



AN LIS PERSPECTIVE ON PEDAGOGY: PRINCIPLES OF CATALOGING AND CLASSIFICATION

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UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CONTEXT:

Cataloging is one of two classes that meets the program's *organization* requirement

- Info Org is the broader overview course
- Cataloging is more practice-oriented (per expectations of the Advisory Board)
- Students can take both, with one counting as an elective
- We have a fair number of other required classes, but the diversity class is NOT required

Wide range of student interests and expectations in cataloging

- Some want to be school librarians... (is required of school librarians in MO)
- Others see themselves in academic or public library environments and needing to understand library data
- Others don't really want to be there at all, but through some scheduling accident can't get out of it

MISSOURI CONTEXT, CONT.

Missouri is a rural state

- “rural” isn’t unique to Missouri...
 - E.g., recent discussion with Dr. Nicole Cooke at UIUC...
 - And yet “rural” users deserve the same considerations as urban and suburban users
- Program is largely online, and largely serves the region (e.g., Nebraska, etc.)

We have a “generalist” program at the iSchool in Missouri

- Many of our students will be one of very few information professionals in their place of employment

Classes are generally small-ish (20 or so students); they meet online synchronously once per week for 90 minutes in the university’s web conferencing virtual classroom platform

CATALOGING CONTEXT

What is cataloging?

- In broad strokes, let's assume cataloging is the creation of a metadata record (a surrogate) to describe library materials
 - Libraries traditionally offer curated collections of high-quality print books
- There are two broad aspects to cataloging – *descriptive cataloging* and *subject cataloging*
 - The whole of which is now encoded in a special mark-up language called MARC

In other words, cataloging is the systematic application of a series of standards that govern the description of the resource, description of the PFC associated with the resource and their representation in the surrogate, AND the application of a classification scheme as well as the provision of verbal subject access (i.e., controlled vocabularies)

IN-CLASS EXERCISE #1

Introduction to subject analysis and verbal subject access (week 8):

- Reflections on the problem of subjectivity, perception, and biases

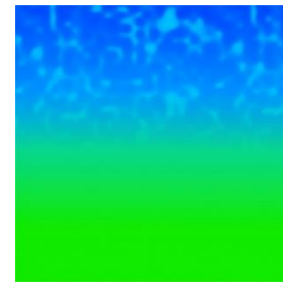


SUBJECTIVITY/PERSONAL BIASES

- How full is this glass?



- Where does blue end and green begin?



- How hot is this tabasco sauce?



RESULTS (SUMMARY)

- How full is this glass?:



About half.

it's half full

half lol

partially

half full

50%

half

half

half

a little over half

half full

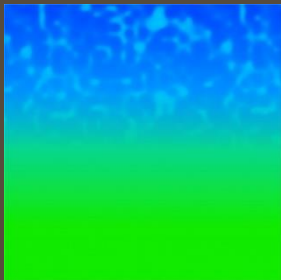
It has x amount of ounces?

half full

half

RESULTS (SUMMARY)

- Where does blue end and green begin?:



Middle-ish?

a little over halfway

about 2/3 down

in the middle

It seems like the green is seeping into the blue.

halfway

yes, a little above the middle

somewhere near the green

over half

Never! There's always some of each in the other!

kinda-- blurry line

a big blurry line

RESULTS (SUMMARY)

How hot is this
tabasco sauce?



Too hot for me

very

too hot

too hot for me too

"It's hot, Damn Hot, Real Hot. So hot I could put food in my shorts and do a little crotch pot cookin'."

depends on what you put it on

super hot!

definitely too hot

It depends on what else you're eating.

HAVING UNIQUE PERCEPTIONS MAKES THE WORLD A MORE INTERESTING PLACE!

But of course, we acknowledge that this might make subject analysis a little trickier...

So next we do a think-pair-share activity.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Think about these for a few minutes and jot down some answers.

- What influences our perceptions of the world around us? Think of as many things that influence our perceptions as possible.
- You've been reading about subject analysis (any questions about it?)
 - What do you think are the primary ways subjectivity and biases might affect subject analysis and the creation and use of controlled vocabularies?
- Libraries are interested in neutral provision of access to information, but humans are fundamentally biased.
 - How **should** we manage this? [this question is pretty open!!]

RESULTS (SUMMARY)

What influences our perceptions of the world around us? Think of as many things that influence our perceptions as possible.

culture

family

gender

[student] and I were in the same group - maybe we had different perceptions

age

health status

geography

Physical capabilities, environment, emotional state, religion, politics, background/upbringing,

education level.

religion politics

sexual identity

SES

media influence

education

hobbies, education

one's senses...and the sensitivity levels of those

Brief discussion of confirmation biases...

RESULTS (SUMMARY)

What do you think are the primary ways subjectivity and biases might affect subject analysis and the creation and use of controlled vocabularies?

Group reporters stated:

We discussed age and how it affects perceptions a lot. We were interested in how kids who are shifting into more advanced content access the information if “adult” subject terms are in the OPACs. Apparently, LoC has a group that looks specifically at that in creating subject terms.

totally, one could see a subject being discussed in a book that one doesn't agree with to be less valid, might catalog it differently...might think something is less appropriate for different age groups (i.e. sex ed for kids)

[where does a book about a kid with a disability get classed? – with “kids” or “medical issues”?]

