

Stop the Backlog! : Cross-training as a Response to a Growing Multimedia Backlog

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Abstract

In 2002, the Senate Library Committee decided that Queen's University Library should begin collecting multimedia material. To meet this goal, the Media Working Group was struck with the task of devising a plan to develop a collection. The collection was primarily comprised of DVDs and VHS recordings, but also included other formats. As the collection increased, the demands on the cataloging librarians increased and a backlog began to develop. Around the same time, Central Technical Services was being reorganized. As part of this reorganization, cataloging and acquisitions staff were being cross-trained to create a more efficient workflow. To help with the backlog, a group of senior technicians were chosen to be trained in videorecording cataloging.

Planning

- As part of the overall Training Plan, individual training plans were created for each member of the Central Technical Services staff to support the reorganization of the department
- Five senior monograph cataloging technicians were chosen to participate in the videorecording cataloging training
- These technicians were chosen because it was hoped that with their many years of experience they would possess the necessary judgment skills to tackle a new format
- The intention was that these catalogers would not only help with the current backlog but would add videorecording cataloging to their routine

Design

Once it was decided who would be trained and what they would be trained to do, we spent several weeks designing a series of training sessions.

We not only had to make decisions about where the training would take place and how it would be delivered, but most importantly, we had to decide on the content of the sessions

- We designed one theory session and two workshops in which we decided to focus on new or different fields, including fixed and variant fields
- To complement the training sessions, we designed a number of handouts that either reinforced the theory or were meant to act as cheat sheets

Delivery

There were three training sessions over a three week period.

One session on theory:

- Began with an overview of general guidelines
- Introduced new fields e.g. 508 and 511 and fixed fields
- Discussed classification issues

Two workshops where theory was practiced using documentaries and Hollywood films:

- We edited the bibliographic records in Voyager
- We showed relevant portions of the films to demonstrate where the information for cataloging would be found
- We discussed areas that can be problematic e.g. dates

Handouts were provided and were referred to throughout the sessions

Recommendations for training technicians to catalog DVDs and VHS

- Screen trainees and choose technicians who are willing to learn and take on a new responsibility
- Ensure that all formats are covered; don't assume that the learning will be easily transferred to another format
- Create very detailed handouts
- Have a dedicated training space if at all possible
- Have structured practice sessions
- Be prepared to do follow-up sessions

