# Catalogers in Academic Libraries: Their Evolving and Expanding Roles

## Lois Buttlar and Rajinder Garcha

Catalogers in academic libraries who belong to ALA's Technical Services Division were surveyed to determine if and how their job functions have changed over the past ten years. The 271 respondents indicated a change from print to electronic formats, involvement of nonprofessionals in higher levels of cataloging, a trend toward outsourcing (particularly, copy cataloging and foreign-language materials), and more cataloging of specialized items, audiovisual materials, and digital documents by professional librarians. The latter now use their expertise to edit problematic records, engage in managerial tasks, catalog and attempt authority control of Internet resources, do Internet training or Web page design, and use HTML. More and more catalogers are involved in activities formerly in the domain of systems librarians (selecting and implementing catalog products, database maintenance, etc.).

The library catalog, now often merged with the concept of a database, has been at the forefront of technological innovation in libraries. Automation definitely has decreased the amount of original cataloging done in academic libraries, and there is agreement in the literature that tasks formerly assigned to professional catalogers have shifted downward to paraprofessional support staff members.[1–4] Much discussion has focused on what has been called the "deprofessionalization" of technical services and cataloging, with various attributions of cause.[5–7]

The commonplace nature of bibliographic utilities, user-friendly OPACs, keyword searching, CD-ROM formats, and, more recently, outsourcing; and the increasing availability and popularity of the Internet have resulted in a multifaceted and evolving role for catalogers in academic libraries.[8–11] Not only must catalogers learn standard general mark-up language (SGML) and hypertext mark-up language (HTML), but also new standards must be developed for the new multimedia delivery formats that are now available.

According to Marsha Starr Paiste and June Mullins, "the cataloging position of the future is germinating now."[12] They said professional catalogers can expand their basic cataloging skills into nonconventional areas and develop skills as information access analysts, systems designers, telecommunications experts, or online analysts/technical resource managers. In a recent two-part article on the cataloger's workstation, which de-

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**TABLE 1**
**Distribution of Responding**
**Catalogers by Library Size**

| Size in Volumes | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Fewer than 100,000 | 36 | 13.6 |
| 100,000 to 499,999 | 91 | 34.3 |
| 500,000 to 999,999 | 33 | 12.5 |
| 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 | 51 | 19.2 |
| More than 2,000,000 | 54 | 20.4 |
| Total | 265 | 100.0 |

scribes the transformation of cataloging, Roger Brisson emphasized the new demands made on the cataloger in terms of computing knowledge and experience, in addition to cataloging knowledge and subject expertise.[13] Ideally, he sees the cataloger's role as mediator between computing and cataloging activities.

Other roles suggested in the literature include: contract negotiators, designers or managers of automated systems, resource allocators, writers, speakers, fundraisers, researchers, subject experts, collection managers, proposal writers, or telecommunications experts.[14–16] According to Sheila B. Intner, the necessity for catalogers and technical services librarians did not change but, rather, the requirements of the positions did.[17,18] Comments such as these justify several questions, including:

• How do catalog librarians actually spend their time?

• How have their roles changed since they became catalogers?

• How many perform traditional cataloging functions, and how many, instead, are involved with new roles that require more managerial skills or computer and/or systems expertise?

**Purpose of the Study**
The purpose of this study was to determine the current job functions performed by catalogers in academic libraries and how these functions have changed over the past ten years in order to provide in-

formation of significance to library administrators and library and information science educators.

**Literature Review**
Wendy Wood attempted to determine the changing role of catalogers at the University of Kansas.[19] In a survey of fifteen professional catalogers, she found that five were full-time supervisors and that four others supervised but also did some cataloging. She concluded that although the need for catalogers would not decrease, more and more catalogers would become primarily supervisors and/or managers of databases. Paiste and Mullins would agreed with this transition.[20]

Hong Xu compared and analyzed the job requirements and qualifications for catalogers and reference librarians in aca-

> **Ninety-six percent of the libraries represented in the survey had fully automated OPACs.**

demic libraries contained in job advertisements between 1971 and 1990.[21] He concluded that catalog librarians had more management responsibilities than reference librarians did and that these responsibilities steadily increased over the time period of the study.

