White Paper on PCC Role in Continuing Education for Catalogers

prepared for PCC Policy Committee Discussion
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1. Current status of instruction and continuing education for catalogers in the United States and Canada.

Library schools

"The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" or so institutions hiring entry-level catalogers have been crying for some time, as they lament the lack of cataloging knowledge of recent MLS graduates. Lynn Howarth, Dean of the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Toronto, writes in a recent article that, "At the 1999 ALA Congress on Professional Education, entry-level cataloging education was identified by employer institutions as particularly problematic, and inadequate to sustain staffing requirements for libraries in the United States." (1)

Howarth further notes that, "In the past dozen years, a number of programs of library and information science/information studies (LIS/IS) have moved to delist cataloging from their core curriculum, to make the introductory level course an elective, and in some cases to eliminate advanced level courses, or, at minimum, to substantially reduce the number of cataloging, classification, and subject analysis electives available beyond the first level. In other cases LIS/IS programs have significantly "reinvented" traditional cataloging courses, focusing on organization of information, or, more recently, knowledge organization." (2) Jodi Lynn Spillane supports Howarth's assertions, citing a 1976 study that showed that 70% of library schools at the time required at least one cataloging course. Citing a 1986 study and her own research from 1998, Spillane notes that between 1986 and 1998, even though there were more schools offering "cataloging-related" courses, the number requiring even one such course dropped from 78.2% to 55.4%. Like Howarth, Spillane also points out that many of the so-called cataloging-related courses are actually broader indexing and abstracting or technical services courses. Spillane cites a study by Sherry Vellucci that challenges the adequacy of such integrated courses for conveying useful information for catalogers. (3) It is clear that these studies back up the popular assertion that library schools are simply not providing adequate instruction in cataloging skills to enable an MLS graduate with no prior experience to be able to handle even an entry-level cataloging position without substantial in-house training. The basics of AACR2, MARC, authority control, subject analysis and classification are not being covered by many library schools.

A further consideration is that even when library schools do provide excellent cataloging courses, they still aren't sufficient for the day-to-day needs of working catalogers. Continuing education courses have the advantage of being more practical and focused and can address the specific and immediate needs of catalogers.

Cataloger perceptions

In the fall of 2000, the SCT Task Group on Educational Needs of the Cataloging Community conducted a survey to learn the types of training and continuing education that practicing catalogers wanted. The results of that survey identified a few key areas (in addition to special formats cataloging) in which a majority of the survey respondents felt the need for training. The five most frequently identified areas were: name authorities, subject authorities, descriptive cataloging, subject cataloging, and classification.(4)

In their final report, the TG recommended that courses in these areas be developed, following the SCCTP model. (5)

Bibliographic networks

For years, OCLC regional networks have been providing a great deal of cataloging-specific training for their members. This typically includes courses in MARC tagging, searching the databases, entering records, OCLC systems and software, such as CatME and CORC, and special format cataloging. It rarely includes courses on subject analysis, classification, authority control or general descriptive cataloging (AACR2 principles). And, since 1999, networks have sponsored many sessions of SCCTP's Basic Serials Cataloging Workshop and now the Serials Holdings course. Sometimes the larger networks, such as BCR, Solinet, or OCLC Western, have such courses on their roster. However, they are offered infrequently and not in many locations. When such courses are offered, the cost is typically $150-$250 per person. As OCLC broadens its products and services, training needs for other areas are also expanding. Most of the network training programs are not able to keep up, even though they rely heavily on practitioners to develop and present the workshops. At the Annual Conference of the American Library Association this year, Jean Hirons, Larry Alford, Ana Cristan and Carol Hixson met with a group of OCLC network training coordinators to discuss their perception of the need for cataloging training and continuing education. The overwhelming response heard at that meeting was that they enthusiastically supported the SCCTP model and that they agreed with the five major topics that had been identified by TG survey respondents. They indicated that they would like to have consistent content to present to their members and would enthusiastically support and utilize any courses developed by the PCC.

Library associations, etc.

Some special library associations provide training in bibliographic control for materials in specialized formats. OLAC (Online Audiovisual Catalogers, Inc.) and MOUG (Music OCLC Users Group) are two such groups that often provide workshops in conjunction with membership meetings or separately (see http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/cts/olac/conferences/2000.html). NASIG (North American Serials Institute) often sponsors training for its members and has provided consistent support for the SCCTP. Regional or state library associations sometimes also sponsor training workshops as a pre-conference or a program in conjunction with membership meetings.

