

My tenure as editor of *Catalogue & Index* was short (2006-7), and at a time when lots of changes were happening in the world, in libraries, and in my working life. The commission for this article was, by its nature, one that requested something very different from the sort of piece I normally write, as it asks for that most subjective and unreliable of things, a memory.

Karen sent us all some prompts, asking about changes during our time in post, and I think the key ones were:

- Restarting the publishing programme
- Moving from print-only to print and online
- Starting the *C&I Blog*

After a few words on each of these topics, I'm going to reflect on the 'Cataloguing Today' special issue that I commissioned, and which I hope provided everyone at the time with a snapshot of how things were, when lots of new technology was coming in – technology that we take for granted now and that to some extent changed how we worked irrevocably.

Everything is Technical

For various reasons, *C&I* hadn't been published for a while, and there were technical issues to be resolved. That was one of the reasons I took the role – my career up to that point had largely involved going in, sorting things out, and then moving on. Hard to believe now, as a young person I was restless and enjoyed change. I knew I could fix some of the issues.

Print-only was Standard

Like most CILIP journals at the time, *C&I* was entirely print, and distributed only to members. Neil Nicholson and Andrew Watson did a lot of work to manage the mailing lists and answer queries from members and subscribers. I *loved* working with the printers – I'd previously spent a spell as production coordinator for a publishing house and it was great to be back in that print deadline environment. I also enjoyed the relationship management aspect of the role. However, one of the challenges was the need to move to a model that was online or partially online. Penny Robertson, who was Deputy Editor, did a brilliant job of creating the (then) new-style online format for *C&I*, and took it forward as Editor when I, true to form, departed after the technical issues we had faced were resolved.

Do You Remember Web 2.0?

All this was back before Twitter, when "Web 2.0" was a Thing that was so new and shiny that some of us were asked to speak at big glossy conferences in posh hotels and large conference centres because we were using RSS feeds and sharing how easy it was to create blogs. I think the main reason I was appointed was because I had created several newsletter, blog and RSS services in my day job, and the committee knew it wanted something similar.

<http://catalogueandindex.blogspot.com> went live on 1 January 2007, with the contents list of the Summer 2006 issue, <http://catalogueandindex.blogspot.com/2007/01/issue-153-summer-2006-contents.html>, and then we moved to the brand new CILIP Communities in April, <http://catalogueandindex.blogspot.com/2007/04/same-blog-new-platform.html>. At the time, I wrote, "*CIG is proud to be the first Group to set up a blog at CILIP Communities, and we hope that all our current blog readers will not be inconvenienced too greatly by this move.*"

Behind the scenes, the new software was challenging for the CILIP web-team to manage, and challenging for us to add content. “LOL,” as we would have typed back then on our Nokia phones with their limited number of characters and pay-per-text pricing plans.

Not *Everything* is Technical

Straightening out technical issues took much longer than I had thought, even with Penny working on the redesign and handling that. It would have been impossible to manage without Penny, who went on to be a far better editor than I could have been. Back then, I was always comfortable in problem-solving deputy posts, and had yet to learn how to report back effectively when roles grow beyond their original scope and the work time available for them. I remember working and working and feeling like I couldn't pedal fast enough. It was lucky that I was reporting into such a lovely committee, who at that time consisted mostly of really experienced bibliographic services managers. Eventually, when I told them how much I was doing in the voluntary role, they were brilliant, and we created new committee roles to deal with the Web, Social Media and Journal, which made everything manageable again.

I remember at the time being very glad that this experience had happened in a voluntary position. Several of my friends in library systems roles were experiencing a similar squeeze – early content management systems for websites were sold to companies as an easy solution for all their website needs, but for the people tasked with adding content often it was a return to the mid-nineties experience of inputting a small amount of data and going to make a cup of tea while it uploaded. Of course, it also helped that many of the committee members were either the people charged with implementing these content management systems or – probably more challenging – managing the people who were, and explaining to their own senior management why something that looked so quick and easy in the sales demo for the software was easy, but certainly was not quick.

In any case, my big takeaway from being editor was that technology and relationship management is not always enough. Having good senior people and being able to approach them is a mixture of a blessing and a life skill, and I will always be grateful to the CIG committee at the time for that.

What About the Editing?

