Introduction

Inquire with a children’s or school librarian about what constitutes “resources for children” and their answer is likely to be broad: print materials, audiovisual materials in a variety of physical and digital formats, e-resources, educational toys and other realia including materials for self-guided learning, etc. The list is expansive and is reflected in the growing number of formats, both physical and digital, that school and public libraries are holding in their youth-centered collections.

While this rapid-pace embracing of new technologies and formats is emblematic of current trends in youth librarianship, once acquired these new materials often present unforeseen challenges for technical services staff and cataloging librarians. Compounding these cataloging challenges is the relatively sparse amount of scholarly material published on the topic of cataloging resources specifically for children. In light of this research and information gap this essay will examine the existing research pertaining to cataloging resources for children while also drawing upon examples of more general research that discusses the growing potential for series-based cataloging and classification issues, the cataloging and processing of realia such as toys and board games, and the possible benefits of enhancing catalog records with photographic previews to assist user access.

Knowledge Organization Systems, Metadata, and Children
Between 2012 and 2017 studies in the area of cataloging resources for children mainly focused on the structure of knowledge organization systems (KOSs) and how that structure affects children’s ability to access information (Beak, 2015; Beak 2012).

Jihee Beak authored two studies on the broader topic of KOSs and children. The first, *Children’s Perceptual Cognitive Factors in Book Selection and Metadata Schema: Pilot Study*, seeks to understand what cognitive approaches (perception, categorization, naming) are involved in a child’s selection of a book (Beak, 2012, p. 2-3). She uses Reuter’s 13 identified facets, (as cited in Beak, 2012, p. 4-6), to aid her organization of perceptual factors (Beak, 2012, p. 9) and argues that these factors should be taken into account when creating a metadata schema (Beak, 2012, p. 9). Beak (2015) expands upon the idea that the structure of KOSs does not operate to the benefit of children in her second article, *Where is Childrens’ Voice in KO?*. She ties KOSs’ bibliocentric descriptive practices (Beak, 2015, p. 285) to problems children have with selecting or locating a variety of resources for which the resources’ physical attributes are not adequately conveyed (Beak, 2015, p. 285) and posits that KOSs used in a school or public library become a Third Space between children and the information they seek (Beak, 2015, p. 286). Beak (2015) also uses sociocultural theory to explain how “KOSs that are socially constructed in a library environment require children to think in the way that the system is designed” (p. 287). She concludes that further user studies on children as a group are needed in order to truly hear children’s voices in the field of knowledge organization (Beak, 2015, p. 287).

Parents, Picture Books, and the Bibliographic Record
Outside of Beak’s research there is Katarina Švab and Maja Žumer’s (2015) article *The Value of a Library Catalog for Selecting Children’s Picture Books* which details a study in which they asked parent participants to choose between different retellings of Cinderella. Parents first chose based on the items’ bibliographic records and then from among the physical resources themselves (p. 717). Their research found that when choosing from the bibliographic record the author was the primary factor influencing the decision-making process (Švab & Žumer, 2015, p. 728) while year of publication was noted as the second-most influencing factor (Švab & Žumer, 2015, p. 729). However, it was also found that when shown the chosen book, two-thirds of parents expressed that they were unhappy with the book they had chosen from the bibliographic record due to a variety of reasons (Švab & Žumer, 2015, p. 730), and when shown the remaining book choices most parents’ preferences changed (Švab & Žumer, 2015, p. 731). In discussion of their findings Švab & Žumer (2015) note that their research supports the inclusion of further descriptive information about resources than what is currently required or commonly included in traditional library catalogs (p. 733), such as links to photographic examples of illustrations, the title page, and a greater depth of descriptive information regarding genre. Their findings echo Beak’s (2012) assertions that KOs are resource description oriented rather than user oriented.

