

Library and Information Science in Journals:
The *Library Resources & Technical Services* Journal- Mid-Twentieth Century and Post-
Millennium

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Introduction

It is not news to even the most early-stage library student or professional that there has been a continuous period of significant change and shifting within the library and information field. Of course, all professions grow and change over time constantly, it is only a matter of how and at what rate. Library and Information Science is not unique in its recent boom of technological advancement and reevaluations of its place in the professional world and the lives of the people which the institution serves. This is a state many (if not all fields) have found themselves in over the last couple of decades.

This exercise serves to analyze the dynamism of the study and practice of library science over the last twenty-three years by examining two articles within the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal. In exploring the history of the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal itself and delving into the contents of one article from the mid-twentieth century and one from the 2010s, trends within the field will become evident. The primary trends identified and discussed center on changes in technology, developing attitudes around access and services, and evolving approaches to cataloging.

History and Concept of the *Library Resources & Technical Services*

The journal this exercise will be focusing on is the *Library Resources & Technical Services* (LTRS) journal. This is a professional journal with close ties to the American Library Association (ALA). The portion of the American Library Association website devoted to highlighting professional and scholarly journals was, in fact, where I located this journal. *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal was described as such on the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) portion of the American Library Association website, “Library Resources & Technical Services (LRTS) is a peer-reviewed journal that takes a

critical approach to the questions and challenges facing librarians and libraries with regard to: Collections, Scholarly communication, Preservation (including digitization), Acquisitions (including licensing and economic aspects of acquisitions), Continuing resources, Cataloging (including descriptive metadata, authority control, subject analysis, and classification). *LRTS* publishes both research papers and thoughtful explorations of operational issues that have value and implications for other libraries. In addition, *LRTS* publishes editorials, book reviews, letters to the editor, and the annual report of the president of Core.” (Library Resources and Technical Services, 2023) The website also notes the relationship between the *Library Resources & Technical Services* (LRTS) journal and the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS), “*Library Resources & Technical Services (LRTS)* was the official journal of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) from 1957 to 2020. In September 2020, it became a publication of Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures.” (Library Resources and Technical Services, 2023) The *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal was offered in print until 2014 when it became an entirely electronic journal. As of 2023, the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal is an open-access resource, with a digitally accessible archive spanning Volume 1 (1957) to the current edition.

Article 1: “Designations of Categories: A Problem in Cataloging” Summer 1963

The first and older of the two articles I elected to focus on is from the year 1963. This article is from Volume 7 Issue Number 3 of the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal. This is the issue published in the summer of 1963. The article I will focus on is titled, “Designations of Categories: A Problem in Cataloging” Other articles listed in this Volume include titles such as, “Books Vs. Catalog Cards,” “Cataloging and Classification in Junior College Libraries,” “A New Concept in Serial Dealers,” “Convertibility Potential Among

Government Information Agency Indexing Systems,” and “A Square Inch for Libraries.” Each of these articles helps to create a general sense of what the perceived issues and topics of importance were for the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal mid-year 1963.

Immediately I noticed a heavy focus on the technical details of cataloging and all of the inherent differences between how cataloging was done then and now. Some clear notable differences include the distinct lack of technology we would consider to be commonplace in dialogue on all aspects of library and information science, including cataloging. For example, you will notice catalog cards being referenced in a number of titles and throughout several articles.

In my article of focus, the matter being discussed was the issue of Categories for print materials in libraries. The discussion focused on the pros and cons of using the categories and the questions and issues of the designation of these categories for titles. The concept was addressed from the perspective of both staff use and patron use. The idea of how this may assist patrons with access and convenience or how it may in fact further obfuscate navigation of materials for patrons was debated.

I also found it interesting how the writer perceived the act of designation of categories to be enmeshed with the card catalog system, “All this use of categorical designation may stem, in part, from the fact that our cataloging principles and practices seem to be based on the assumption that our records are to appear on cards- which are capable of being lost, strayed, stolen, etc. That is, each citation is, in theory, self-sufficient, capable of being understood (after having been found) without reference to any other card, specifically, without reference to a guide card; this despite the fact that libraries have been known to file according to categorical designations indicated only on guides.” (Pierson, 1963) This was a point of interest to me

because we still use categorical designations in public libraries today, in spite of the fall of the card catalog in favor of digital catalog use.

Further, the matter of how to be clear and consistent with category designation is still a conversation frequently in my encounters with fellow library staff to this day. The conclusion of the article offers little solutions other than a balanced approach and a nod to the author's anticipation that this issue will not be disappearing any time soon, and that we can anticipate this conversation continuing.

The conclusion states, "Categorical designation is not, then, the solution to all problems of entry; nor should one, ultimately, expect alphabetically-arranged catalogs to replace classification schemes and directories." (Pierson, 1963) and "designations of categories might well play larger roles than the ALA and proposed codes assign them." (Pierson, 1963)

Article 2: "Broken Links and Failed Access How KBART, IOTA, and PIE-J Can Help" January 2012

The second and more recent of the two articles I homed in on is from the year 2012. This article is from Volume 56 Issue Number 1 of the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal. This issue was published in January of 2012, almost 50 years after the previous article discussed was published. The second article I will focus on is titled, "Broken Links and Failed Access How KBART, IOTA, and PIE-J Can Help" Other articles listed in this Volume include titles such as, "Literature Acquisitions in Review," "Preservation in the Digital Age" "Kindles and Kindle E-Books in Academic Libraries," "Book Review: Subject Access to Films and Videos 2nd ed" and "Book Review: The Frugal Librarian: Thriving in Tough Economic Times." Again, each of these articles reflects what was considered a matter of importance for the *Library Resources & Technical Services* journal at the start of the year 2012.

