

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2011 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION KNOWLEDGE NETWORK CATALOGING AND METADATA INITIATIVE SURVEY

Paul R. Burley, Northwestern University Transportation Library¹
p-burley@northwestern.edu

Transportation Research Board
Library and Information Science for Transportation – ABG40 (LIST) Committee

December 22, 2011

Introduction

The National Transportation Knowledge Network (NTKN) was formed in early 2011 as a result of recommendations in National Cooperative Highway Research (NCHRP) Report 643, *Implementing Transportation Knowledge Networks*². NCHRP 643 recommended the creation of a national-level transportation knowledge network to unify and expand on the efforts of the existing regional transportation knowledge networks (TKNs)³. One key goal advocated by NCHRP 643 is the development of “library connectivity support and advocacy” across several functional areas of library and research centers. A National Coordinating Body would be formed and should include a component group to provide support for cataloging and metadata activities across the broader transportation library community.

Formation of NTKN Cataloging and Metadata Initiative

The NTKN Cataloging Committee was established as one of six standing committees of the NTKN in 2010. Members of the committee included representatives from national and state-level libraries, as well as two members from large academic libraries.⁴ The committee was

¹ Correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to Paul R. Burley, Technical Services Librarian, Northwestern University Transportation Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, Illinois 60208; or p-burley@northwestern.edu.

² *Implementing Transportation Knowledge Networks*. Washington, D.C: Transportation Research Board, 2009.

³ The TKNs include: Eastern Transportation Knowledge Network (ETKN), Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network (MTKN), and Western Transportation Knowledge Network (WTKN).

⁴ Institutions represented include the National Transportation Library; the University of California, Berkeley Institute of Transportation Studies Library; the Virginia Department of Transportation Library; the Federal Highway Administration Research Library at the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center; and the Northwestern University Transportation Library.

renamed the Cataloging and Metadata Initiative in the summer of 2011 to reflect a broader view of information organization in transportation libraries and resource centers.

Survey Overview

The committee began its work by administering a general survey of cataloging and metadata practices in transportation libraries and research centers. Two key goals of the survey were established from the onset. First, the Committee would report the survey findings to transportation library constituencies in a variety of ways. Second, the committee would develop a defined set of deliverables based on needs identified after analyzing the survey results.

Survey participants were solicited via an announcement on the TRANLIB listserv⁵, which the Committee believes reaches most established domestic and international transportation libraries and research centers. The survey was conducted between March 2, 2011 and May 10, 2011. A total of 58 respondents from the total population of TRANLIB members (343 individuals) completed the survey, for a total “individual” response rate of 16.9%. One limitation of the survey is the fact that each organization represented elected one person to respond on their behalf. Although the Committee does not know the total number of organizations represented by the individual members of TRANLIB, evidence indicates that nearly all of the known cataloging “organizations” were represented in survey findings.

The largest group of respondents, 25%, were from state departments of transportation. The remaining 75% of respondents were from nonprofit organization, federal departments of transportation, academic institutions, corporate libraries, and a metropolitan planning organization.

Findings

1. Staffing

In all, 72.4% of survey respondents said they catalog in some capacity, but 27.6% of institutions reported they have no dedicated cataloger on staff. This is likely due to the fact that many transportation libraries are staffed with “solo librarians,” who are required to perform many job functions in addition to cataloging. The survey results indicate that cataloging and metadata are handled in many institutions by “non-catalogers.” While almost all non-cataloging librarians gained a basic familiarity with cataloging practices in graduate library studies, few expressed

⁵ TRANLIB: Discussion list for transportation information professionals. Hosted by the Special Library Association. URL: http://units.sla.org/division/dtrn/td_tran.html

confidence in their cataloging skills. One survey respondent noted, in a sentiment shared by other respondents, that:

“Up until last year, I had a cataloger on staff. Now I am a solo. I took a cataloging class in 1979. I do copy cataloging in OCLC [...] but I would like to have a better understanding of the process.”