Jennifer A. Younger addressed the functions of professional librarians, particularly catalogers, in providing bibliographic access services; and prescribed nine roles they should play.[22] She called

**TABLE 2**
**Distribution of Libraries by**
**Network Affiliation**

| Network Affiliation | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| OCLC | 249 | 91.9 |
| RLIN | 52 | 19.3 |
| WLN | 7 | 2.6 |
| Other | 19 | 7.1 |

for a formal team approach with professionals and paraprofessionals working in a close relationship in cataloging. Urging catalogers to develop a broader perspective, she said that this does not mean abandoning cataloging rules in favor of indexing rules but, rather, adopting an awareness of how these rules work together to create an effective system of bibliographic access.

Patricia A. Eskoz investigated the extent to which catalogers in academic libraries also are involved in activities typically labeled as public services.[23] The majority of survey respondents were involved, to some limited extent, in crossover activities such as reference and bibliographic instruction and/or collection development. In earlier surveys, Eskoz concluded that although catalogers' tools and resources had changed, basic cataloging skills had not changed that much and "catalog departments are still recognizable as catalog departments and catalogers are still recognizable as catalogers."[24]

## Methodology

A list of sixty-seven traditional and emerging activities in which catalogers in academic libraries are involved was gleaned from the literature. These activities were incorporated into a questionnaire that was distributed to catalogers in academic libraries. The catalogers were identified via labels purchased from ALA showing the addresses of members of its Technical Services Division. The questionnaires then were mailed to a random sample of 500 catalogers; 271 useable responses were returned, for a response rate of 55 percent.

## Findings

### Demographic Information

The largest category of respondents (91, or 34.3%) worked in libraries with collections ranging from 100,000 to 499,999 volumes; however, about 40 percent of the respondents worked in larger libraries

**TABLE 3**
**Status of Professional Staff**
**Past 5–10 Years**

| Number of Professional Staff | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Decreased | 105 | 39.2 |
| Increased | 38 | 14.2 |
| Remained about the same | 125 | 46.6 |
| Total | 268 | 100.0 |

with collections of one million or more volumes (see table 1).

Ninety-six percent of the libraries represented in the survey had fully automated OPACs. Most of these (249, or 91.9%) were affiliated with OCLC (see table 2). At 125 (46.6%) of the responding libraries, the number of professional cataloging staff members had remained about the same over the past five to ten years, and at 105 (39.2%) of them, the number had decreased (see table 3). The figures were almost parallel with regard to support staff, with the tendency for the number to remain the same in 123 (45.9%) of the libraries and to decrease in 112 (41.8%) of them (see table 4). At the time of the survey, having one professional staff member seemed to be a common pattern (85, or 31.6%), followed by an approximately equal number of libraries having from two (47, or 17.47%) to five (45, or 16.73%) catalogers with an MLS degree. In terms of clerical or support staff mem-

**TABLE 4**
**Status of Support/Clerical**
**Staff in Past 5–10 Years**

| Number of Support/ Clerical Staff | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Decreased | 112 | 41.8 |
| Increased | 33 | 12.3 |
| Remained about the same | 123 | 45.9 |
| Total | 268 | 100.0 |

bers, cataloging units were likely to have slightly more nonprofessionals, with one (57, or 21.35%) or two (51, or 19.1%) being most typical (see table 5).

### Primary Roles

More than 70 percent of the catalogers (185) responded that the cataloger's primary role was that of creating bibliographic records, although 199 (75.1%) saw a trend toward involving nonprofessionals in higher levels of cataloging. The majority (194, or 77%) agreed that the cataloging unit had experienced an increase in productivity because of automation and technological innovation and that their tools and resources had changed (203, or 78.7%). The most repeated response, indicated by 158 (58.5%), was the obvious change from print to electronic formats such as online materials, CD-ROMs, cataloger's desktop, the Web, or the Internet. Four (1.48%) of the respondents said they had moved to a Windows environment, nine (3.3%) indicated the use of OCLC, and ten (3.7%) others indicated that the computers and software they used had become much more sophisticated.

