We make heavy use of student workers at the UNT Music Library. This talk is about how they are taught here.
Outline

1. How to catalog
2. The Why behind cataloging
3. Relationship of what we do to the rest of the Music Library
4. In general, how to handle a job and what a library job entails

What I teach can be divided into four points
   Not taught separately but intertwined

1. How to catalog
2. The Why behind cataloging
3. Relationship of what we do to the rest of the Music Library
4. In general, how to handle a job and what a library job entails
1. How to Catalog Music
with RDA in MARC

• Two paths
  • Specific to general
    • Works best for most students
  • General to specific
    • Works better for particular students

1. How to catalog music, with RDA in MARC

From Day 1, I try to use RDA terminology exclusively

With more experienced students, I sometimes give a little history of practices and terminology

There are two paths that I use: Specific to general and General to specific

My usual way of teaching this process is “specific to general”
  • Teach the details
  • Gradually these make a larger picture
Some students need general to specific
  • Start with the larger picture
  • Then go to the details
I am prepared to go either way with a new student employee.

Probably will start with specific-to-general, but will switch immediately if this isn’t working for a particular person.
Most students, particularly library-school students, will get a bit of both
To start (everyone)

• Go through some tutorials and question lists (treasure-hunt type lists in cataloging tools and documentation) to get some basics

• Incidentally, this is done from instruction sheets
  • No hovering, though I answer questions and check in with students from time to time, to be sure they are on track and not feeling overwhelmed.
  • Starts the habit of working on their own.
One-on-One

• Tell

• Suggest and prompt

• Ask leading questions

• Watch

• Student works alone

One-on-one instruction comes next. Here I pick which route to try, specific to general or general to specific (and may change in mid-stream, if it seems advisable)

Regardless of the route

• At first I tell the student what to do (but the student actually does it)
• Gradually I back off and let the student do the cataloging
  • From telling
  • To suggesting and prompting
  • To asking leading questions
  • To just watching
• When the student is reasonably comfortable with the basics, I go back to my desk and let the student work alone
  • But I give explicit assurance that questions are welcome and expected
  • Give instructions to ask as soon as a question arises; I say something about not waiting for me to be "not busy," because that will never happen
  • At first, questions come every few minutes, gradually farther and
farther apart, until the student can work for hours with few or no questions (or can hold questions until I get back from a meeting or desk duty or whatever has kept me out of the office)
Specific to General

• Thing to catalog

• Directly to MARC

• Pick a thing to catalog
• With a MARC workform up,
  • Apply Constant Data (this adds lots of prompts and some complete text to the workform)
  • Point out a particular element (such as title)
  • Point out that information on the thing being cataloged
  • Explain how to formulate the data in MARC
• Repeat with another element
• Eventually, repeat with another thing to be cataloged
General-to-specific

- Word processor
- RDA Toolkit
- After a while, Connexion

If I decide to go the general-to-specific route.

- Word processor, RDA Toolkit, and eventually Connexion
- The process of cataloging a particular thing
  - Find the instructions for a certain element
  - Decide on the data
  - Write it in a word-processing document
- Repeat with something else
- Eventually put it in MARC
Either way

Once we are putting it in MARC, we make extensive use of Constant Data records.

Sample is from one for CDs.

Some text can remain unchanged (such as 336 to 347)

- Student checks the text to make sure it actually fits whatever we are cataloging right then
- If the student doesn’t notice a potential problem, I point it out

As you can see, some fields have indications of what data go there, such as 264 1

Some, such as 383 in this sample, have a link to documentation to help with filling out this field.
After Training

• Students check each other’s work

• Field 021 used for writing messages to each other

• After students have cataloged for a while (usually about 2 months), they start checking each other's work

• We have a specified MARC field (021) for writing messages – asking questions, correcting, reminding, praising – a field near the top of the record (readily visible) that can't end up in the catalog or in the master record (won’t validate)
2) Why We Do What We Do

1. What rule or guideline says to do it that way?

2. What purpose does the action serve

2. Why?
   Two sides to this question.

   First, what rule/guideline/instruction/best practices says to do it that way?
   - Can be anywhere from very general to very specific
     - General: “Look in the RDA Toolkit”
     - Specific: “Look at RDA 2.3.2.8.1 and the MLA Best Practices statement on that instruction”

   Second, what purpose does this action serve
   - what good it could do for patrons, given an ideal interface (can be a thought-experiment for the student)
   - how the online catalog handles it in actual fact (look in our catalog to see the result of certain coding)

   - Some cataloging history usually comes up here.
3. How cataloging relates to the rest of the music library

Major, continuing emphasis: Cataloging is a public service!!