As with the first article I decided to home in on, I experienced a sort of knee-jerk response to the titles of these articles and what sort of world these pieces were published in. For example, we see an immediate influx of titles with technology as a key feature of the titles, the use of the now infamous term “Digital Age,” and reference to economic issues that were present as holdovers of the economic strife of the late 2000s.

As the title implies, this article is focused on the matter of improving access to digital materials by addressing the common issue of broken links. This article highlights three initiatives positioned to address this issue and improve digital access to licensed content: KBART, IOTA, and PIE-J. The article also seeks to describe the access problems for which the solutions were intended to remedy, as well as expounding on some background information relevant to the matter such as OpenURL, link resolvers, and knowledge bases. This article is as enmeshed with technology as the topic of the previous article was with the card catalog and less contemporary perspectives on cataloging. The very first sentence of this article reads, “Libraries today rely heavily on electronic full-text content. Users like electronic access, but become frustrated when links to content do not work.” (Glasser, 2012)

It is fascinating to see how much more technology-centered the journal (and by proxy the institution of the library itself) becomes in the time jump between the first and second articles of focus and yet it is also notable the shortcomings technology still displays in this article from a little more than a decade ago. This quote comes to mind, “In their study on link resolver accuracy rates, Trainor and Price found that links failed nearly a third of the time (29 percent)” (Glasser, 2012). This is not a success rate that anyone would view as admirable.

The conclusion takes the form of a sort of call to action for all stakeholders in the digital serials supply chain to rally around the industry initiatives proposed as solutions to these

prevalent linking failures as a win-win solution. A portion of the last paragraph of the article reads, “All parties stand to benefit from the work being done by KBART, IOTA, and PIE-J: users get better service, librarians get a better return on their investment, and content providers get more traffic to their content, which leads to increased usage (a criterion often used in library purchasing decisions) and a better reputation” (Glasser, 2012)

Similarities: Trends

As previously stated, I viewed trends between these two articles within three categories: changes in technology, developing attitudes around access and services, and evolving approaches to cataloging. However, I also conceptualized the arch of the profession as seen through these articles as similarities (trends) and differences (evolution). The first major similarity I noticed was the focus each had on access. Both articles were, at their core, a matter of access for patrons. In the 1963 article, the focus was on ways in which aspects of cataloging as it was done in that time period could better serve patrons regarding accessing the materials. In the 2012 article, the primary focus was access. There was a major issue of patrons being able to access the digital materials they needed, and the literature focused on solutions and why access was essential.

Differences: Evolution

The key differences between the focuses of the articles and by extension the focuses of the field during those periods were the ways in which the 1963 article hinged on cataloging matters devoid of technology and the 2012 article was the exact inverse: centering entirely on technology with less focus on “traditional” cataloging methodologies and practices. This reflects the inherent differences in the technological landscape and their place within the field during each of those times.

Looking Ahead

No one possesses a crystal ball to be called upon to predict the future for any profession or purpose, I certainly wouldn't dare to after having completed a deep dive on only two specific points in recent history. However, I will endeavor to speak to some takeaways I am left with after analyzing these points and their place in the overall arch of the profession over the past century or so. Based upon the trends I was able to identify through these readings, in conjunction with what I am being exposed to via my education and my professional experience in the field I am predicting future trends will continue to include ongoing advancements in technology and how they might be used in the library setting by both patrons and staff. I anticipate that assisting patrons with technology use and information literacy will persist in the coming decades although the types of technology itself is going to be impossible to predict. I also believe that the cataloging questions that are raised are going to continue to be discussed as the library continues to gain new forms of materials and new types of collections. Additionally, the matter of how we best provide access to patrons will continue to be discussed ongoing as our patrons, culture, and environments continue to evolve.

Conclusion

Through this comparison, several observations can be made and conclusions regarding the trajectory of the field can be drawn. It is evident that advances in technology will continue to march onward and the role of the library will continue to become increasingly more enmeshed with technological services for patrons and tools for staff. Further, the philosophy behind service will continue to evolve as the population of our nation and their needs continue to evolve. Being that the library is an institution of service it is natural that it would have a need to morph alongside the people it serves to maintain relationships with and by extent relevance in the lives of the people the institution serves and is supported by. Lastly, conversations around cataloging

and how best to address the collections we house will always continue as we seek to improve our libraries.

Examining the dialogue taking place within scholarly and professional literature is a sound strategy for capturing the professional senses of a time. Each of the articles skimmed, referenced, and dissected within this exercise serves as a microcosm of the professional and academic thinking of the moment for each time period. Engaging in this practice assists professionals in reflecting and acting on this retrospective perspective in their present-day practice and in looking to the future of the field.

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