RESULTS (SUMMARY)

Libraries are interested in neutral provision of access to information, but humans are fundamentally biased.

How **should** we manage this?
[this question is pretty open!!]

i wonder, is it even possible to be neutral? if we all have a bias and all our patrons have biases then how is neutrality possible or even required?

we didn't [find an answer].

i know, a big question...

Native Americans vs. American Indians is another example where patrons expectations don't match the controlled vocab.

Committees. Consensus if possible.

you can only label so much, externally I mean

Students are invited to keep all of this in mind moving forward...

IN-CLASS EXERCISE #2

Introduction of classification (week 10):

- Students are invited to try WebDewey themselves while doing the exercise...

GROUP EXERCISE

With you partner(s)...

1. Brainstorm a few topics that might be particularly susceptible to a biased outlook.
2. Check to see where this topic might be classified in DDC – use WebDewey (everyone should have access) – talk to each other as you go!
3. Where, hierarchically speaking, is this concept placed in DDC?
 - What observations can you make about its placement?
 - What suggestions can you make?
 - How might you help patrons understand this?
4. Record your thoughts and be prepared to share your experiences with the class.

RESULTS (SUMMARY)

we looked up gun control
and there was an entry under
personal security
and one under control of
firearms
and they were not too close to
each other in the numbers

we looked up poverty

We looked up Wicca
[student] and I searched for
Wicca, and found that it can be
classified as either religion or
magic and witchcraft.

SOME ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION OF “HOW DID IT GO?”

pretty good

Interesting!

good discussion!

interesting

Very interesting!

interesting

Very interesting

FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS

In small groups, students presented on topics relating to cataloging and the future of cataloging.

A list of potential topics was distributed, and students indicated their top three.

I compiled groups based on first and second preferences. **The ethics of subject cataloging** generally wins!

Why are ethics important in subject cataloging?

- Catalogers have direct control over how information is accessed, organized, and represented (Bair, 2005; Ferris, 2008).
 - Unethical choices can lead to issues of: censorship, accessibility of information, “conceptual violence” through disparaging language, misinformation, and misrepresentation (Bair, 2005; CannCasciato, 2011; Fox & Reece, 2012; Olson, 2001).
- Catalogs becoming accessible worldwide (i.e. OCLC) and tools such as LCSH are being used globally (Bair, 2005; Ferris, 2008; Knowlton, 2005).
 - Catalogers must be more aware of the diverse audiences they are representing and serving (Bair, 2005).

OTHER SLIDES TITLES FROM THIS PARTICULAR PRESENTATION WERE:

Background and History

Inadequacy of Current Ethical Codes

Examples of Ethical Dilemmas

The Trouble with LCSH

Correcting and Avoiding Bias

Enabling the Conversation

Examples of ethical dilemmas

- Zipcowitz fictional case study (Ferris, 2008).
 - Cataloging librarian wants to add notes to records of books to which she personally objects.
 - Head of cataloging reminds her of her professional duties.
- “Bad” or ambiguous books
 - Books presented as biography, then proved to be fictional (Shoemaker, 2015).
- 1987 *Library Journal* case study
 - Creationism and Intelligent Design books moved from religion to science (CannCasciato, 2011).

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- Olson, H. A. (2001). The power to name: Representation in library catalogs. *Signs: Journal Of Women In Culture & Society*, 26(3), 639.
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WHAT ARE OTHER CATALOGING INSTRUCTORS TEACHING?

With colleagues from Dominican (Karen Snow and Maurine McCourry) and Texas Woman's University (Gretchen Hoffman), I'm pleased to say I've explored questions relating to the ethics of cataloging instruction

Melissa Adler (Kentucky) is also looking at these questions, as are others!

MAURINE MCCOURRY COMPILED THE FOLLOWING BIBLIOGRAPHY IN 2016 BASED ON EDUCAT SUGGESTIONS:

- Bade, D. (2008). The perfect bibliographic record: platonic ideal, rhetorical strategy or nonsense?. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 46(1), 109-133.
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- Kwaśnik, B. H., & Rubin, V. L. (2003). Stretching conceptual structures in classifications across languages and cultures. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 37(1-2), 33-47.
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“ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES” (PER MCCOURRY):

Beghtol, C. (2008). Professional values and ethics in knowledge organization and cataloging. *Journal of information ethics*, 17(1), 12.

Fox, M. J., & Reece, A. (2012). Which ethics? Whose morality?: An analysis of ethical standards for information organization. *Knowledge Organization*, 39(5).

Kipp, M. E., Beak, J., & Graf, A. M. (2015). Tagging of Banned and Challenged Books. *Knowledge Organization*, 42(5).

Shoemaker, E. (2015). No One Can Whistle a Symphony: Seeking a Catalogers' Code of Ethics. *Knowledge Organization*, 42(5).

Snow, K. (2015). An Examination of the Practical and Ethical Issues Surrounding False Memoirs in Cataloging Practice. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 53(8), 927-947.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The students seem to internalize notions related to the ethical provision of access to library materials, even though

- the topic wasn't explicitly mentioned in the course calendar of topics
- course readings didn't focus on ethics
- ethics weren't a topic tested explicitly

Going forward: over and over, issues related to ethics and diversity show themselves to be the compelling issues that standards-saturated classes like cataloging bring to bear on the field.