Peering into the Gap: An Exploration of Technical Services Outsourcing and the Library Profession

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Agenda

• Introduction
• Background
• Methodology
• Findings
• Next Steps
• Questions/Discussion
introduction (ɪnˈtrə dʌkˈʃən), introducing or the state of being introduced; personal presentation of one person to another.

3. a preliminary part, as of a book, report, or the like, leading up to the main matter: an introduction to botanical science.

6. something written in 1400; ME introduction < L intrōduccionem (< introductio). See introduce, -tion]

—Syn. 3. Introduction, foreword: material given at the front of a book to introduce it to the reader. A foreword is usually written by someone other than the author, often an authority on the subject.
Introduction - who are we?

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• Leanne Olson
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• Western Libraries - London, Ontario
Background

Project origins
Background

Origins of the project, the gap in the literature, and our assumptions.

Questions to consider:

• Who are vendor cataloguers?
• How do they compare to academic library cataloguers and librarians?
• How do they contribute to the profession and the future of cataloguing/metadata services?
• What are their career aspirations?
Methodology

The research path

Photo by Christina Zoricic
Method

- Research question
- Exploratory survey
- Target population and time frame
- Research tool used
- Questions we asked
Research questions

What role do cataloguers at private firms play in the development of cataloguing/metadata librarianship as profession?
How included and engaged do they feel in the wider profession?
... testing the water
Target population and time frame

• Unknown population size
  – Self identified cataloguers working at private, for-profit cataloguing firms

• Survey - open for 4 months
Peering into the Gap: An Exploration of Technical Services Outsourcing

Principal Investigators:
Leanne Olson, Metadata Management Librarian, Western University
Christina Zoricic, Metadata Management Librarian, Western University

Letter of Information

You are invited to participate in a study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role that cataloguers at private firms play in the development of librarianship as a profession, as well as their feelings of engagement and inclusion in the profession.

We want to hear from individuals who have experience (past or present) working in cataloguing/metadata creation at vendor firms. For example, those that provide bibliographic, cataloguing, or metadata services for libraries including original or copy cataloguing.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time. Completion of the survey is indication of your consent to participate. The survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. Neither your email address nor any other personal identification will be transmitted with your survey responses.

Although you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, information gathered may benefit to the librarian profession through a greater understanding of the evolving nature of the profession. You will not be compensated for participating in this survey.

All data collected will remain confidential. The results of this study will be used in future publications and presentations.
Questions asked

• Demographic information
• Job titles and duties
• Feelings of inclusion and engagement with the profession
• Contributions to the profession/professional activities
• Knowledge of metadata standards
• Career goals
Findings

Exploratory survey results

Photo by Howard Ignatius
Demographics

- 21 responders
- Gender: 33% male, 67% female
- Education: 69% MLIS
Vendor cataloguing jobs

• 81% librarians

• Job titles:
  Librarian
  Cataloging & Authorities Manager
  Librarian 2
  Team Manager, Cataloguing and Metadata
  Catalog Librarian
  Senior Catalog Librarian
  Cataloger
  Manager
  Chief Catalog Librarian
  Senior Cataloger
  Consultant
  Metadata Librarian
  Supervisor of AV Cataloging
  Director
  Product Manager
  Cataloging Librarian
  Technical Services Librarian/System Administrator
  Catalog Librarian II
  Information Resources Specialist Senior
  Manager, Book Cataloging
  Senior Catalog Librarian

• Professional development required?
  48% yes, 52% no
Job duties of respondents

- Policies and procedures
- Training and mentoring
- Supervising and Quality control
- Cataloguing
- Authority work
- Database management
- Liaison
- Other

Number of Respondents

Category of job duties
Inclusion and Engagement

• Defining inclusion and engagement
• Feelings of inclusion vs. importance of inclusion
• Feelings of engagement vs. importance of engagement
• Engagement vs. inclusion
• The specifics (conference pres, prof dev, etc.)
Feelings of inclusion in librarianship

Do you feel included in the profession?

How important is it to for you to feel included in the profession?
Feelings of engagement in librarianship

Do you feel engaged with the profession?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely engaged</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very engaged</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately engaged</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly engaged</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all engaged</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How important is it to for you to feel engaged with the profession?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a part of your job, how often do you..

Read literature related to your job?

- Weekly or more
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less
- Never

Read blogs, tweets, etc.?

- Weekly or more
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less
- Never

Read email discussion lists?

- Weekly or more
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less
- Never

Attend conferences?

- Weekly or more
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less
- Never
As a part of your job, how often do you..

Write papers for publication?

- Weekly or more frequently
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less frequently
- Never

Write blog posts, tweets, etc.?

- Weekly or more frequently
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less frequently
- Never

Participate in email discussion lists?

- Weekly or more frequently
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less frequently
- Never

Present at conferences?

- Weekly or more frequently
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Yearly or less frequently
- Never
Inclusion and Engagement

Outside of what’s required for work, 76% of respondents also participated in activities:
72% read literature at least monthly
77% read discussion lists at least monthly
52% attend conferences
38% write papers
40% present at conferences
Career goals

What are some of your long-term professional goals? Where would you like to see yourself working in the future?

![Bar chart showing responses to career goals questions.](chart.png)
Career goals

“I’m pleased with my present cataloguing outsource agency. I would like to promote more pragmatic and less rule bound cataloguing. I would like to promote cataloguing better suited to a multi-lingual situation.”

“I spent nearly 30 years working at 2 of them. The first one changed from wanting us to be involved to wanting us to be machines. The second one treated us all like peons, and didn't want us to be professionally involved.”
Career goals

“I'm happy where I am! I hope to continue as an employee at this great organization and continue to advance the cataloging profession.”

“My long term professional goal is to work in an academic library. The goal of the corporate environment is to earn as much money possible with the least amount of effort. I have spent a lot of energy and PowerPoint slide decks trying to get [management] to understand why we need to invest in things like authority control [and] RDA standards...I am tired of explaining what I do to highly paid people who don't understand their own market. I am tired of having to beg to go to ALA or win the right to any kind of professional development that gets in the way of production goals. I am all for hard work. I just want to be valued for it. I think I will only get that in a traditional library setting.”
Findings
Decoding the data

Photo by Christina Zoricic
What does it all mean?

• What assumptions can we make at this point?
  – Too soon to tell?

• More questions
Assumptions

• Email discussion lists are the most popular way of staying engaged with the profession

• Levels of professional engagement vary widely
More questions...

• Outsourcing and cataloguing - deprofessionalization?
• What does this mean for academic librarians in this field?
Next Steps
New research topics...

- Are there any future possibilities for partnerships?
- Inclusion vs. engagement correlation
- Are people who are required to do professional development more or less engaged/included?
- Highlighting profiles of some of the responses to explain context (what they say in one question has great impact on how answer another) – interviews!
Questions/Discussion

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