The consensus of non-cataloging librarians is that cataloging materials for their agency in an Integrated Library System (ILS) and OCLC is a requirement, but many respondents expressed uncertainty about the quality of the cataloging records they create, and frustration with the cataloging process as a whole. Furthermore, cataloging and metadata creation for new reports and historical collections is not processed in a timely manner, creating significant cataloging backlogs of transportation-related resources in many libraries.

2. Formats and standards

According to the survey findings, the transportation library community remains deeply rooted in traditional encoding formats, descriptive standards, and cataloging in OCLC. All libraries surveyed catalog in the MARC⁶ format⁷. All libraries that responded reported that they use the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd ed. (AACR2)⁸ as a descriptive standard⁹, despite the introduction of Resource Description and Analysis (RDA)¹⁰ (the long-awaited replacement for AACR2) in 2010. No libraries in the survey reported participating in national-level RDA test cataloging, however, one library reported the use of RDA records in copy cataloging. Of all respondents, 67.24% indicated their organization belonged to OCLC.

3. Subject analysis

Despite the cost and required expertise, all respondents reported performing subject analysis in their cataloging. The transportation library community is evenly split between those using Library of Congress Subject Headings (LSCHE)¹¹ and the Transportation Research Thesaurus

⁶ MARC, data format for bibliographic, holdings, and authority record data. Hosted by the Library of Congress. URL: <http://www.loc.gov/marc/>

⁷ One library noted using Dublin Core to describe images; one library noted using Encoded Archival Description (EAD) for archival resources.

⁸ *Anglo-American cataloging rules*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2002.

⁹ Libraries in non-English language countries reported using a translated adaptation of AACR2 in their respective languages

¹⁰ *Resource description & access: RDA*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2010.

¹¹ Library of Congress Subject Headings. Hosted by the Special Library Association. URL: <http://authorities.loc.gov/>

(TRT)¹², but surprisingly, 23 libraries are using both LCSH and the TRT in catalog records. This speaks to not only the importance of discoverability via a controlled vocabulary, but also to the enduring utility of the TRT across the spectrum of transportation library and research centers.¹³

Next Actions for the NTKN Cataloging & Metadata Initiative

After two presentations of survey results, the NTKN Cataloging and Metadata Initiative began work in earnest on the creation of resources as recommended in the survey. Initiative members decided to create a wiki¹⁴ focused specifically on cataloging and metadata resources needed by transportation librarians, using examples specifically from transportation-related resources. The National Transportation Library will host the wiki¹⁵, and a general editor of the wiki has been named. The wiki will be made accessible to the larger transportation community in early 2012. In conjunction with the publishing of the wiki, Initiative members will also start a peer question/review network. At the end of 2012 the initiative members will evaluate the return on investment of its efforts and utility of the wiki and peer network to the wider transportation library and research center community.

Conclusion

The NTKN Cataloging and Metadata Initiative was created to support library connectivity and advance advocacy in the areas of cataloging and metadata. The survey of the committee carried out in 2011 revealed a need for greater support and advocacy for cataloging and metadata production, specifically by and for non-cataloging librarians. The committee seeks to increase cataloging competencies, provide peer support, and create instructional tools to fill gaps in cataloging and metadata creation across the transportation library community.

¹² Transportation Research Thesaurus. Hosted by the Transportation Board. URL: <http://trt.trb.org/>

¹³ Other subject schema used by libraries in the survey includes UMTRI Library Thesaurus, the ITRD Transportation Thesaurus (International Transport Research Documentation), the Macrotesauro de transporte (Brasil), and an unnamed internal thesaurus.

¹⁴ "Wiki: A website whose users can add, modify, or delete its content via a web browser using a simplified markup language or a rich-text editor. Wikis are typically powered by wiki software and are often used collaboratively by multiple users." (Wikipedia, viewed Dec. 15, 2011)

¹⁵ At date of publication, the wiki has no formal name.