Technological Applications in Cataloging, 1995–1999

New technology is one area in which the possibilities for research and writing seem endless. The brisk development of new technologies leads to just as brisk a development in potential research topics. Each new technology brings with it new questions and the need for information sharing. The obvious questions about new technology are: what has been or is being developed and, how is it being used?

Since new technology plays such a big role in libraries, the discussion in these paragraphs overlaps with those in essays on other topics. For example, the impact of new technology on training and development is a question related not only to but technology but also to training issues.

Many cataloging departments are faced with more to catalog and fewer people to do the work. Efficient and wise use of technology can often help meet production demands. How are people using technology to streamline workflows? Many discussion groups have documented their conference discussion on the impact of technology, especially on copy cataloging (Weber 1996; Roth 1997, etc.). In these articles, and no doubt in the discussions themselves, many topics for further research and study come to light. Conferences, in general, are fertile ground for the germination of research ideas. Regina Reynolds (1995) gives a good overview of promising technology for catalogers with their work. She talks about SGML, expert systems, and imaging technologies, among other things. Articles such as this educate the reader about current developments and also get the reader thinking about possibilities for the future. Elizabeth Steinhagen and Sharon Moynahan (1998) assert that catalogers should make technology work harder. How catalogers in different situations are successfully applying technology is a topic that gives readers an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others. Virginia Scheschy's 1998 article about using Web technology to create and maintain a local cataloging procedures manual offers such an opportunity for learning and also serves us as a sound base for future studies. She concludes by saying, "An investment by library staff in putting procedures online requires some effort initially, but will pay substantial dividends in cataloging quality and productivity." Payoffs in cataloging quality and productivity could be studied over time.

Another aspect of new technology is the human factor. What is the impact of new technology on librarians? How are people adapting to learning and using these new tools? How does it affect training or change our job descriptions? The conclusion of Hong Xu’s 1996 article states that "with the accelerating development of the computer network and its extensive application in academic libraries, impact on job requirements and qualifications for catalogers and reference librarians will be more tremendous and instantaneous. This is something that needs to be explored by further study."

Finally, let us look at the question of new technology being developed for use by patrons. Janet Swan-Hill (1996) writes that the emergence of new types of information resources are making the job of constructing a catalog more difficult. What is the best way to provide access to these new resources? Eric Childress, ERic Jul, and Eric Miller (1998) write that in recent library and computer science literature, it is easy to learn two things: “the electronic information commons is a rich, vast, but unevenly accessible global resource; 2) everyone and their neighbors are busy trying to develop information access technologies and standards to make the commons easier to organize and navigate." In her 1997 article on resource description in the digital age, Jennifer Younger writes about making documents bibliographically accessible as well as developing standards, and how well MARC and AACR2 work in the electronic environment. Younger also addresses this question in her article. Ideas for writing in the area of new technology in libraries may arise in the course of one's daily work, if one is a practitioner, or by discussion at conferences, as well as by what is in the current literature.

Works Cited


Swan-Hill, Janet. 1996. The elephant in the catalog: Cataloging animals you can't see or touch. Cataloging & Classification Quarterly 23, no. 1: 5–25.


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