



WHO MADE THOSE RULES?



Although how we catalogue has drastically changed, why we catalogue, and the conceptual foundations of our work, have not. Those foundations are the work of cataloguing heroes – the likes of Charles Cutter and Seymour Lubetzky. Never heard of them? Read on.

Our early modern era cataloguers – which for this article I am considering to be from the 1870s or so – routinely created and administered card catalogues housing one or more cards for each item held in a library. Today's cataloguers cross-search large cooperative databases for 'copy' or create their own machine readable cataloguing (MARC) records to include in their library's online public access catalogues (OPACs). Throughout our working days we are keyboard jockeys, clicking and typing our way through databases, online cataloguing tools, our library management systems and specialist software packages as we perform our work.

Cataloguers old and new do this work not because we love to debate the placement of a full stop or the correct application of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, but because we want users to be able to find items and the information therein. But where did the rules we use come from – or rather, who created them?

Charles Ammi Cutter formalised a structure in his 1876 *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, in which he stated that the first objective of a catalogue is to enable users to find an item for which the author, title, or subject is known. This is why today's cataloguers, over a century later, will think about how users might search for an item and add series titles or variant titles to records. This is why we wrestle with subject terms, trying to match what users might think an item is about and what the Library of Congress authorities say we can actually use. And this is why we mutter darkly at typos in author, title or subject fields of a record.

Typos in card catalogues didn't necessarily prevent users from finding items, but in an OPAC? It's only 2011 and our OPACs can't think yet, so the item authored by 'Meyer, Stephanie' rather than 'Meyer, Stephenie' won't be found.

Although Cutter formalized why we catalogue, he did not explicitly define the first thing that cataloguers consider when we think about how to ensure users find items: access points. Access points come from the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR)*, and these rules, in turn owe much to the work of Seymour Lubetzky.

In 1953, Lubetzky published *Cataloguing Rules and Principles*, a report advocating a move away from a cataloguing code based on cases, toward cataloguing practices based on principles. He produced a draft of such a code, *Code of Cataloguing Rules; Author and Title Entry in 1956*, which then went on to inform the 1961 *Paris Principles*, preceding the AACR we know today.

Lubetzky's contributions to what became AACR inform key aspects of the cataloguing that we perform today. When we are faced with originally cataloguing a CD containing

Damien Leith performing cover versions of Roy Orbison songs, for example, we can thank AACR and Lubetzky for clarifying that Roy Orbison is primarily responsible for the artistic content of the work (main entry) and Damien Leith is merely performing the work (added entry). And thanks to the deep thinking of this mid-20th century librarian, today we can confidently assign a title main entry to a video adaptation of *Winnie-the-Pooh* with an added entry for A.A. Milne, and not the other way around.

At first glance this distinction may seem unimportant to users; whether main or added entry, any entry serves as an access point that enables users to find an item. But as we transition from AACR to Resource Description and Access (RDA), it appears we will have to be very careful about which name goes where in a MARC record in order to ensure that items gather in the proper relationship sets. Lubetzky's considerations of relationships between items and bibliographic entities aren't really reflected in AACR, but they are in the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)-based RDA.

And so Cutter and Lubetzky continue to guide the work of cataloguers today, and will into the future. Our primary goal will always be to make items and information findable. With RDA our goals will also include creating and describing meaningful relationships. Of course, if RDA doesn't work out we may have to find a new cataloguing hero.

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