Program for Cooperative Cataloging and Library of Congress

The PCC provides training for its participants within the United States and around the world. There are, of course, the formal training sessions for libraries wishing to join BIBCO, CONSER, and NACO. These sessions rely heavily on current PCC participants to provide training and handle the review of records. Many of the trainers and reviewers are also employees of the Library of Congress. At this point, series NACO training is handled exclusively by Judy Kuhagen, whether at LC or on-site at another institution. SACO workshops conducted by LC staff have recently been held in conjunction with ALA meetings. LC Coop Team members have all traveled extensively in the past few years to conduct PCC-specific training within the United States and overseas. More and more, LC employees are being asked to provide generalized training, in addition to PCC-specific training. Ruta Penkiunas, Coop Team Leader, conducted a workshop on authority control for Palinet within the past year. LC CPSO and Coop Team members are preparing training on LCSH and other topics at the Library in May 2002 for a number of Latin American librarians. LC CPSO staff provided training in LCSH to Casalini staff in 2001. In addition, Anthony Franks and Jean Hirons provided NACO and CONSER training, respectively, in the United Kingdom. Some of the documentation that supports these training efforts is provided largely by LC staff with contributions from Program participants (NACO and CONSER); some is provided largely by Program participants with contributions from LC staff (BIBCO Training Manual, SACO Participants' Manual, BIBCO Participants' Manual).

ALCTS

The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services of the American Library Association has placed a major emphasis on continuing education in the past two years, as outlined in a position paper in June 2000.(7) The ALCTS Education Committee has been charged to identify suitable topics for continuing education, as well as the people who can pull together workshops, pre-conferences, and programs. Some of the topics identified by ALCTS members relating to cataloging are: basic and practical cataloging, subject analysis, and LC classification. ALCTS is specifically targeting paraprofessionals for much of this training, having ascertained that many of the people carrying out technical services work in libraries today are paraprofessionals who are have not attended library school or received a MLS. To date, no cataloging related courses have yet been developed by ALCTS as part of this initiative. A pilot project between the ALCTS Subject Analysis Committee and the PCC Standing Committee on Training is underway to attempt to develop a course on subject analysis.

2. Who Is Doing the Cataloging in PCC and Other Libraries?

Anyone working in cataloging today is aware of the fact that much of the work is being done by staff without an MLS. While many of the paraprofessionals doing cataloging have advanced degrees in one subject or another, most of the cataloging knowledge they have has been acquired on the job. In a recent article looking at levels of cataloging performed by and qualifications expected of paraprofessional catalogers in ARL libraries, Sever Bordeianu and Virginia Seiser (8) note that paraprofessionals currently constitute between 50 and 85 percent of the library workforce. They cite a 1995 survey which documented that 77% of ARL respondents utilized paraprofessionals in some aspect of original cataloging. In a 1992 study, over 90% of ARL respondents assign copy cataloging to paraprofessionals, 51 % assign original description, and 36% assign original description, subject analysis and classification. According to the authors, most libraries rely on in-house training programs for paraprofessional catalogers. Their own 1998 survey found that 67% of libraries utilize paraprofessionals for original cataloging.

In a recent survey to the BIBCO discussion list, it was found that 73% of the 22 responding BIBCO libraries utilize paraprofessional catalogers in their BIBCO operations and almost all of the training provided for these staff is done in-house. Respondents to the 1998 SCCTP survey also made it clear that paraprofessionals are the target audience and participation in the workshops has proved this to be true. Many of the catalogers currently contributing to PCC programs, as well as many prospective PCC catalogers, are paraprofessional catalogers who have not studied cataloging in any formal program.

3.   The Success of the SCCTP Model

The SCCTP model consists of the following components: 1) course development by experts in the field, funded by LC's Cataloging Distribution Service (course developers receive a contract) and monitored by the CONSER Coordinator; 2) training of experienced librarians to give the workshops; 3) working with training providers to sponsor courses and listing those workshops on the SCCTP Web site; 4) ongoing evaluation and review based on course evaluations and comments from trainers. In addition, there is an SCCTP Advisory group which provides ongoing oversight.

Two courses are currently being given: Basic Serials Cataloging and Serial Holdings Workshops. Two more courses are under development for 2002: Advanced Serials Cataloging and Electronic Serials. These will form the core of SCCTP courses. Developing distance learning and a mentoring program are possible next steps, along with keeping course materials current and training more trainers.