That means we always keep the needs of the patron foremost

When we encounter a cataloging dilemma

• The first question we ask is what patrons will want to find and how they will want to have this presented
• Then we figure out how to get a patron-friendly result within the realities of the cataloging code and of our online catalog
4a) How to Handle a Job

4a. How to handle a job

• Needs little explicit instruction

• Following models is most effective, other students or me.
  • We all work in the same room, without cubicles or dividers
  • So what each person is doing is visible to others

• I consider things like punctuality and reliability to be part of the learning experience
  • Possible to be a bit lenient since my workers are not staffing a public desk
  • My experience on the whole has been that after a while students see the value and purpose of these practices, and any problems disappear.
4b) What a Library Job Entails

- What the job description says
- What else

4b. What a library job entails

1. What the job description says, of course
2. More importantly, what is involved beyond the job description
   • Simply doing their job teaches part of this
   • Student workers also see what life as a librarian is like for me, which gives them a wider view than they would get from their own work

Next, two library-school students who work in cataloging will talk about their experience in school and in work

First we will hear from Leslie Collie
Leslie Collie
Essay form of symposium talk

I came to music cataloging largely by happenstance. I hold a Bachelor of Music and a Master of Music in vocal performance, but I ultimately decided that pursuing a professional singing career was not for me. I settled upon an MLIS, but with no clear idea of what I wanted to do with it. About a month and a half into my first semester, I discovered a job listing for a cataloging student assistant in the music library, and I thought my extensive background in music would be useful in this sort of job. I soon realized how much I enjoyed cataloging, and discovered that I could specialize in information organization as part of my field of study.

To me, the single most valuable thing about this job is the practical experience I get from creating records. It’s one thing to learn the theories and rules; it’s an altogether different thing to use those theories and rules on a near-daily basis. It’s particularly invaluable to not only apply rules to real records, but to be able to know WHY the rules are the way they are. Not every rule in cataloging is intuitive, but there’s usually a good reason why a seemingly arbitrary rule exists, and one wouldn’t know the reason why without an explanation from experts like Jean.

As a result, a lot of the concepts we read about in class that are difficult to grasp for people who have never worked any sort of cataloging or metadata job come easily to me, because I’ve seen them in action. For example, in my metadata class, people are often confused when the professor starts discussing specific MARC fields by using the three-digit codes, whereas I’m able to follow along with no trouble and even have a dialogue with the professor because I use MARC codes all the time.

Another thing I appreciate about this job is the opportunity to collaborate with other catalogers, from experienced professionals like Jean and Janelle, but also fellow students like Morgan. I think the 021 field is arguably the single best field for catalogers, because that’s
where we get a chance to both give and receive constructive criticism, as well as simply ask questions and leave comments as needed. Beyond that, I value the opportunity to have impromptu discussions about current issues in the cataloging field that don’t necessarily appear in class readings.

One unexpected benefit of this job I’ve discovered is being able to be a “casual observer” of interactions between both professionals and patrons. It’s an invaluable learning experience to see how day-to-day issues are negotiated and handled, something you simply can’t learn from coursework. A lot of attention is given in one of our core courses to “the reference interview,” but I firmly believe that observing how seasoned librarians respond to a patron’s questions and (all too often) complaints is a much better form of education than simply reading theory and watching videos of reference interviews.

When it comes time to look for a job, I think having hands-on experience creating records will be a big plus on my resumé. More importantly, however, I feel like I have the ability to speak intelligently about working as a cataloger because of my practical experience. As I said before, it’s one thing to take classes and know all the theories; it’s quite another to know what happens when those theories are put to practice, and I think that’s going to give me an edge on the job market. Also having conversations with librarians like Jean who have been down this road themselves gives me a better idea of what I might expect myself, and also where it would be worth aiming my energies and efforts.
Morgan Davis
My name is Morgan Davis. I am finishing my second semester of my MLS here in the College of Information. I am currently the Graduate Library Assistant for Music Cataloging.

As mentioned earlier, so much of what being a high functioning, well-rounded, and effective librarian you learn from just simply doing it. As a graduate library assistant, I help with the training of the student cataloging assistants as well as checking and editing their MARC records before they are exported into our ILS. This is beneficial because it forces me to have a much deeper understanding of the why behind the various and sundry aspects of bibliographic control standards and to go a step further to articulate it in somewhat plain speak, rather than to just say...well, that’s just because that’s how I was taught to do it. Which thankfully because we have such smart and observant student assistants, is an excuse that never really gets much traction. Another aspect of my assistantship is authority control work. I am responsible for updating and verifying headings according to the monthly Music Cataloging Bulletin. I also receive reports, about every two to three weeks from catalogers over in our annex with headings that need to be changed or updated or have raised a flag in the ILS for any number of reasons. And the final aspect of my authority control work, is exporting any authority records into our ILS that our catalogers come across and realize we do not have. As time-consuming as this part of my job is, it’s made me a better cataloger. It’s a really great way for me to get to know the catalog because it requires me to look at hundreds of bib records that I would otherwise never see and it makes the checking and editing aspect of my job go a bit faster as well, because I’m increasingly more accustomed to seeing how things should look so I’m able to spot errors more quickly and notice when something is missing or formatted incorrectly.

