

Cooperative Quality Control for Cataloging: Initiatives in Error Handling

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Cooperative quality control can take many forms. Most catalogers consider it as the provision of standards for records, together with agreement among participants to adhere to them. That is one aspect. Another aspect - which will be the focus of this presentation - entails dealing with errors that have occurred in the cataloging process.

During the past ten years, primarily while working in a medium-size public library in Ohio, and using cataloging copy from OCLC, the presenter discovered much work to be done upgrading the master records in WorldCat. Where authorized to do so, he made corrections directly in those records. In cases where he was not authorized to make corrections: When the record originated from the Library of Congress (and in some cases, from other national agencies), he reported suspected errors directly to them. For other mistakes - those in OCLC member copy - he contacted OCLC's Quality Control Section, eventually developing a professional relationship with section manager Brenda Block. This relationship led to the preparation of local and regional conference presentations and workshops, demonstrating procedures for the steps entailed in the above actions, with contact information and individual local requirements for communicating with bibliographic agencies.

The extent to which such remedial work was required upon records was astounding. The cooperative aspect was greatly extended through the use of e-mail to notify other cataloging agencies who can benefit from reports sent to those agencies. In particular, he and others established electronic distribution lists using Listserv(R) software, each list dedicated to addressing a specific concern such as errors in personal names (PERSNAME-L). Another project, the Typo of the Day for Librarians blog, was built upon the foundation of the extensive database of typographical errors which Terry Ballard and others had been compiling over many years.

The presentation will review these initiatives, advising seminar participants on incorporating such practices into the routine activity of a library. It will also discuss future potential developments and further initiatives envisaged.