Success of SCCTP can be attributed to a number of factors:

Meeting a defined need

First of all and most critically, it has fulfilled a defined need. SCCTP surveyed the library community and learned what we expected: that serials cataloging instruction was sorely needed and at many different levels. Serials and other specific types of cataloging instruction is often not available in library schools (at least not in depth). Furthermore, it is the often the case that a cataloger does not realize that such instruction is needed until he/she is on the job. The survey also made it clear that most of the staff who catalog serials do not catalog them exclusively and that continuing education courses are the best means for fulfilling training needs.

Training by experts

Comments from workshop attendees make it clear that being trained by those with day-to-day experience is a real plus. SCCTP trainers can share their own working experience and some volunteer to provide follow up support.

Use of standardized and authoritative materials

The materials have to be developed only once and can be revised as needed. And because they are developed by CONSER, they bear an authoritative "stamp of approval". The trainee manual of the Basic Serials Workshop has been revised and by moving to distribution in PDF, changes can be more readily made.

Training providers sponsor workshops

Leaving the work of planning and conducting the workshops to networks and library associations has been a major factor in the success of the program. While course development takes time and significant effort, once it is done and the trainers are trained, there is little for the coordinating staff to do! At this point, a variety of training providers take over by planning dates and locations, selecting trainers, advertising the course, and providing all of the logistical support for the workshop. Many workshops can be given with a minimum amount of work on the part of the coordinating staff.

Affordable training at the local level

By marketing the courses to a variety of sponsors, SCCTP is able to bring workshops to the very local level at costs that are affordable. Some have been as inexpensive as $40 to $50. Local library associations and institutional sponsors have been particularly successful in this area. And, while there has been a wide range of costs, there has never been any complaint about this range. Participants are happy to have a workshop in their area and the cost of the workshop seems less important.

Format of workshops

SCCTP has developed in-person workshops rather than relying on distance learning, based on survey preferences. Developing distance learning alternatives is definitely in the plans. However, it has been clear that for difficult topics like serials cataloging, workshops are the preferred method of teaching. We should not underestimate the need for face-to-face instruction and the opportunities for personal networking that such workshops afford.

Enthusiasm of the serials community

SCCTP has benefited from the enthusiasm of the serials community. CONSER and non-CONSER catalogers alike have volunteered to develop materials, become trainers, and serve as reviewers and advisors. In fact, most trainers are not CONSER members, but three institutions associated with SCCTP have subsequently joined CONSER.

Collaboration with a number of partners

SCCTP has worked collaboratively with a number of different organizations: PCC, ALCTS, NASIG, and OCLC and its regional networks.

Howarth notes that "the SCCTP is … an exemplary model for continuing professional development in that it has emphasized cooperation, and built on existing collaborative educational infrastructure. … Constrained by a relatively modest budget, the SCCTP has, nonetheless, "thought big," but "acted small," building incrementally on a base program, and iteratively enhancing existing modules as serials, serials cataloging, and serials standards continue to evolve." (9)

4.   Challenges of the SCCTP Model.

At the continuing education forum noted above, Laura Kimberly, training coordinator at AMIGOS and advisor to SCCTP, noted that SCCTP's strength was its grass roots nature and that its biggest challenge was its grass roots nature. She was very astute! Indeed, many of the strengths above are also sources of challenge.

Course development

For instance, while professionals in the field develop courses, these cataloging professionals are not professional training developers. The resulting drafts have often been too lengthy, too complex, too wordy, lacking in appropriate examples, and so forth. SCCTP has been fortunate in having very dedicated and patient course developers, excellent reviewers, and it has also tested its courses before finalizing them. But the development of well-designed courses has been time-consuming and never easy.

Trainers

Another problem is that some of the trainers are better than others. While trainers were required to submit applications with references to attest to their cataloging experience and training abilities, not all have been fully qualified. Luckily, this has not been the case with the majority. However, finding good trainers has been something of a challenge. OCLC network staff are also afraid of wearing out the good trainers and say they could use many more!

Program coordination

Coordination of the program is also a challenge in that it rests on the CONSER Coordinator and CONSER Specialist. The program was developed at a very busy time of AACR2 revision and finding the time and energy to devote to the program has at times been difficult. Attention to the program is sporadic and there is no support for administrative and clerical tasks.