### Distribution of Cataloging

Only seventy-three (27%) of the respondents indicated that their libraries outsourced cataloging. Of those functions outsourced, copy cataloging (33, or 12.2%) and foreign-language materials cataloging (30, or 11.1%) were by far the most popular (see table 6). Only four respondents (1.5%) reported that cataloging positions had been eliminated at their institutions as a result of outsourcing, and thirty-two (12%) said that their cataloging units had experienced an increase in productivity due to outsourcing.

At eighty-six (32%) of the institutions, cataloging was distributed across departments or by subject discipline. Music, as

**TABLE 5**
**Distribution of Staff Members by Number and Level**

| Number of Staff | Level of Staff | | | |
| | Professional | | Support/Clerical | |
| | f | % | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 4 | 1.49 | 11 | 4.12 |
| 1 | 85 | 31.60 | 57 | 21.35 |
| 2 | 47 | 17.47 | 51 | 19.10 |
| 3 | 40 | 14.87 | 22 | 8.24 |
| 4–5 | 45 | 16.73 | 39 | 14.61 |
| 6–10 | 36 | 13.38 | 42 | 15.73 |
| 11–15 | 7 | 2.60 | 21 | 7.87 |
| 16–20 | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 3.00 |
| 21–25 | 5 | 1.86 | 9 | 3.37 |
| 26–30 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 1.12 |
| 31–40 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | .75 |
| 41–50 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | .37 |
| >50 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | .37 |
| Total | 269 | 100.00 | 267 | 100.00 |

a subject discipline, was most likely to be cataloged in a special department, followed by maps and archives/manuscripts (see table 7).

### Changing Trends

Catalogers indicated activities they were performing in 1987, 1992, and 1997 (see table 8). It would appear that in 1997, more catalogers were handling dissertations and theses than in 1987 (55.1% compared to 50.9%), rare books/special collections materials (51.1% compared to 40.8%), and government documents (53.4% compared to 47.3%). This probably is explained by the fact that professional librarians have taken on more cataloging of specialized items because some of the monograph and other types of materials now are processed by copy catalogers.

The major changes over the ten-year time period are reflected in the increased number of individuals cataloging AV materials (66.7% in 1997 compared to 49.1% in 1987), digital documents (44.3% compared to 4.7%), and Internet resources (31.4% compared to 1.2%).

Planning and conducting retrospective

conversions of library card catalogs to online databases are activities in which professional catalogers are less involved now (25.4% and 37.5%, respectively) than they were ten years ago (40.2% and 45%, respectively). In 1997, catalogers were more likely to be using their professional expertise in editing problematic records (45.8% compared to 32.5%) or engaging in more managerial tasks such as writing contracts with vendors (12.9% compared to 6.5%), writing proposals (20.9% compared to 13.6%), supervising support staff (78.1% compared to 66.5%), coordinating work of subordinates (69.1% compared to 56.2%), monitoring budgets (30.6% compared to 25.4%), managing cataloging work flows (71.3% compared to 59.8%), evaluating cataloging personnel (63.4% compared to 55%), and training copy catalogers (55.5% compared to 46.2%). They also became increasingly instrumental in affecting policy because their number expanded with respect to designing cataloging policies and procedures (77.7% in 1997 compared to 58.6% in 1987) and designing technical services policies/procedures (46.2% compared to 31%).

Although their involvement with the Internet was still very modest, there was a slow, but steady, increase in the number of catalogers who cataloged Internet resources (31.4% compared to 1.2%) or tried to maintain some authority control over Internet files (11.4% compared to 2.4%). Four respondents reported that they were involved in Web page design and two in Internet training for students.

More and more catalogers were involved in activities formerly in the domain of systems/automation librarians, such as selecting and implementing catalog products (64.4% in 1997 compared to 39.1% in 1987), developing specifications for microcomputer applications (14.1% compared to 5.4%), database maintenance/bibliographic control (75.4% compared to 43.5%), records management/indexing (14.9% compared to 6.6%), managing OPAC performance (20.6% com-