While focusing on the technical issues, it was surprising to discover that editing itself was quite easy – a mixture of having an idea of what people want to read and finding the right people to write those articles. The one issue that I put together myself, without articles commissioned by the previous editor or by Penny was the ‘Cataloguing Today’ double issue in 2007. It's not in the online archive, but the contents page is here: <http://catalogueandindex.blogspot.com/2007/02/issue-155-winter-20067-contents.html>

I can remember commissioning the pieces, which included a research paper by Kathleen Whalen Moss on Cat and Class in the LIS curriculum in the UK. Based on her Masters research, she presented it at the conference in 2006, and it brought the room to complete silence and then an onrush of questions, because people, then, were so shocked at that transition from teaching people *how* to catalogue and classify to teaching *about* cataloguing and classification. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that the way the subject field was developing, it was going to become harder and harder to teach a how-to class that was both thorough and comprehensive, with the rise in taxonomy design, citizen science contributing user-generated subject terms, and the fast-approaching introduction of RDA and soon-to-be-upon-us move from MARC to Bibframe. But at that time, in that conference hall, all this was ahead of us, and there were just a lot of angry bibliographic services managers amazed and vocal about the loss of university courses teaching “our trade.”

This Was When Public Libraries Had Big Cataloguing Teams

Indeed, the thing that stands out to me in the commentary section of that issue of *C&I* is the presence of opinions from two of the great Bibliographic Services Managers from the public library sector – Andrew Coburn of Essex and Heather Jardine of City of London.

Andrew's piece was prescient: as well as being concerned about recruiting new cataloguers, he could see that for promotion his best staff would have to move out of Cat and Class, and, indeed, that was to prove the way of things. Shelf-ready data has come to dominate the field for new books and we now seem to accept that public libraries will buy in their data and academic libraries similarly *most* of their data.

Heather's piece complements Alan Danskin's in discussing the things they look for in new cataloguers. These, I think, have not changed – Heather summarised it as “recruiting the attitude” and then training from that point. Alan was keen to see people educated to ask questions – of the materials in their hands they were cataloguing; of the authority files they were searching; and of more experienced cataloguers. This seemed both excellent advice, and also an achievable learning outcome for someone learning to catalogue for the very first time. Cat and Class can be daunting skills to acquire, and I doubt any of us on our first day imagined that we, too, might one day be chatting away to friends at CIG conferences using MARC tags and Dewey numbers. But learning to ask what those tags and Dewey numbers mean? That's an attainable goal. (Sidenote: talking in tags is jargonistic and not something of which we should be proud. Thankfully, I've not heard anyone talk in DDC numbers for years – I guess we all know how exclusionary *that* is).

What Else Did We Care About?

Other articles have also stood the test of time, I think. I'd love to see updates on some of these pieces – Jeffrey Beall, has, of course, published much in the area of information retrieval and the importance of metadata. I'm not sure that we would think about “traditional” and “non-traditional” as the distinctions in recruitment that Nicola Franklin saw daily in her role at Sue Hill back then. (Nicola now works for the *LA Times* as Senior Director of Talent Management, so she herself has taken her own transferable skills from recruitment and developed them in a field I don't think existed back in 2006-7). In any case, looking at recruitment adverts, the distinctions now seem to focus on whether a role is about data and metadata creation, and / or manipulation, and whether it is working with mainly electronic materials, mainly print, or a mixture of the two. However, the advice she gave back then, about tailoring applications and CVs, examining the job specification and asking questions at interview to determine if something is the right match for applicants, still holds true.

The rest of the articles give glimpses into the activities of cataloguers in different sectors – academic, public library, museums and galleries – and highlight different activities in which many of us were involved back then – selecting and applying classification schemes, information architecture and managing other staff. There's a shift outwards from libraries themselves, with pieces on museum work (not solely museum library work), archival description, website development and, of course, working as an embedded librarian in a law firm.

What's Changed?

Perhaps this has been one of the greatest trends by number in the roles of new professionals? Whereas the destination of most of my graduating class from Aberystwyth in the 1990s was back to their originating libraries, these days most new professionals are not funded by their workplaces, or, if they are, their workplaces tend to be corporate – banks, law firms, and tax accountants do still seem to offer some funding for staff they wish to retain. Those that don't fund training do at least recruit a lot of new information professionals, either for their libraries and / or to embed in practice teams. The other first-destination for a lot of people keen on cataloguing today seems to be institutional repositories. These did exist in 2006, but not in the quantities that they do today. (I remember a big upswing in the number of papers on university repositories at the CIG conference in 2014, so perhaps that's the timeline). Of course, such observations are tentative, because they *are* only observations.

That is, perhaps, the joy of the kind of special issue Karen and Phil have commissioned. It's not about facts and figures and quantitative research, but about people's recollections, and it's people that make our cataloguing community.



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