

CATALOGUING – AN ARGUMENT FOR BUILDING A FOUNDATION

The study of any science requires the ability of its professional practitioners to describe, analyse, and record the raw material of their science using the language of that science. In the case of library information science (LIS), that language is in the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR). Some will argue that FRBR, and its application to the cataloguing rules of RDA, is a tool used to perform a technical task, and therefore better studied at diploma level. But I would argue cataloguing is more than just a technical task.

Every professional degree program has its core foundation level subjects which equip students with the prerequisite and generic skills needed to progress through their chosen field. For engineers, maths provides those skills; for doctors, it is anatomy and physiology; and for library professionals cataloguing provides a foundation for the study

of information organisation. Isn't cataloguing in the business of describing and organising the information we as library professionals hold and manage?

Cataloguing taught as a first year degree subject will encourage attention to detail as you are drilled in the FRBR standards. It develops analytical skills through the use of subject headings and their construction, enhances reference skills because you know how to construct a search that queries stored bibliographic records, and it alerts library managers of the need to comply with agreed international standards used in describing and presenting their collections to the wider community.

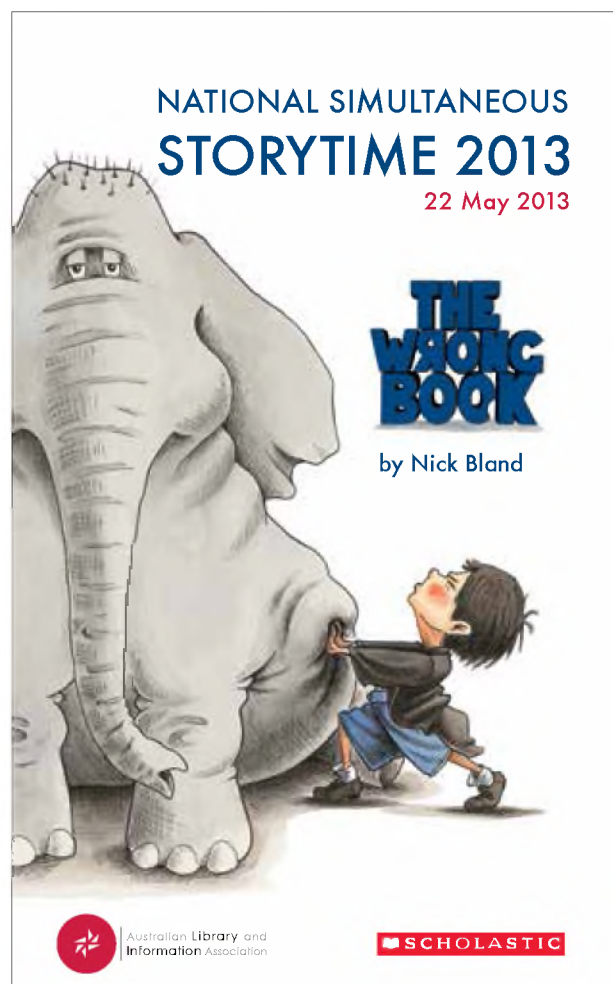

Philip Hider, in his article *The Future of Cataloguing Education and Training: Input from Surveys of the Profession* (www.nla.gov.au/sites/default/files/hider2007.doc), observes that it is highly desirable for all information professionals to appreciate information organisation

principles, and goes on to name the cataloguing standards. He also notes the Australian Committee on Cataloguing is concerned that a first professional LIS qualification no longer guarantees any working knowledge of key bibliographic standards. And a third point Hider makes is that cataloguing "involves the exercise of professional judgement and a level of expertise that deserves professional recognition".

I think making cataloguing a core subject in first year professional library qualifications is a must. Let's see more of it.

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