### TABLE 6
### Distribution of Cataloging Functions Outsourced

| Function Outsourced | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Copy cataloging | 33 | 12.2 |
| Original cataloging | 15 | 5.6 |
| Serials cataloging | 2 | 0.7 |
| Nonprint cataloging | 7 | 2.6 |
| Special items cataloging | 18 | 6.7 |
| Foreign-language cataloging | 30 | 11.1 |
| Government documents | 10 | 3.7 |
| Retrospective conversion | 6 | 2.2 |
| Special projects | 3 | 1.1 |
| Microforms | 3 | 1.1 |
| Reclassification projects | 2 | .7 |
| Catalog records | 2 | .7 |
| Original scores | 2 | .7 |
| Other | 3 | 1.1 |

pared to 9%), managing network and local interfaces (9.2% compared to 1.8%), managing systems and tool selection and evaluation (11.5% compared to 3.6%), managing systems implementation (12.6% compared to 4.8%), and applying database management software (13.4% compared to 4.8%). Additional activities responding catalogers added to the list included: e-mail and Internet training for students, Web page design, PC software installation and maintenance, CD-ROM network management, one-on-one faculty OPAC training, purchase and distribution of AV hardware, management of satellite dish reception, coordination of

### TABLE 7
### Distribution of Cataloging across Departments/Subjects

| Department | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Music | 20 | 23.3 |
| Maps | 10 | 11.6 |
| Archives/manuscripts | 9 | 10.5 |
| Rare books | 5 | 5.8 |
| Law | 5 | 5.8 |
| Nonprint | 4 | 4.7 |
| Other | 9 | 10.5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TABLE 8** | | | | | | |
| **Evolving Activities and Roles of Catalogers 1987–1997** | | | | | | |
| | 1987 | | 1992 | | 1997 | |
| Activity | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Descriptive cataloging | 157 | 92.4 | 203 | 92.3 | 240 | 90.9 |
| Assign call numbers | 153 | 90.5 | 201 | 91.4 | 244 | 92.4 |
| Assign subject headings | 153 | 90.5 | 200 | 90.9 | 246 | 93.2 |
| Copy cataloging | 121 | 71.6 | 155 | 70.5 | 180 | 68.2 |
| Catalog non-English items | 133 | 78.7 | 170 | 77.3 | 203 | 76.9 |
| Catalog dissertations/theses | 86 | 50.9 | 116 | 52.7 | 145 | 55.1 |
| Catalog rare books/special collections | 69 | 40.8 | 99 | 45.0 | 135 | 51.1 |
| Catalog monographs | 142 | 84.0 | 186 | 84.5 | 229 | 86.7 |
| Catalog serials | 90 | 53.6 | 127 | 58.0 | 151 | 57.4 |
| Catalog digital documents | 8 | 4.7 | 21 | 9.5 | 117 | 44.3 |
| Catalog government documents | 80 | 47.3 | 101 | 45.9 | 141 | 53.4 |
| Catalog AV materials | 83 | 49.1 | 135 | 61.4 | 176 | 66.7 |
| Catalog Internet resources | 2 | 1.2 | 2 | 0.9 | 83 | 31.4 |
| Set local catalog standards | 106 | 62.7 | 153 | 69.5 | 206 | 78.0 |
| Authority control | 130 | 76.9 | 175 | 79.5 | 221 | 83.7 |
| Plan retrospective conversion | 68 | 40.2 | 73 | 33.2 | 67 | 25.4 |
| Conduct retrospective conversion | 76 | 45.0 | 100 | 45.5 | 99 | 37.5 |
| Edit problem records | 55 | 32.5 | 91 | 41.6 | 121 | 45.8 |
| Create bibliographic access system | 22 | 13.1 | 34 | 15.6 | 33 | 12.6 |
| Write contracts with vendors | 11 | 6.5 | 23 | 10.5 | 34 | 12.9 |
| Define library requirements | 23 | 13.6 | 42 | 19.1 | 54 | 20.5 |
| Cost out direct/indirect costs | 19 | 11.2 | 26 | 11.9 | 36 | 13.7 |
| Write RFPs | 16 | 9.5 | 29 | 13.2 | 29 | 11.1 |
| Write proposals | 23 | 13.6 | 44 | 20.0 | 55 | 20.9 |
| Design technical servervices policies | 52 | 31.0 | 76 | 34.5 | 122 | 46.2 |
| Select/implement catalog products | 66 | 39.1 | 103 | 47.0 | 170 | 64.4 |
| Bibliographic access department head | 72 | 42.6 | 98 | 44.5 | 139 | 52.5 |
| Manage technical services department | 21 | 12.4 | 35 | 15.9 | 124 | 47.0 |
| Supervise proffessional staff | 52 | 30.8 | 73 | 33.2 | 85 | 32.1 |
| Supervise support staff | 109 | 66.5 | 162 | 73.3 | 207 | 78.1 |
| Supervise student workers | 87 | 51.5 | 112 | 50.7 | 132 | 49.8 |
| Coordinate work of subordinates | 95 | 56.2 | 140 | 63.3 | 183 | 69.1 |
| Plan budgets | 36 | 21.3 | 54 | 24.4 | 67 | 25.3 |
| Monitor budgets | 43 | 25.4 | 59 | 26.7 | 81 | 30.6 |
| Manage cataloging work flows | 101 | 59.8 | 138 | 62.4 | 189 | 71.3 |

