Editing Library Science Journals: Reflections on Change and Constancy in almost Two Decades of Editing Library Science Journals

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Rezumat: *Într-o lume în care digitalul se intersectează cu tipăritura în circularea informației de specialitate, editorii de jurnale de bibliotecă fac față foarte bine, fiind familiarizați cu ambele universuri: al cărții și al computerelor. Dincolo de diversele media, rolul editorilor rămâne, în esență, cel dintotdeauna: acela de a filtra fluxul informației, pentru a reține doar ceea ce merită cu adevărat să rămână ca mărturie despre fazele evoluției unui domeniu.*

(știința informării ; bibliotecă, jurnale de ; editor ; editare ; jurnale electronice)

One of the most delightful and fulfilling professional activities that this author has undertaken in librarianship has been that of journal editor. From the time I accepted the position of editor of *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly (CCQ)* in 1984 until the present, being a journal editor simultaneously has been exciting, demanding, and enjoyable.

I was fortunate to take over *CCQ* as an established journal. That this made being an editor easier I did not fully appreciate at the time. Now, having been co-editor at the startup of *Journal of Internet Cataloging (JIC)* and more recently *Journal of Archival Organization*, I know how difficult it is to begin a new journal. For the purposes of this paper, however, I would like to consider what has and hasn't changed in editing library science journals over the nearly two decades that have passed since I began as an editor. Topics I will cover include: international aspects, editorial processes from methods of submission to review and acceptance, topics covered, and ramifications on journals of the Internet and digital technology. There will, because of my experience, be an emphasis on cataloging related journals as examples. However, most of what I say will apply to one degree or another to journals in library education, collection development, reference services, administration, and automated systems support in libraries.

International Aspects

From the beginning many library science journals stated that they were international in coverage, both in content and in contributors. Yet, fifteen years ago there were few international contributors to journals based in the United States or more broadly, North America.[i] Even within North America the articles and members of editorial boards had a preponderance of English speakers who participated.

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Much changed in the 1990's. Although cataloging and classification and publications such as *CCQ*, for example, always had an international audience and participation, during the 1990's that representation went from one or two articles on average per volume to, in many cases, one or two articles per issue. Library science journal editorial boards expanded to include more members outside the United States and they helped secure a broader readership and more articles from around the world.

Several factors contributed to the increased international activity. One of these was the Internet including e-mail, which allowed faster communication and the electronic submission of manuscripts. Another was the general context of the late twentieth century and its more global outlook and the realization that while a journal might be published in one country the audience was not limited by geographical location. Some aspects of librarianship such as cataloging in terms of both standards and rules had long been common in international forums including the International Federation of Library Institutions and Associations (IFLA) and the International Standards Organization (ISO). Increasingly retrieval issues have gained an international perspective as well. The ability to search an online catalog from anywhere in the world brought the catalog creators closer together whether consciously or not. All of this received additional emphasis as libraries and other agencies around the world began converting resources to digital form and mounting them on the World Wide Web where anyone with Internet availability could access them. In short the digital revolution contributed to an increasingly global and international orientation by library science editors.

It is worth noting that the trend toward global contributions to and readership of journals does not always mean that the journal publishes in more languages. Although *CCQ* and *JIC* have published occasional articles in languages other than English this is a very infrequent occurrence. This is not because I or other editors based in the United States would not be willing to publish other languages, but because if non English native speakers are going to read an article in a language that is not their native language there is a general consensus they prefer English rather than having to cope with articles published in many other languages.

Editorial Processes

Manuscript submissions in the middle 1980's were limited to printed copies. In the intervening fifteen years electronic submission became feasible and is used increasingly, especially by overseas authors. In most cases, after manuscripts are received and acknowledged, they are subject to the peer review process used by most library science journals. Peer review especially pertains to unsolicited manuscripts and involves two reviewers reading each manuscript and providing an evaluation of whether or not a manuscript should be published and, if yes, suggesting any revisions that the reviewer believes will strengthen the paper. The reviewers do not know who wrote the paper they receive and the author does not know who does the reviewing. Ordinarily peer review does not pertain to columns or reports. In most respects peer review today is the same as it was in the early 1980's. Peer review does not always apply to invited papers that often makeup theme issues. In this case review is at the direction of the editor of the theme issue.

One difference in the manuscript review process now is that sometimes reviewers will furnish the editor with comments via email. This works when the reviewer did not heavily mark directly on the manuscript. Most editors, at least in my experience, can work with evaluations received either via traditional postal mail or via e-mail. E-mail responses do save time.

Another part of the editorial review process involves receiving a manuscript submission form in which the author signs

over copyright to the publisher. The Haworth Press and most other publishers strictly adhere this to. In general, copyright is an issue of substantial importance to publishers and libraries and great care is taken to adhere to existing copyright laws. Sometimes an author does not even realize that a printout of a Web screen might be under copyright protection. Today editors in cooperation with publishers have to exercise great caution in assuring that nothing published violates copyright ownership.

