking into ways to incorporate Serials Solutions data into the workflow. Many libraries are struggling with ways to integrate e-journals and aggregators into their OPACs, and many are coming up with homegrown programs. Did you consider creating something locally?

SS: We've already created something locally in that we've integrated e-journals and aggregators into our WebPAC, more or less successfully. Links for titles in smaller packages (usually less than a couple hundred) are entered and maintained by our serials acquisition staff. Catalog records for the individual titles from our two largest aggregations (ProQuest and LexisNexis) are obtained from a third party and periodically machine-loaded. We've also created an SQL database of catalog records for all our electronic resources. This database, called the Digital Registry, is spun off from our MARC database on a daily basis and forms the basis for many of our Web-based services, including the e-journals and database pages and many of our subject-based pages.

The service that we're not currently providing is a link management service that takes OpenURL data (mostly from our bibliographic databases) and returns library services to the user (i.e., a list of services such as "Full-text from ScienceDirect," "Catalog search for this title," "ILL request"). In order to do article-level linking using OpenURL, we need to have holdings data in a formatted form for our e-serials, something we haven't tracked to date. Serials Solutions will be providing us with two sets of data: holdings data for as many packages as we can get from them, and full MARC records for titles from three aggregator databases, ProQuest, LexisNexis and Expanded Academic Index. We're then planning on using

this data in conjunction with Innovative Interfaces' WebBridge software to provide additional library services.

BP: What convinced you to give a commercial product, in this case Serials Solutions, a try?

SS: In our case, it was a need to improve user service by providing better, more customized access to our full-text collections. Our systems office had discussed developing link management software in-house, but with the number of packages and publishers we get full text from, the problem was unmanageable. Now that OpenURL is becoming a more commonly used standard, we decided to try Innovative Interfaces' WebBridge software so that we would have a compatible commercial product (and a single data store) to support some of these services. As I mentioned, the specific data we were looking for to support the link management software was holdings data and MARC records for the aggregator databases.

BP: By now we've all heard about the upcoming AACR2 revisions, specifically those involving Chapter 12, the chapter that deals with serials. What are some of these revisions, and how do they address some of the cataloging challenges that you mentioned earlier?

SS: The main revision is the change of scope of Chapter 12 to "Continuing Resources" which now includes not only serials but also a new type of material called "Integrating Resources." These are defined as resources that are added to or changed by updates that do not remain discrete and are integrated into the resource. Websites, loose-leaf publications, and databases are examples of integrating resources. Until now, there were supplementary rule sets, like Adele Hallam's guidelines for print loose-leaves.⁵ Nancy Olson's manual never really addressed describing how an electronic resource changed over time.⁶ I think one of the great things about the Chapter 12 revision is that catalogers will be able to describe consistently how a Website or a database changes over time.

Other significant revisions that affect serials catalogers are the changes to the title change rules. Instead of referring to "title changes," catalogers will be referring to "major changes" and "minor changes." This is the terminology used by the ISSN network to identify whether a change is significant enough to create a new record, thus a major change. Serials catalogers have previously called any change significant enough to create a new record a "title change" even if the change was not in the title, but in the corporate body main entry. Then there are many title changes that aren't significant enough to be a "title change" but are considered title variants. No wonder non-catalogers find serials cataloging so confusing. I'm hopeful that the change in terminology will make our conversations a little clearer. In addition to the terminology, the actual title change rules have changed significantly so that many fewer changes in the title will be considered major changes and so fewer successive entry serial records will be created in the future.

To tell you the truth, I'm not sure that the change in rules will help with the cataloging challenges I talked about earlier. We'll still have inconsistent and ambiguous

presentation of bibliographic information on electronic resources, and catalogers will still have to use a lot of judgment in creating original records for electronic serials. There are some e-serial specific guidelines for title changes that will definitely help in determining whether a particular e-serial title change is major or minor. I think the main benefits are that catalogers now have rules governing how to describe the changing aspects of non-serially published resources and that we'll see more consistent cataloging.

BP: What kind of an impact, if any, do you see these changes having on users?

SS: Records will include a lot more dates (date viewed, last update, etc.) so that a user will have a better sense of how current a particular record is. Better access will also be provided since earlier access points (earlier titles, authors, issuing bodies) will be retained in the catalog records. For example, if an online database changes its name, the earlier name will be retained in the record (MARC field 247) so searchers will be able to find the earlier title in the catalog.

BP: What about the impact on catalogers and serials staff? I imagine there are some retraining issues that need to be addressed.