teleconferences or videoconferences, and coordination of campus involvement in multicampus integrated library system.

In 1987, only 1.2 percent of the professional catalogers were using HTML; in 1997, 33.3 percent were. The one single activity that showed the greatest expansion in terms of cataloger involvement was related to e-mail. Two hundred catalogers (76%) were involved in e-mail discussion groups in 1997, compared to five (3%) in 1987. With respect to crossover activities, in 1987, 37.5 percent were involved in reference desk work; in 1997, 47 percent reported that they were, and one reported doing reference work, but not having a reference desk assignment.

| | | TABLE 8 (cont.) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Evolving Activities and Roles of Catalogers 1987–1997** | | | | |
| | 1987 | | 1992 | | 1997 | |
| Activity | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Recruit/hire cataloging personnel | 82 | 48.5 | 114 | 51.6 | 140 | 52.8 |
| Evaluate cataloging personnel | 93 | 55.0 | 130 | 58.8 | 168 | 63.4 |
| Compile/maintain statistics | 109 | 64.5 | 151 | 68.3 | 195 | 73.6 |
| Train copy catalogers | 78 | 46.2 | 118 | 53.4 | 147 | 55.5 |
| Design cataloging policies/procedures | 99 | 58.6 | 158 | 71.5 | 206 | 77.7 |
| Design technical services policies/procedures | 52 | 31.0 | 76 | 34.5 | 122 | 46.2 |
| Participate in fund raising | 4 | 2.4 | 7 | 3.2 | 12 | 4.6 |
| Authority control Internet files | 4 | 2.4 | 10 | 4.6 | 30 | 11.4 |
| Develop special mainframe applications | 8 | 4.8 | 15 | 6.9 | 12 | 4.6 |
| Develop special microcomputer applications | 9 | 5.4 | 22 | 10.0 | 17 | 14.1 |
| Database development | 30 | 18.0 | 48 | 22.0 | 72 | 27.5 |
| Database maintenance/ bibliographic control | 73 | 43.5 | 152 | 69.1 | 199 | 75.4 |
| Expert system design/application | 3 | 1.8 | 6 | 2.7 | 6 | 2.3 |
| Records management/indexing | 11 | 6.6 | 23 | 10.6 | 39 | 14.9 |
| E-mail discussion groups | 5 | 3.0 | 89 | 40.6 | 200 | 76.0 |
| Manage OPAC performance | 15 | 9.0 | 32 | 14.7 | 54 | 20.6 |
| Manage network/local interfaces | 3 | 1.8 | 15 | 6.9 | 24 | 9.2 |
| Manage system/tool selection/evaluation | 6 | 3.6 | 14 | 6.4 | 30 | 11.5 |
| Manage systems implementation | 8 | 4.8 | 19 | 8.7 | 33 | 12.6 |
| Manage/coordinate LAN functions | 1 | 0.6 | 6 | 2.7 | 12 | 4.6 |
| Apply database management software | 8 | 4.8 | 17 | 7.8 | 35 | 13.4 |
| Design user interfaces | 5 | 3.0 | 7 | 3.2 | 18 | 6.9 |
| Write abstracts | 2 | 1.2 | 3 | 1.4 | 4 | 1.5 |
| Automated indexing | 4 | 2.4 | 9 | 4.1 | 11 | 4.2 |
| Thesaurus use and construction | 3 | 1.8 | 3 | 1.4 | 6 | 2.3 |
| Use SGML | 2 | 1.2 | 1 | 0.5 | 12 | 4.6 |
| Use HTML | 2 | 1.2 | 2 | 0.9 | 88 | 33.3 |
| Design integrated systems | 4 | 2.4 | 8 | 3.7 | 11 | 4.2 |
| Computer programming | 8 | 4.8 | 8 | 3.7 | 12 | 4.6 |
| Reference desk work | 63 | 37.5 | 88 | 39.8 | 124 | 47.0 |
| Collection development | 55 | 32.5 | 90 | 40.5 | 126 | 47.5 |
| Bibliographic instruction | 42 | 24.9 | 56 | 25.3 | 84 | 31.7 |

