Introduction

The pressure to adapt to the digital environment has radically changed the approach of cataloging materials for all libraries. Unfortunately, this transformation has also created new challenges and obstacles. This bibliographic essay discusses and reviews literature published between 2011 and 2016 on the new responsibilities libraries are facing when it comes to cataloging e-books. Throughout this research, three major subjects emerged on the topic: accessibility, quality of records, and new online systems as a solution to appropriately catalog e-books. Each subject will be discussed thoroughly and additional topics will be addressed.

Accessibility

The basic function of library cataloging is to provide access to patrons for their personal and academic use. Krtalić and Hasenay (2015) make the argument that accessibility is important for e-books but extend the discussion to long-term accessibility. Both authors focus on the preservation of e-books and the platform to carry and maintain the content. Tan (2014) reasons that providing access to e-books will promote reading for the newer generations. Cataloging e-books allows readers to access titles on their phones which is becoming more popular among teens and young adults. Similarly, Breeding (2011) asserts that libraries need to modify their access to e-books by changing the user interface. Younger users will want to retrieve titles more frequently if the interface models social media applications.

Other topics on cataloging e-books include how library features need to change to promote accessibility to e-titles. Breeding (2011) discusses that libraries need to provide the same service, availability indicators, and enhanced content for e-books as for other materials. This is critical for the upcoming future where library collections will mostly be comprised of online material. Additionally, Knowlton (2014) extends this argument by stating that cataloging e-books is a necessity for our present and future. Knowlton uses the appeal of e-books to all patrons to argue that cataloging e-books are a necessity and libraries are not adequately prepared for this current generation. Olney-Zide and Efird (2015) illustrate the effect of e-book features and accessibility through surveying the community at Franklin & Marshall College. The survey found that e-books with limited or difficult access hindered the ability to perform quality research.

Quality of Records

A major issue libraries face is obtaining adequate quality of bibliographic records to provide access to all patrons seeking e-titles. Often times, provided MARC records contain little to no information for libraries to use when cataloging. Enis (2013) summarizes that e-book MARC records are expensive and time consuming. When libraries purchase numerous e-titles, the records provided by the company are not uploaded to the cataloging system quickly enough for immediate access and often require editing. This slows down the process of availability to users. In addition, Bardenheier (2014) found that the quality of e-book
records varied in relation to bibliographic standards; this impedes retrieval from users when searching the library catalogs. Some errors found in the MARC records included: punctuation, date, and/or indicators. Minčić-Obradović (2011) provides an explanation for the poor quality of e-book records by discussing that vendors lack understanding of the principles of bibliographic description.

Vendor issues seemed to be the main factor for the poor quality of records. Wu and Mitchell (2011) analyzed the University of Houston Libraries (UHL) bibliographic records that were mostly supplied by vendors. Their research found that vendors followed few standards and communication between libraries and vendors was minimal. This caused the records to contain gaps and very little information for patron use and accessibility. Similarly, Martin and Mundle (2011) experienced problems with vendor provided MARC records such as unauthorized headings, loading problems, and broken links. Fixing these records required more time and effort than the library had available. The University of Oregon (OSUL) also experienced cataloging issues with vendor loaded MARC records (Sapon-White 2014). OSUL purchased numerous records from different vendors which resulted in different quality of records. There was no uniform system between the different companies. Trainor and Price (2011) looked beyond the unsatisfactory records and discussed how these records affected patrons. They found that although users are not aware of the records, they are aware of their effect--users are unable to readily access materials.

Solutions

Despite accessibility issues and poor quality MARC records, libraries have found various solutions to appropriately catalog e-books. The most common solution is purchasing an online web tool to manage e-book records. Lybarger (2013) observes that NORMAC, a web-based software that regulates MARC records, can easily configure and modify MARC fields to catalog e-book records purchased from vendors. It allows libraries to revise individual or batch records, which saves time and money. Another editing service is MarcEdit (Preston 2011), used by numerous libraries to edit and clean up batches of records. Preston also illustrates how specific teams in libraries are assigned solely to complete the task of editing records with MarcEdit.

Other solutions also include companies that offer fast record delivery services (Skyriver Launches EMARC Express 2012). Skyriver found that obtaining records more promptly allows ample time for libraries to review and correct records. EMARC Express was described as being user-friendly and providing high-quality records.

In contrast to purchasing services, Sapon-White (2011) provides simple solutions to ensure that libraries are adequately prepared to catalog e-books. Solutions included: training to all staff on downloading and editing bibliographic records, communicating expectations between libraries and vendors, and creating and up-keeping of documentation on e-book procedures. Similarly, the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) has created its own portal for archiving e-books and making them readily available to its patrons (Horava 2013). Horava discusses how OCUL has taken ownership of cataloging e-books by creating a committee dedicated to servicing e-book MARC records.
Other Topics

In addition to these three major topics, other themes were discussed in cataloging e-books. The price of electronic books and creating access to the titles was another issue in cataloging e-books. Randtke and Fowler (2016) state that there is no standardized approach to accessing and cataloging electronic titles. This causes confusion when purchasing or leasing titles; catalog records can be lost or incomplete. Since library budgets are decreasing, some libraries can only afford to lease titles, which causes misunderstanding when cataloging rotating e-book collections. In addition to budget constraints, Herther (2012) asserts that vendors often raise prices when providing titles and MARC records. This puts libraries in a difficult situation, since they need to catalog books to provide access. Often there is not enough money or librarians to effectively and quickly catalog e-titles.

Conclusion

This essay explores the literature published between 2011 and 2016 on cataloging e-books. Clearly, the lack of a uniformed process or standards has created difficulty for librarians when cataloging electronic titles. Thus, this essay revealed a need for improving standards and a unifying procedure that all libraries can follow.

Works Cited


Knowlton, Steven A. 2014. “Print, Electronic or Both? How Libraries Choose a Format When


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