Funding

By far the biggest challenge has been the funding. Since SCCTP does not sponsor the workshops, it does not receive any direct financial benefit from them. Initial funds ($5000) were donated by NASIG for course development, but federal rules prohibited its use and it was decided that CDS would fund the

development and that it would also distribute the materials. NASIG funds were then used to support the train-the-trainer sessions. Recent efforts to develop a more sound funding model have drawn support from the OCLC networks, which have agreed to help cover some of the costs of train-the-trainer sessions, but there is still no real supply of ready funds. Honoraria donated to the PCC fund will be an important source of SCCTP funding for the coming year.

5.   Role of the PCC

Brian Schottlaender once said that the role of the PCC is the "business of cataloging." This implies a broader vision than cooperative cataloging programs alone. In its mission statement, the PCC defines its role as: " to cooperatively increase the timely availability of authoritative records created and maintained under accepted standards, to facilitate the cost-effective creation and use of these records, and to provide leadership in the national and international information community."

The PCC has made great inroads in cooperatively increasing the timely availability of authoritative records created and maintained under accepted standards, through the four components of the Program and the supporting work of the Standing Committees on Automation, Standards, and Training. Contributions of PCC libraries increase every year and have greatly increased the availability of authority and bibliographic records according to accepted standards. Many libraries accept all PCC-generated records as being the equivalent of Library of Congress records and utilize these records with no modification in order to process their materials more rapidly. Furthermore, by providing authoritative and easily understood documentation, such as the CONSER Editing Guide and CONSER Cataloging Manual, catalogers around the world are able to catalog to PCC standards.

The PCC has also done a great deal to facilitate the cost-effective creation and use of the records. The Standing Committee on Automation has played a key role in this effort by identifying projects that cried out for an automated solution and working with vendors and other groups to streamline record creation and loading. The Standing Committee on Standards has also been fundamental to PCC progress in this area of its mission, by developing the core standards which initiated discussions and examinations of inefficient practices in libraries across the country, including the Library of Congress. The Standing Committee on Training also played a key role in working with ALCTS to develop the Cataloging Now institutes to foster a more efficient, user-centered approach to record creation.

The PCC has the opportunity to play a greater role in providing leadership in the national and international information community, the last aspect of its self-defined mission. The PCC has made significant progress in this area with the standards developed, new tools and processes investigated and implemented, and broad discussions of the value and efficacy of cataloging. Library of Congress staff also play a leadership role nationally and internationally by the questions that are answered by CPSO, Serial Records Division, the Coop Team, and individual cataloging teams on a daily basis and by the training that so many within LC provide. However, CONSER forged the path for a new way of providing this leadership in the development of the SCCTP workshops. By responding to a defined need and providing basic serials cataloging training that could be utilized in a variety of locations at a reasonable cost, CONSER has become strongly identified as **the** place where serials cataloging needs are being met. The need for basic cataloging training in authority control, descriptive cataloging, subject analysis, and classification has been identified. The failure of library schools and other groups to provide systematic, reliable training in these areas has been documented. Furthermore, such training is even more useful on the job. The PCC is in a unique position to expand its leadership to the cataloging community at large by working to develop other training programs geared to all catalogers, whether currently members of the Program or not.

6.   Benefits of PCC Involvement in Continuing Education

It should be clear now that this is a win-win situation where everyone benefits. There are benefits for the library community, for PCC libraries and the Library of Congress, and for the PCC as a program. There are also benefits for those who participate in the training programs and those who provide training to the library community.

Library community

Programs such as SCCTP are democratizing library continuing education. No longer is it only library professionals who attend conferences and who can afford expensive training who are receiving the training. Training is being conducted by local library associations from northern Vermont to southern Texas, and in Canada, Mexico and abroad. Libraries that lack serials expertise now have a means of training their staff that previously did not exist. This need extends to all aspects of cataloging and a broadened program would only be a plus.

LC and PCC libraries

In all libraries, including LC, there is a clear need to rely on cataloging copy whenever possible. By providing training to all catalogers, we raise the level of expertise and the level of copy. Furthermore, we raise the level of confidence and the likelihood that copy will be contributed to utilities such as OCLC. And by providing consistent training that is based on national standards, we further the likelihood that contributed copy will be good enough to meet the needs of all. In short, developing this type of training will save money for us all!