About one-third were involved in collection development in 1987 as compared to 47.5 percent in 1997. The number of cataloging librarians involved in bibliographic instruction rose from 24.9 percent in 1987 to 31.7 percent in 1997.

Other open-ended comments indicated that some catalogers served in consulting roles to serials control or acquisitions systems. It appears that automation has led to a blurring of the lines between the traditional bifurcated roles for technical service and public service librarians. Activities added to the list by responding catalogers included committee participation, including accreditation and col-

**TABLE 9**
**Top Twenty-Five Activities Currently Performed by Catalogers**

| Activity | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Assign subject headings | 246 | 93.2 |
| 2. Assign call numbers | 244 | 92.4 |
| 3. Descriptive cataloging | 240 | 90.9 |
| 4. Catalog monographs | 229 | 86.7 |
| 5. Authority control | 221 | 83.7 |
| 6. Supervise support staff | 209 | 78.1 |
| 7. Set local catalog standards | 206 | 78.0 |
| 8. Design cataloging policies/procedures | 206 | 77.7 |
| 9. Compile/maintain statistics | 206 | 77.7 |
| 10. Catalog non-English items | 203 | 76.9 |
| 11. E-mail discussion groups | 200 | 76.0 |
| 12. Database maintenance/ bibliographic control | 199 | 75.4 |
| 13. Manage catalog work flows | 189 | 71.3 |
| 14. Coordinate work of subordinates | 183 | 69.1 |
| 15. Copy cataloging | 180 | 68.2 |
| 16. Catalog AV materials | 176 | 66.7 |
| 17. Evaluate cataloging personnel | 168 | 63.4 |
| 18. Catalog serials | 151 | 57.4 |
| 19. Train copy catalogers | 147 | 55.5 |
| 20. Catalog dissertations/theses | 145 | 55.1 |
| 21. Catalog government documents | 141 | 53.4 |
| 22. Recruit/hire cataloging personnel | 140 | 52.8 |
| 23. Bibliographic access department head | 139 | 52.5 |
| 24. Catalog rare books/spec. coll. | 135 | 51.1 |
| 25. Supervise student workers | 132 | 49.8 |

part of the work routine of more than 90 percent of all survey respondents, followed closely by monograph cataloging (86.7%) and authority control work (221, or 83.7%). The top twenty-five activities in which at least 50 percent of all professional catalogers responding were currently engaged are presented in table 9. It is interesting to note that, despite the downgrading of former cataloging functions to nonprofessionals, 180 respondents (68.2%) were currently involved in copy cataloging.

***Open-Ended Comments***
An attempt to analyze and synthesize the open-ended comments solicited at the end of the questionnaire proved to be both extremely interesting and extremely challenging. The diversity of attitudes and opinions, as well as the multifaceted aspects of the topics contributed to the difficulty of the task, but some repeatedly occurring observations are categorized as follows.

**Areas of greatest concensus.** Comments that reflected the greatest consensus definitely included those related to the observation that outsourcing and/or copy cataloging by support staff frees the catalogers to do more professional activities such as special projects, foreign-language cataloging, more difficult original cataloging, serials management, policy writing, development and maintenance of the library's Web site, reference consultation and other noncataloging tasks, and learning to use "a flood of electronic products." The three areas mentioned most frequently were management functions, participation in bibliographic instruction, and maintenance and upgrading of the database. One respondent said: "Although cataloging departments are not disappearing, cata-

lege governance work; teaching library science courses and workshops; circulation and/or stack maintenance; interlibrary loan; preservation; library signage, displays, and exhibits; responsibility for bindery/repair unit; serials control; and service activities such as writing/editing the library newsletter, doing inventory, managing a gifts program, and research and publication.

