
MANY PATHWAYS FOR DISCOVERY

DESCRIBING MUSIC RESOURCES USING
FACETED VOCABULARIES

By

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*In memory of
A. Ralph Papakhian,
my music cataloging mentor and a friend and role model to all who knew him;
and June MacKenzie,
supervisor at my first music library job.*

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. CONTENT ANALYSIS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Training and education for catalogers and other library metadata practitioners often begins with the basics of transcription. One learns how to identify specific pieces of metadata on an information resource and transcribe or record them into an appropriate location in a structured description. By creating an accurate and faithful surrogate of a resource in this way, one ensures that a user can then identify their resource(s) of interest in a library catalog. Much time is spent by the metadata practitioner in learning how to mediate between the universe of information resources (which present themselves in ways that are often inconsistent and even ambiguous) and the needs and expectations of the end user. Advocates for thorough and high-quality bibliographic metadata often trace their working philosophies back to the foundational work of Charles Ammi Cutter, whose *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog* break down the objectives of a well-organized catalog as follows:¹

1. To enable a person to find a book [resource]² of which either
 - a. the author,
 - b. the title,
 - c. the subject is known.
2. To show what the library has
 - d. by a given author,
 - e. on a given subject,
 - f. on a given kind of literature [genre/form].
3. To assist in the choice of a book [resource]
 - g. as to its edition (bibliographically),
 - h. as to its character (literary or topical).

Throughout the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first, libraries met Cutter's objectives through the creation and maintenance of card catalogs. Most publicly accessible card catalogs were divided into three alphabetical sequences: the author file, the title file and the subject file. The author and title files served to meet Cutter's objectives "a," "b," and "d". The subject file was meant to serve objects "e" and "f"; a separate file for "kind of literature" was

1. Charles A. Cutter, *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, 4th ed. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 12.
2. Bracketed interpolations have been made by the author.

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EPILOGUE: POSSIBILITIES FOR USER DISCOVERY OF MUSIC RESOURCES VIA FACETED DATA

CASEY A. MULLIN AND KEVIN KISHIMOTO

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This book was conceived by metadata practitioners (catalogers) for the benefit of other metadata practitioners, and so by design it focuses on faceted bibliographic metadata as practitioners see and interact with it. Sadly, in too many libraries, the people who make the decisions regarding how metadata is presented to the end user are not the same people who create and curate the metadata that the catalog draws upon. To be sure, a “front of house” perspective, informed by firsthand knowledge of the searching behaviors of the library’s user base, is integral to making informed decisions about the optimal functionality of a discovery system. But so too is the “back of house” perspective; to quote a slogan once promoted by OCLC on buttons, “cataloging is a public service.” To that end, where opportunities present themselves for metadata practitioners to advise on how best to leverage the nuanced data structures contained within a library catalog, it behooves those practitioners to take advantage of them.

Even where formal decision-making roles about catalog functionality are out of reach of a particular reader of this book, the content in this chapter can at the very least provide food for thought when feedback about display of and resource retrieval based on faceted bibliographic data specifically is sought. If nothing else, the mere ideation about sophisticated retrieval possibilities inspires and motivates the continuing implementation of faceted vocabularies (especially retrospective implementation, which may prove to be a very long-term, incremental and resource-intensive endeavor). It is all the better if the metadata practitioners at a given institution can proactively advocate with their front-facing colleagues for catalog functionality improvements. This is, perhaps, how inspiration for emerging possibilities begets justification for devoting the necessary resources to comprehensively exploit those possibilities.

The potentialities explored in this chapter—drawn from the authors’ (who are catalogers!) admittedly limited experience and awareness—are only a preliminary exposition to the universe of possibilities. In this the third decade of the twenty-first century, as artificial intelligence applications begin to permeate everyday life and as algorithms influence how we interact with our information ecosystem, the obstacles to unlocking the full discovery potential of the faceted approach to resource description are not technological. Indeed, much advocacy effort must be directed at the organizations who sell discovery products to libraries; these products vary in the extent of their customizability and in the local programming know-how required to put

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IFLA Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) Review Group, “IFLA Library Reference Model: A Conceptual Model for Bibliographic Information.” (December 2017) <https://repository.ifla.org/handle/123456789/40>.

IFLA-LRM is the conceptual model that underpins the latest version of RDA (2020). A basic understanding of the entities and relationships described in IFLA-LRM will aid the reader in construing which entities of interest are embodied in the resource they are cataloging, and thus provides a framework for the application of faceted descriptors.

Library of Congress. *Classification Web*. <https://classweb.org>. Subscription required for full access.

———. *ID.LOC.GOV—Linked Data Service*. <https://id.loc.gov/>.

Classification Web and the Library of Congress *Linked Data Service* both provide access to the full and up-to-date versions of LC faceted vocabularies, as well as LCSH and (in the case of the latter resource) other term lists. *Classification Web*, a subscription product, offers a superior hierarchical/syndetic browse interface, whereas the *Linked Data Service* displays uniform resource identifiers (URIs) for each vocabulary term, and is more amenable to machine-assisted processes. As of 31 July 2023, resources previously accessible through the now defunct product *Cataloger’s Desktop* are now accessible via *Classification Web Plus*.

Library of Congress, Network Development and MARC Standards Office. “Bibliographic Framework Initiative.” <https://www.loc.gov/bibframe>.

This webpage includes documentation related to the BIBFRAME conceptual model and its ontology of classes and properties, as well as tools to convert bibliographic metadata from MARC 21 to BIBFRAME and vice versa.

———. “MARC Standards.” <https://www.loc.gov/marc>.

Library of Congress, Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division. “Descriptive Cataloging Manual Section Z1 and LC Guidelines Supplement to MARC 21 Format for Authority Data.” <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cps0/z1andlcguidelines.html>.

The freely available MARC Standards webpages contain official descriptions of the fields, subfields, codes and indicators within the MARC 21 formats. The DCM Z1 specifies how specific MARC fields, subfields, codes and indicators may be used in NACO authority records.

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