**Working Toward a New Definition of “Series”**

Although their work does not focus on how series are linked together or designated in children’s resources, Jett, Humpal, Charles, and Lee’s (2017) *What is a Series, Really?* presents an in-depth consideration of the ways traditional bibliographic definitions of “series” are no longer able to keep pace with increasingly complex types of media especially as the concept of
series is applied across formats (p. 24-25). Their coverage of how relationships between works might be identified or interpreted specific to the work’s format provides a valuable resource to children’s catalogers who are tasked with determining series information for works sharing a common brand, character, universe, or timeline, and who may be working with narratives across format types. Jett et al., (2017) also examines how, from a theoretical standpoint, there may be a difference between the “work” that is a chronological arrangement of a series and a “work” that is a publication-date arrangement of a series (p. 34); they conclude that the concept of what a series is remains much more complex than the bibliographic evidence required is able to convey and that “the boundaries between concepts like brand, franchise, and series” are increasingly murkier as the ability for content consumers to “directly engage with content and extend it in multiple dimensions” becomes easier (Jett et al., 2017, p. 34-35). This last conclusion is especially relevant to catalogers who work with self-published or fan-published works that have garnered mainstream popularity due to brand recognition (ex. fan-published Minecraft fiction series and non-fiction gameplay guides).

Toys, Games, and Other Realia

With public library children’s departments growing their holdings of toys, puzzles, games, and other types of realia-based collections, and school libraries embracing user-driven learning with MakerSpaces and STEM kits, catalogers of resources for children are increasingly performing copy or original cataloging of realia. While resources such as the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) allow for quick access to quality bibliographic records for many types of realia encountered, realia consisting of multiple pieces (such as educational toys or kits) still provide a challenge in terms of cataloging and patron accessibility.
Bastiansen and Wharton (2015) note in *Getting Ready for Play!: Toy Collections in Public Libraries* that “cataloging and circulation procedures vary widely” (p. 14) and respondents to their survey indicated that they would like “more effective cataloging for toys with multiple pieces” (p. 15). This desire is not expanded upon; however, it is reasonable to consider that more effective cataloging practices for all types of realia with multiple pieces would be beneficial to catalogers and patrons and would assist in improving patron access to realia materials. Similarly, Slobuski, Robson, and Bentley’s (2017) article, *Arranging the Pieces: A Survey of Library Practices Related to a Tabletop Game Collection*, notes that realia cataloging rules and best practices still lag behind those of other formats (p. 5; 9-10) and the results garnered from their survey show that slightly more than half of respondents do not catalog tabletop games while more than three quarters of respondents do catalog board games (p. 8). Although their study offers no specific insight on games for children, their findings in general on the cataloging and processing of different types of realia (Slobuski et al., 2017, p. 9-12) provide examples of local cataloging practices that could be beneficial when working with educational games and other realia for children, such as using outside game-related resources to help create local subject or genre headings (p. 9).

Finally, in terms of accessibility, Rubel’s (2017) article *Picture Perfect: Using Photographic Previews to Enhance Realia Collections for Library Patrons and Staff* examines the process of adding photographic previews to bibliographic records for realia. While the focus of the article is on realia in academic libraries many of the difficulties encountered when adding photographic previews to records could likely be encountered by those working in school or public libraries with realia for children as well. The article notes such possible difficulties as: the limitations of a library’s integrated library system (ILS) or library management system (LMS),
accessibility issues tied to the necessary use of an internet browser to access the preview (Rubel, 2017, p. 62), needing to link to the 856 field in the bibliographic record (p. 62) and attempting to use images that might vary in resolution and file size (p. 63). Rubel (2017) concludes that, although time-consuming and labor intensive, adding photographic previews to bibliographic records for realia rendered realia collections more accessible to their patrons (p.65), and “further research on photographic previews is sorely needed” (p. 66).

**Conclusion**

Given the limited amount of current research available on cataloging resources for children, catalogers and technical services professionals working with children’s resources and seeking information on most issues related to specific materials, formats, and bibliographic record-related topics must turn to general scholarship on the desired topic and apply it as best suited to their work, as this essay has. However, recognizing the growing diversity of resources and formats found within school library collections and children’s departments in public libraries, it is imperative that further research and study be undertaken on topics directly relating to cataloging for children such as: format-specific cataloging best practices for children’s resources, the experiences of catalogers handling real-world children’s collections, the efficacy of the Library of Congress’s Children’s and Young Adult’s Cataloging program, and how current and future trends in children’s and school librarianship might affect cataloging, classification, and processing habits.
Works Cited