As of this semester, I’ve been fortunate enough to work alongside Jean and our processors with our incredibly extensive and seemingly never-ending inventory project. And as Jean so joyfully expressed to me earlier this week, we’ve only just scratched the surface. This project entails re-classing scores and eventually books, that have received incorrect call numbers, creating item records, transferring bib records, and sometimes believe it or not, even cataloging something that’s been on our shelf for literally decades being completely unfindable and without a barcode or an item record, or a bib record. That’s been a very interesting process and very eye opening as well. It’s emphasized even more how important cataloging something correctly the first time truly is and what a difference it makes when it’s done poorly or simply not all.

While not directly related to my assistantship, but due largely in part to my time spent here at UNT working in the music library, I was selected to be a fellow for the Association of Research Libraries MLA Diversity Inclusion Initiative. One of the stipulations, but really I should say perks, of this fellowship, is to complete a rotation of the different departments in the music library. My first stop was in
reference with Donna Arnold who knows our reference section impressively well. She opened my eyes to a number of wonderful music reference materials as well as allowing me to actually field reference questions that she would receive via e-mail about all sorts of different musical subjects. Working in reference reinforced how important quality bibliographic control truly is to a library. My experience as a cataloger enabled me to better assist patrons, by knowing where to look in a bibliographic record in order to help a patron decide whether or not this was the item they were looking for. That came in handy on more than one occasion. Next, I got to work with Andrew Justice who we miss dearly, on the glorious CD weeding project. I’d always wondered what libraries do when they just have too much stuff and I knew remote storage couldn’t be the only answer… and thanks to this project, I definitely got my answer. Completing a project of that magnitude requires time and manpower. There are very few corners to cut. But at the end, you have a much more user relevant and leaner collection. I have a personal interest in digital curation and preservation. So, in order to explore that interest a bit more, I got to work with our esteemed sound preservationist David Huff. Not only has he created a work flow for digitizing our rather large collection of College of Music recital recordings, he had to choose and calibrate the software that was best for the job as well as helping to digitize Maristella Feustle’s project of digitizing the Willis Conover collection. I was very lucky to be able to assist with both of these tasks. I learned how to use studio software and equipment, how to maintain it, resources to go to in order to learn more about the field…it was a fantastic experience. My last unit, is with Dr. McKnight and its in collection development. I’m getting to learn about how a library budget works, how it’s created, aspects of vendor relationships, and how to develop a collection. I’m faced with the question “what does the library need vs what would be super awesome to just have”. No doubt that’s a tricky question to answer to say the least.

So, suffice it to say the hands-on experience is incredibly valuable. However, the most important thing I’ve learned from being a student cataloger is the value of simply being teachable. This is a personality trait that any person who hopes to consider themselves employable in any field, should have. But, ya know…in a field such as library science that is riddled with emerging technologies, constant talk of streamlining management and workflow frameworks in order to keep with the current trends, and a field that is notoriously fighting for survival on the financial front… You simply must. Be. Teachable. This is something that I believe to be at the root of Jean’s management style. Jean has created an environment amongst us student catalogers that promotes learning and in turn requires us to be teachable. It promotes inquisitive and thoughtful dialogue. It promotes patience. It promotes genuine understanding of our role in the music library. Bibliographic control is the fulcrum on which user access truly pivots. I am so very fortunate to be at this university, with this position, and under the tutelage of Jean Harden who through her kind, patient, and understanding leadership really allows that aspect of cataloging to be emphasized. Not only that, Jean seeks to understand her employees. To make sure they’re doing ok, not just at their job (although that is important), but in life. She cares. She gives so freely of her time. I know that this isn’t supposed to be
a presentation about how fantastic my boss is, but she is truly fantastic. Being able to observe Jean’s management style, is of particular importance to me, because I hope to one day assume a leadership role in librarianship. Through this assistantship and the time that I’ve spent working in this library, Jean’s leadership has shown me just how influential a good manager can be and how very ok and necessary it can be to put your trust in a seemingly unlikely source such as students. It’s because of my time as a cataloging assistant for Jean, that I feel more capable of going out into the world of librarianship with these ideas on how to interact with people, how to manage people, and how to teach people. So, I feel as though I would be incredibly remiss if I didn't mention the personal growth that I have experienced while holding this position as a graduate library assistant. As important as it is to be able to do your job, it is equally important to have a legitimate respect and understanding for the profession and to place value in those with who you work.

UNT’s music library is an incredibly special place. The reason that Jean is able to promote such a wonderful and safe environment for teaching and learning is also due to the fact that Dr. McKnight works to facilitate such efforts and promote that kind of environment, not just in music technical services, but for all of the staff and patrons. Here at UNT, we’re so very lucky to have leadership that not only is eager to teach and for its student employees to gain valuable workplace experience, but to have leadership that is concerned with our wellbeing and churning out to functional, contributing members to the realm of music in a variety of capacities. That is truly a special thing and I am all too humbled and proud to be apart of such a wonderful legacy. Thank you.
Thanks!

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