Despite their expanded role, catalogers were still very much involved in the activities that had long been associated with their careers. For example, descriptive cataloging and the assigning of call numbers and subject headings were still

log librarians are spending more of their time managing the system and less time cataloging."

**Impact of Internet.** Several respondents indicated that they were currently cataloging Internet resources on a selected basis. One mentioned participation in OCLC's Internet project, and another was involved in the development of national standards for Internet cataloging. It appears from other references to the Internet that it is consuming more and more of some catalogers' time. One respondent indicated that she used information from the Internet in cataloging U.S. government documents.

**Areas of concern.** Some responding catalogers expressed concern that time and attention given to computer technology and rapid cataloging at the expense of accurate cataloging, or that with the development of online systems in small- and medium-sized academic libraries, professional catalogers will become nonexistent, even though the need for their professional expertise will not disappear. One respondent said: "The quality of cataloging is lower because more cataloging is being done or handled by paraprofessionals with less education and less intellectual ability." However, another respondent claimed:

> We have high productivity because we have chosen to concentrate on the areas of records which affect retrieval and pay less attention to other areas. . . . Many librarians are obsessive about cataloging practice. They enter every field they can think of, double-check and triple-check authority records, and so slow down the whole cataloging process that high backlogs develop. This is a one way ticket to outsourcing. One must learn to balance thoroughness with practicality. Work carefully but establish priorities.

A second area of concern was reflected in respondent comments related to new system responsibilities. Whether these were related to enhanced authority or bibliographic control or, as in one case, responsibility "for the automated system— all hardware in the building and all software," there was general agreement that the expectations for catalogers in terms of sophisticated knowledge of computer technology are increasing at a more rapid rate than is the necessary commensurate education and/or training.

Finally, some catalogers' feelings were represented by the following: "We are not

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**Despite their expanded role, catalogers were still very much involved in the activities that had long been associated with their careers.**

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recognized as we were twenty years ago, as performing valued work," and in reference to library science students, the "majority of students do not want to take cataloging because they do not see how this relates to the job that they will be doing upon completion of the program." In other words, library schools programs are not impressing on students the importance of building the library's catalog in accessing and retrieving information.

**Future of cataloging in the academic library.** Several comments addressed predictions related to the cataloger's role in the future. Some of these included: the trend for catalogers to seek new positions of employment working for commercial outsourcers; increased cross-training of catalog librarians to take on more noncataloging responsibilities (without, necessarily, additional monetary compensation); an increased proportion of paraprofessional to professional positions in cataloging units; a merger of cataloging units into broader technical services units (e.g., cataloging, acquisitions, and serials, along with computer technicians, merged into a Department of Automation and Bibliographic Control, or ABC Depart-

ment); a new expectation for new hires to also be systems librarians; involvement of cataloging professionals in more HTML/SGML activities, more Windows 95 applications, and more CD-ROM cataloging resources; and more cataloging/imaging (scanning) of special collections materials to the library's Web site.

## Conclusions

It is quite apparent that professional catalogers no longer are defined merely on the basis of performing their traditional roles of original cataloging, authority work, and assigning call numbers and subjects. Rather, they are viewed as managers, policymakers, upgraders of the database, bibliographic instructors, collection development librarians, automation librarians, and more. Job sharing is on the rise, especially transfers from the technical services area to the public services area, adding to the decrease in cataloging staff and increase in reference staff. This trend of job sharing has some positive aspects, including heightened job interest among participants, better understanding between technical and public services, and more flexibility. However, sometimes combinations of duties have drawbacks as well, including lack of expertise and thus lack of quality and consistency in multiple job functions. Perhaps the term *professional cataloger* will have to be replaced by another term or title that would cover a variety of position responsibilities carried on by the cataloger of the future.

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## Notes

1. Hong Xu, "The Impact of Automation on Job Requirements and Qualifications for Catalogers and Reference Librarians in Academic Libraries," *Library Resources and Technical Services* 40, no. 1 (Jan. 1996): 9–31.

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