CATALOGING AND ORGANIZING DIGITAL RESOURCES: A HOW-TO-DO-IT MANUAL FOR LIBRARIANS

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Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians addresses the dramatically changing collection, management, mediation, and preservation of information resources. Even modest-sized libraries now access dozens of licensed electronic products representing thousands of individual titles; seek out freely available resources on the Web; and digitize unique materials from their own collections.

Users now expect libraries to provide the best digital resources and deliver them easily. Beyond the technical aspects of handling online resources—which are complex and constantly changing—lays a nebulous array of legal, financial, and managerial concerns. How do libraries adapt to these new challenges? Many re-evaluate their collections, service priorities, and work processes, and even reassign job duties, create new positions, and bring together new departments to manage online content.

The standards for managing electronic collections tend to evolve more slowly than the resources themselves. Libraries must often adjust existing standards and develop local tools to facilitate access to their increasingly complex electronic collections. Today, as a new generation of systems and standards comes of age, the tools created are more sophisticated and interoperable than their predecessors; they are also more numerous and complex.

Electronic-resource management often refers to the tools and processes used to organize administrative metadata, such as license terms, vendor contacts, and usage statistics. Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources covers the full spectrum of library operations involved in building and maintaining access to electronic collections; affecting every area of the library, from the initial selection process to the point of use. It focuses on the methods for organizing and providing access to information collections (known collectively as bibliographic control).

Confronted with burgeoning online collections and a changing technology landscape, each library must determine which bibliographic tool or combination of tools best suits its needs. Some libraries favor catalog access while others highlight alternative bibliographic tools; some libraries offer parallel access through both traditional and alternative tools, and a great many libraries mix a little of both. We wrote
Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources to provide readers with an overview of the scope of online management concerns, the issues that influence bibliographic control in the online environment, and the variety of tools available for managing bibliographic data.

The online catalog serves as the library’s best-established tool to organize and provide access to conventional information materials. We believe it will continue to operate in this capacity for the foreseeable future. The catalog is just one tool among many. The movement toward alternative bibliographic approaches, as well as the recent overhaul of traditional cataloging practices for electronic resources, has been propelled primarily by developments in the online environment. Although physical electronic media such as CD-ROM and DVD-ROM have special physical-management needs, from a bibliographic perspective these media are more akin to other physical resources with unique descriptive conventions, such as video recordings or maps, than to their online counterparts. Care and Handling of CDs and DVDs: A Guide for Librarians and Archivists (Byers, 2003) provides detailed guidelines for storing and handling direct-access electronic media, and the “Electronic Resources” chapter in Cataloging Nonprint and Internet Resources (Weber, 2002) offers step-by-step instructions for cataloging these resources. Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources concentrates instead on online resources and the issues they raise for bibliographic control.

Chapter 1, “Thinking about the Organization of Digital Resources,” examines the management of online materials, including collection development, acquisitions, and administration; and the special considerations for local digital libraries, including planning, processes, and resources.

Chapter 2, “Establishing the Cataloging Work Flow,” looks at how libraries can perform original or copy cataloging for individual records and record sets and includes strategies for reviewing and updating entries.

Chapter 3, “Exploring Alternatives to Cataloging,” lays out the strengths, weaknesses, and implementation of three alternatives to cataloging—Web lists, context-sensitive linking, and federated searching.

Chapter 4, “Determining Bibliographic Control in the Online Environment,” outlines strategies for tailoring a library’s bibliographic tools and practices to meet its own unique access needs.

Chapter 5, “Understanding Cataloging Rules and Guidelines,” provides an easy-to-understand introduction to the record content and cataloging rules involved in organizing digital resources.

Chapter 6, “Analyzing the Bibliographic Structure of Online Resources,” looks at the bibliographic characteristics of online information. This chapter will serve as a guide for the succeeding chapters that explore and explain various types of online sources.
Chapter 7, “Online Monographs: E-books and Manuscripts”; Chapter 8, “Online Serials: E-journals and Periodicals in Aggregator Databases”; and Chapter 9, “Online Integrating Resources: Databases and Web Sites,” provide step-by-step instructions for cataloging the three different classes of online resources—monographs, serials, and integrating resources—according to the most current rules and standards. Coverage includes multiple examples for organizing and cataloging born-digital monographs; online reproductions; unpublished resources; born-digital, online-only serials; journals copublished in online and print formats; aggregator neutral records; continuously updating Web sites; and more. These chapters take into consideration the challenges of title changes and the discontinuance of print editions (as often happens when a record migrates from print to online). Each example features bibliographic characteristics, instructions for coding the MARC 21 record, and the full MARC 21 record.

Chapter 10, “Online Trends to Watch,” forecasts the future importance and impact of new technologies on the cataloging and organization of digital resources.

Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources addresses the fundamental dilemmas that all libraries face as they confront bibliographic control for online resources. Any library that selects online information for its collection must ultimately decide whether to catalog that information, how to maintain bibliographic control if the resources are not cataloged, and how to manage the proliferation of information resources and bibliographic tools in an effective and sustainable manner. This book provides a broad survey of the e-resource—management landscape and specific techniques for managing, accessing, and cataloging online information with ease.

We joined the library profession as electronic-resource catalogers at a time when online resources were proliferating exponentially and libraries had begun to look to cataloging and technical services to take the lead in managing these growing collections. Change has been the only constant in our daily work, and we are frequently exhilarated, overwhelmed, and frustrated all at the same time. Ultimately, the promise and potential of the online environment inspires our imaginations and sustains our inquiry and service. We hope that Cataloging and Organizing Digital Resources: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians reflects our excitement about the future of managing and providing access to online resources, and that it will be not only practical but thought provoking as well.
REFERENCES


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