

Lazerow Fellowship recipients research copy cataloging and electronic resources management systems

Ed note: Each year ACRL awards the Samuel Lazerow Fellowship for Research in Collections and Technical Services in Academic and Research Libraries. Recipients are awarded \$1,000 cash and a citation donated by Thomson ISI. Below are synopses of the research projects conducted by Jeffrey Beall, the 2002 Lazerow Fellowship winner, and Adam Chandler, the 2001 winner. Information on all ACRL awards is available on the ACRL Web site (www.ala.org/acrl, click on "Awards").

How successful is copy cataloging at catching and fixing typographical errors in records imported from bibliographic utilities?

Copy cataloging has increased libraries' efficiency by eliminating the need to perform original cataloging on every work the library acquires. But one downside of copy cataloging is the presence of typographical errors on the master records found in bibliographic utilities such as OCLC and RLIN. The amount of quality control done in copy cataloging differs from library to library and can differ within the same library, depending on the source of the record. This research quantifies the rate of success that libraries have achieved in eliminating typographical errors during the copy cataloging process.

Typographical errors are significant because they can mean the difference between a library user finding needed information and not finding it. Errors that occur in access points, such as authors and subjects, can be especially serious. Knowing the extent to which errors creep into local library online catalogs can help libraries decide how much effort they need to make to eliminate typos in shared bibliographic records.

In 2002, Karen Kafadar and I conducted a study of 100 typographical errors taken from the Web site *Typographical Errors In Library Databases* (faculty.quinnipiac.edu/

libraries/tballard/typoscomplete.html). The site collects typos found in library catalogs and divides them into five categories, based on frequency. The categories are very high, high, moderate, low, and very low.

In our study, we randomly selected 20 words from each category (for a total of 100 words) and found 100 OCLC records, each containing one of the misspelled words. We then randomly selected five libraries listed on the "holdings" of each record; that is to say, we found five libraries that had used the record in question to copy catalog the book. Next we searched the online catalogs of these five libraries, examined the record in their local catalogs, and recorded whether each had corrected the typographical error.

The study looked at a total of 500 individual bibliographic records. We discovered that the errors had been corrected on 179 (35.8%) of the records, and the errors were not corrected on 321 (64.2%) of the 500 records. In the course of the study, we thought that a typo's position in a particular MARC field in relation to the total number of words in the field might affect its likelihood of being corrected, but the data showed no such relationship, so we did not pursue this hypothesis any further.

The data shows that libraries may wish to examine quality control in copy cataloging to more effectively eliminate typographical errors. One way to do this is to perform keyword searches of commonly misspelled words (such as words found on the Web site mentioned above) and correct the typos that are retrieved in the searches. By eliminating errors in library catalogs we improve data quality and increase the probability of library users finding the information they seek.—*Jeffrey Beall, University of Colorado at Denver, Jeffrey.Beall@cudenver.edu; an article based on this research by Jeffrey Beall and Karen Kafadar will appear in *Library Resources & Technical Services* in 2004.*

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