Although as editor I receive a mixture of print and email evaluations from the reviewers, I nearly always reply to the authors with a letter and comments in print. Depending on timing an author might receive some or all comments via email first but it is still helpful to send the print version. It is especially critical to reply in print if a reviewer has marked directly on his or her copy of the manuscript. In addition, most authors appreciate a formal acceptance letter for their dossiers.

Finally, most editors submit the material for each journal issue to the publisher's production offices in both print and electronically or electronically only. Electronic submissions expedite the production process by the publisher and minimize accidental errors from rekeying data.

Scope and Contents

The scope of contents in journals has tended to proliferate along with the greater geographic distribution of contributors. This is a reflection of the increase in information globally, the many new formats in which information is carried, and the need to address a diverse audience. Even a journal as focused as *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* has seen a multiplication of topics within its scope including articles related to the organization and cataloging of Internet resources and public use of catalog records. At the same time some of the newer areas,

for example Internet organization and access, have generated more specialized journals, for example, the *Journal of Internet Cataloging.* Thus, library science editors are working in a field with established journals taking on broader scopes while simultaneously spawning new, more specialized journals. This leads inevitably to more competition.

Competition is a stimulus and can result in more publications due to greater awareness of the value of publishing. Yet more library science journals and more competition are in conflict with another seeming trend toward fewer unsolicited articles being received by editors for consideration for publication. Jennifer Younger, the editor of *Library Resources and Technical Services* noted former editor Richard Smiralgia reported receipt of 293 manuscripts in the five year period between 1991 and 1996. In contrast in the following four years Younger received 142 submissions.[ii] Fewer unsolicited manuscripts mean that editors must work harder to invite individual manuscripts and/or develop concepts for theme issues. Part of the reduction in numbers of submitted manuscripts is that in some areas such as library technical services there have been significant reductions in librarians and other professionals. With fewer staff and more and changing work demands, there is less time to write. Conversely, a number of academic institutions have tenure for librarians and they are required to publish.

In some cases publishers also publish journal theme issues in monograph formats that include an index. These "book" versions are useful to libraries or individuals who care about the specialized theme issue topic but who do not want to subscribe to the journal on a regular basis. The book versions also often are valued for required reading collections in library and information science schools.

The Digital Revolution

Of all the factors affecting changes in library science publishing in the past decade, the most omnipresent and significant is the digital revolution. Although most library publishers are still print based, many are moving to publishing electronic versions that are often available to subscribers only. Other new e-journals may not undergo peer review and therefore may comprise quality. Editors in fields dealing with Internet and other digital based topics have urged publishers to expedite availability of the contents of their journals, as many of the authors and readers are highly Internet savvy and eager to see the fruits of their labor available electronically. Some journal editors in the 1990's started Web pages for their journals. In fact the *Journal of Internet Cataloging* when established built in plans for its own Web page from the beginning. The value of journal web pages as an intermediate step toward an e-journal version was presented in a paper by Brisson and Carter[iii] at the IFLA 1997 conference in Copenhagen. The home pages for both *CCQ* and *JIC* have been very popular. They provide the text of the editor's remarks, the table of contents and abstracts, and the full text of the news column for each issue. As an editor it is important to meet the user demand for this information online.

Conclusions

Being an editor is multifaceted and satisfies disparate needs for different editors. But most have in common a scholarly inclination in that they value the dissemination and preservation of the written word as evidenced in the research, theories, and practical applications shared by authors. Because librarians and information scientists are very computer literate and immersed in the print and digital worlds and their intersections, library science journal editors are aware of and involved in the latest trends and developments. Most library science editors are at least comfortable in the electronic world at the same time that they continue to value print. I take pleasure in being able to bring to fruition publications that will be useful in the present and document the ideas, experiences, and practices of today for future generations.

Editing library science journals will evolve with technology and the interconnectivity of the libraries and librarians of the world. At the same time the value of publishing is a dearly held tenant by editors and their partners on the editorial boards and in publishing or they would not become or stay involved. If Younger is correct, we can expect the role of journals and editors, regardless of venue, to increase in significance.[iv] This is because journals and their editors transmit knowledge that as Ralph Waldo Emerson noted is "the amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds."[v] Library science journal editors have and will continue to play an essential role in the transfer and preservation of the knowledge of our field.

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[i] *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly's* first editor was C. Donald Cook at the library school at the University of Toronto, Canada.

[ii] Jennifer A. Younger, "From the Editor," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 44(4): 175 (October 2000).

[iii] Roger Brisson and Ruth C. Carter "Using the World Wide Web to complement print journals: the Experience of *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly,"* presented at the Editors of Library Journals Program, IFLA, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 September 1997.

[iv] Younger, *Ibid.*

[v] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Quotation and Originality," *Letters and Social Aims,* 1876 as quoted in Gorton Carruth and Eugene Ehrlich, *The Harper Book of American Quotations* (Harper & Row: New York, Ny, 1988): 311.