SS: Not only retraining issues, but also some organizational issues. Since databases, Websites and loose-leafs are cataloged using Chapter 12, who catalogs them? Where do the divisional or personnel lines go? I might be wrong on this, but I think the e-resources cataloging community, as a whole, was not really aware of the extent of the changes to Chapter 12, and there might be a small amount of panic out there when individual catalogers start seeing catalog records that include notes and tagging conventions that are different from what they're used to seeing. These changes won't affect all e-resources. Static resources (individual documents, monographs) will still be cataloged using Chapter 9. When the resource changes somehow, the cataloger will then need to consult Chapter 12 in addition to Chapter 9.

SCCTP and the PCC are developing a one-day workshop on cataloging integrating resources. I understand that the release date will be sometime in April 2003. In the meantime, various organizations will be sponsoring programs on the rule changes. ALCTS will be holding a series of institutes on the revisions, and Jean Hirons' (LC) overview of the changes is available from the CONSER home page. My advice to electronic resource catalogers is to keep your ears open for any continuing education opportunities that might be available and take a look at Jean's overview to get an idea of what to expect.

BP: Let's talk a little more about the e-serials course with which you're currently involved.⁷

SS: The e-serials course was released in April 2002, and I think that four workshops have been given since its release. I just gave it for the first time a couple of days ago at OCLC Western Service Center in Lacey, Washington.

BP: How was the workshop received?

SS: We had twelve people, and it worked really well. The evaluations were very positive. The course is very information-dense. There's some information about different approaches to providing access to aggregations through the library catalog and also how to provide access outside the catalog. There's a little tutorial on OpenURL using an SFX example because that was the only widely available commercial product six months ago. I'm hopeful that it will get people who have never had to deal with these issues before pointed in the right direction. And there's a bibliography where they can find out more about various e-serial products and projects.

BP: This is the workshop that you co-developed with Les Hawkins from LC?

SS: Right, with Les Hawkins. Jean Hirons had identified a number of people who could be workshop developers for either the e-serials course or the advanced serials course, which was being developed at the same time. Because of my background, she felt it would be more appropriate for me to work on the e-serials course. I'm one of probably a couple dozen "experts" in the field. It's really kind of funny because these days I really have to try to make time for cataloging e-serials because we don't do a whole lot of original cataloging of e-serials. Most of the titles we get (and I think this is true for a lot of people) are part of a package or are commercially published so there's cataloging copy in OCLC for most of our new titles. I know that there are people like David Van Hoy from MIT, Renette Davis from University of Chicago, Naomi Young from University of Florida, Becky Culbertson from University of California at San Diego, and Valerie Bross (UCLA) who do a lot more cataloging and are really much more the experts on this stuff than I am. I just happened to be the one to write a couple of articles and get involved with the training issues, so my name is out there more.

BP: I understand that the course is aimed at those who have serials cataloging experience.

SS: Yes. The course is geared towards people who have serials cataloging experience but not necessarily a lot of experience with e-serials. I really like the fact that it doesn't just focus on creating original records, but it also addresses other, related issues.

BP: What are some of these common issues?

SS: Some of the issues covered include how to provide access both within and without the catalog, how to handle a variety of change situations such as title, URL, or format changes, and what is a serial versus an integrating resource.

BP: A final question for you. As online resources become more commonplace in libraries, how do you see the role of serials catalogers evolving to meet the future challenges these resources present?

SS: Geez, you save the easy questions for the end! As we use more commercial tools and products, I think serials catalogers might become the "serial metadata experts,"

being part of a team that manages serial data that can come from a variety of sources or that is used in a variety of services. It all depends on the library. At our institution, we've definitely seen a decrease in print serial workflow that is as much due to serials cancellation projects as to the format. Or put another way, it's cheaper for us to buy a title in electronic form as part of a package than individually in print, so we'll cancel the print. However, we have a pretty sizable microfilm backlog, so I think someone will still be creating serial catalog records at the University of Washington for quite awhile.

Notes

1. Marcia Sinetar, *Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow: Discovering Your Right Livelihood*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

2. National Serials Data Program. <http://www.loc.gov/issn> (17 August 2002).

3. CONSER *Cataloging Manual* (CCM). Washington, DC: Serial Record Division, Library of Congress, distributed by the Cataloging Distribution Service, 1998.

4. CONSER PURL Pilot. <http://www.loc.gov/acq/conser/purl/documentation.htm> (17 August 2002).

5. Adele Hallam, *Cataloging Rules for the Description of Looseleaf Publications with Special Emphasis on Legal Materials*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1989.

6. Nancy B. Olson, *Cataloging Internet Resources: A Manual and Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. Dublin, OH: OCLC, 1997.

7. Serials Cooperative Cataloging Training Program (SCCTP). The materials for the SCCTP e-serials workshop have been translated into Chinese and Spanish. More information about the course is available at <http://www.loc.gov/acq/conser/scctp/home.html> (19 August 2002).