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From the Guest Editor



RACHEL ZILL

Rachel “Ray” Zill, formerly Rachel Kenny, is a monographs cataloger at the Oregon State University Valley Library in Corvallis. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, she has worked at a variety of libraries and archives in the areas of interlibrary loan, digitization, and cataloging. Ray may specialize in digital data by day, but she prefers the analog: vinyl records, cassette tapes, and dusty books. She is currently publishing a small collection of her poetry by letterpress.

My first experience cataloging was meticulously composing cards on a clunking typewriter for a high school librarian who refused to let go of the practice after automation. She had once regaled me with tales of technology’s impending doom as I click-clacked away. My first cataloging class was the last AACR2 course offered to students that only briefly mentioned the RDA developments followed by long sighs of frustration. My first original MARC record was the development of a template for a local seed library housed in card catalog drawers no longer used to file the public catalog cards. I have often felt, as I am sure many of you have often felt, perpetually in limbo between what was and what is coming to be—all while carrying on with the daily task of making accessible the exponentially increasing load of information available to us. I am convinced that cataloging is neither an art nor a science, but a superpower.

The issue of OLAQ that you currently hold in your—er—computer screen focuses on the “future organization of things.” I titled this issue not out of laziness or a lack of eloquence, but because I did not want to reduce our work to mind-numbing and siloed verbiage such as cataloging, technical services, metadata, and the long string of jargon that our job titles have become. I wanted this issue to approach current developments and future concerns of technical library work with an ease only accomplished by consulting the humble, articulate colleagues present in this state.



OLA



This issue begins with a very succinct, informative overview of current developments in the field through a practical lens. Then, we'll delve right in to faceted vocabulary, followed by lessons learned in making open electronic resources more accessible in the catalog. In fact, there are a lot of articles dealing with improving our systems and leveraging our collections, because that is what we do. Learn how to evaluate workflows across departments, migrate to more adept systems, automate past practices, and implement a new discovery layer. Last but not least, we'll consider some personal insight on developing technical training within a tight budget.

In this “perpetual limbo” in which we find ourselves, it is easy to feel bogged down or nostalgic or even forgotten. Our practices may seem to become less personal, more automated, and even rushed. But, our purpose has remained the same. We exist to connect readers with information in the most efficient and accessible way. As I write this introduction, I am reminded of the words of Adrian Frutiger, an influential Swiss typeface designer. I am currently working with his Univers typeface to print a book of my own, and I—of course—had to check out a collection of his complete works through interlibrary loan. The massive 32 cm high, 452 page book includes an introductory passage translated from his previous work entitled *Denken und Schaffen einer Typographie*, or *Thinking and Creating a Typography*. In this passage, Frutiger reminisces on his career, stating, “But then we found ourselves in an era in which type was no longer set using lead characters, but with beams of light.” Noting that evolution as one of the greatest learning experiences of his life, he touches on the difficulty of “designing characters that were readable not only to the human eye, but also to mechanical ones—something that stirred up, shall we say, an aesthetic conflict that taught me how to think about things in a different way.” Through it all, the reader is his primary concern. His art, his life's work, is but a subtle vehicle to deliver the author's words. The passage finishes with, “On my career path I learned to understand that beauty and readability—and up to a certain point, banality—are close bedfellows: the best typeface is the one that impinges least on the reader's consciousness, becoming the sole tool that communicates the meaning of the writer to the understanding of the reader” (Frutiger, page 7).

Cataloging, like typeface design, is a tedious magic. The magic is in making it seem effortless and instant, reserving the spotlight for the intellectual property in which we deal. I hope you enjoy reading through the experiences of your technical colleagues and learn to appreciate the important, yet often-times invisible, work of organizing things.

Reference

Frutiger, A. (2014). *Adrian Frutiger typefaces: The complete works*. H. Osterer and P. Stamm (Eds.). Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783038212607>

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