Utilities

Utilities, such as OCLC and RLIN, rely on the copy contributed by their participants and to a large extent, they are have little control over the quality of records contributed. The usefulness of databases, such as Worldcat, is directly proportional to the availability of copy, quality of records, and lack of duplication that can cause lengthy and complex searches. Providing quality training to any contributor to such utilities, rather than just BIBCO and CONSER members, not only assures better quality copy for PCC libraries but enhances the overall quality of the OCLC and RLIN databases. OCLC's recent restructuring and renewed focus on its database made it clear that quality of its content is a top priority.

Individual contributors

One of the reasons behind the development of SCCTP was the desire to find a way to pass on serials expertise to the coming generations of catalogers. An unexpected plus was that for some catalogers, SCCTP provided a professional activity that suited their personalities and skills. One trainer confided that she hated committees but loved training and that SCCTP gave her the professional outlet that she had always desired. Providing this opportunity for trainers while providing the mechanism for keeping the profession alive is a true benefit of such training.

Training providers

Some have expressed concerns that PCC's involvement in developing training might encroach on the turf of those in the business of providing such training. In fact, this has not happened and training providers, such as the OCLC networks and library associations, have indeed benefited from SCCTP courses. Because they are able to use SCCTP trainers and course materials, they are better able to meet the needs of their constituents while also being able to remain financially viable. Such courses also do not overlap with those provided by library schools, but instead complement them.

PCC

PCC as a program will benefit from the positive image that it will receive. CONSER has only gained from SCCTP, both in image and in members. Furthermore, CONSER has been able to extend its boundaries through SCCTP, bringing in many non-CONSER participants whose institutions may not be in a position to participate, but who as individuals can contribute their skills and experience as trainers and course developers. Providing workshops based on national standards also makes participation in national programs seem less daunting and broadens application of standards.

7.   What would be needed?

One of the greatest obstacles to having the PCC play a greater role in basic cataloging training and continuing education is coordination of the effort. Currently, LC and other PCC libraries devote a great amount of time and effort to training catalogers in the basic principles, whether through formal presentations, documentation, FAQs on Web sites, or answering questions informally. The Standing Committee on Training has a key role to play in this effort: clarifying needs, identifying experts to prepare content, assisting with documentation. However, with frequently changing membership on the SCT it cannot play an effective coordination role over the long term. The SCT also cannot fulfill over the long term the need to have course content archived and made available centrally. A centralized coordinator could: 1) track the variety of training efforts, within LC and beyond; 2) develop a structure for developing course content; 3) pull together individuals and groups to develop content; 4) oversee payment of contracts to course developers, when needed; 5) centrally arrange for the archiving and distribution of documentation and training materials, working with CDS and others; and 6) oversee ongoing evaluation and revision of the materials.

The other major obstacle to this effort is funding. We must find a way for the workshops to generate revenue that could be fed back into new course development and documentation. Adding a development fee to the cost of materials has been suggested for SCCTP, but conversations with CDS concerning this were not positive. Further discussion is needed in this area. Setting up a separate PCC Continuing Education fund to which such revenue and donations could be contributed also seems wise.

References

1) Howarth, Lynne C., "(Re) making the Serials Cataloger: the SCCTP Within an Educational Framework" Cataloging & Classification Quarterly, vol. 30(4) 2000: 31-32.

2) Ibid, 31.

3) Spillane, Jodi Lynn, "Comparison of Required Introductory Cataloging Courses, 1986-1998" Library Resources & Technical Services vol. 43(4): 223-230.

4) 5) Task Group on Educational Needs of the Cataloging Community: Interim Report
http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/tgedneedsinterim.html

5) Task Group on Educational Needs of the Cataloging Community: Final Report
http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/tgeduneedsfinal.html

6) The following are some Web sites of OCLC network workshop offerings:

    Amigos http://www.amigos.org/training/courses.html

Palinet http://www.palinet.org/

Nelinet http://www.nelinet.net/calendar/tab_f01.htm

Solinet http://www.solinet.net/cet/registration/Inventorylist.cfm

OCLC Western http://www.oclc.org/western/training/index.htm

BCR http://www.bcr.org/workshop/sep2001-feb2002.pdf

7) ALCTS and Continuing Education http://www.ala.org/alcts/now/ce.pdf

8) Bordeianu, Sever and Seiser, Virginia, "Paraprofessional Catalogers in ARL Libraries," College & Research Libraries vol. 60 (6): 532-540.

9) Howarth, p. 34-35.