Cataloging to Support Equitable Access to Spanish Language Materials

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The United States is a diverse country, with non-native-English-speaking people fast becoming a greater and greater percentage of the population. With the country's diversity only increasing, community needs are shifting, and this includes what communities need from libraries. Libraries—from the school to the academic to the public—must know their communities and seek to serve all community constituents. Libraries have a responsibility to provide equitable access for all patrons regardless of ethnicity, language, or culture (Library Services to the Spanish-Speaking Committee, 2007).

While the U.S. attracts immigrants from all over the world, Hispanics are becoming the largest minority group (Correa & Marcano, 2009). According to Adamich (2009), the United States will experience a 180% increase from 2009 to 2050 in the number of Hispanic children attending public schools. Many Hispanics' primary language is not English, and even if it is, it may not be proficiently understood (Adamich, 2009). Libraries need to ensure that useful materials are available for Spanish speakers needing free, reliable information.

The 2007 guidelines by the Library Services to the Spanish-Speaking Committee, Reference Services Section of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), American Library Association (ALA), state that traditional library services are not meeting the multilingual information needs of patrons who are bilingual citizens, language students, or foreign students. Multilingual patrons may look for resources on the shelves, but if they want to search first online, or if they need electronic resources, they must first search the online public access catalog (OPAC). Jensen (2001) states that "mastery of the OPAC is essential to full enjoyment of the library" (Libraries for All, Catalogs for Some section, para. 5). While libraries are

collecting more Spanish language materials in recent years, *access* to those materials has not improved (Miller, 2007). Not only do collections and programs need to meet Spanish speaking patrons' needs, but also the mechanisms to access the collections and programs must not be ignored. Adamich (2009) argues that a multilingual OPAC should be a priority in libraries. Cataloging is an often-overlooked component of providing equitable access because the library already has the Spanish language collection, but appropriate cataloging ensures that items are accounted for and patrons can find what they seek efficiently and effectively (Jensen, 2001).

While there are no national guidelines for developing Spanish language collections or programs or performing Spanish language cataloging, the author found several recommended practices. First, though, she discusses the challenges associated with Spanish language cataloging. Although challenges exist, special considerations must be made when cataloging Spanish language materials to provide equitable access for users.

Challenges

Spanish language cataloging presents many challenges for the organizations and catalogers working with the materials. First, catalogers may lack language proficiency and/or subject knowledge to satisfactorily catalog certain materials (El-Sherbini & Chen, 2011; Jensen, 2001; Molavi, 2006). Organizations may not be able to find professionals with Spanish language or subject expertise, or professionals may be proficient in a different language or subject area.

While "nativist resistance to the provision of public services in foreign languages has already been preempted by the availability of multilingual OPACs," the high expense of Spanish language cataloging processes still poses a significant challenge (Jensen, 2001, Another Kind of Robbery section, para. 1). Minimal-level cataloging is a possible solution, but Jensen (2001)

warns that this compromise does not help users because minimally-described items will effectively be concealed when searching. Libraries must "find convincing practical arguments and inexpensive incentives" to allow them to include Spanish in their catalogs (Jensen, 2001, Another Kind of Robbery section, para. 3).

Another challenge is the lack of cataloging standards regarding grammar in Spanish (Correa & Marcano, 2009). For example, initial articles may be treated as filing or non-filing characters when indexing. Correa and Marcano (2009) recommend disregarding all initial articles for sorting purposes, but note that there will be some exceptions, as in the case of an apparent initial article actually being a pronoun or number.

In addition, there is no official Spanish subject headings list, and translating concepts into English can prove difficult (Correa & Marcano, 2009; El-Sherbini & Chen, 2011). Catalogers may settle for "good enough." In addition, the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) provide limited coverage of non-Western topics, so concepts may not be truly represented even in the main language of the catalog (El-Sherbini & Chen, 2011).

Adamich (2009) does mention the Library of Congress Subject Headings in Spanish/Encabezamientos de materia LC en español (LCSH-ES) research project (www.lcsh-es.org), which is a free, shared authority file prototype providing Spanish language subject heading authorities that may be downloaded. The developer, librarian Michael Keryche, hopes to show the benefits of cooperative cataloging and authorities-sharing and assist in providing access for Spanish speakers and researchers. Also, the "Escamilla List," a Spanish subject headings list first compiled by Gloria Escamilla González in 1967 and published by the National

Library of Mexico, has been adopted by the majority of Mexican libraries (Martínez Arellano, 2007).

Recommendations

The literature does provide some recommendations for dealing with Spanish language cataloging challenges and multilingual materials in general. First, Correa and Marcano (2009) recommend becoming familiar with the basics of Spanish, particularly the structure of names, which is not always first name, middle name, and last name like in the U.S. To accomplish this language familiarity, Hall-Ellis (2008) suggests providing language training in library science graduate programs and professional development opportunities for catalogers.

Catalogers need to acknowledge particular countries' rules and standards, "as well the concepts and procedures on how to describe the print monographs" (Correa & Marcano, 2009, p. 300).

Jensen (2001) and Hall-Ellis (2008) recommend bilingual cataloging for all Spanish- and dual-language materials to achieve equitable access.

Discerning between "printing" and "edition" is needed, because often the two use similar vocabulary (Correa & Marcano, 2009; Molavi, 2006). Catalogers also need to differentiate between dates associated with a work, such as publication date, copyright, and legal deposit date (Correa & Marcano, 2009).

Catalogers need to utilize all accents and punctuation as they exist in the work (Correa & Marcano, 2009; Adamich, 2009). Jensen (2001) stresses that omitting diacritics or using improper ones "can affect meaning and intelligibility" (Methods and Findings section, para. 4).

Also, numerous access points are needed, especially notes with keywords for which users can search (Correa & Marcano, 2009; Jensen, 2001). In fact, Berman (1991) claims that "the one overriding omission in descriptive cataloging is notes" (p. 136). Jensen (2001) suggests transcribing original statements from title pages or flyleaves and adding contents notes in some records to provide additional access points in Spanish. Creider (2003) recommends retaining and displaying "Spanish language subject headings and subject keywords in bibliographic records" (p. 12).

Standardization in subject headings lists and personal name entry could also assist in effective user access (Correa & Marcano, 2009). The LCSH-ES project could help with standardization, as could looking toward the efforts of Latin American libraries to develop subject heading lists, as some of the papers in the book *Salsa de tópicos: Subjects in SALSA: Spanish and Latin American subject access* (2007) describe. Indigenous languages, tribal names, and local history, geography, and corporate names are all reflected in particular subject heading lists such as the one used by the National Library of Mexico, the "Escamilla List" (Martínez Arellano, 2007). Depending on one's user community, these terms could be valuable for providing access.

Library automation systems' user interfaces, including help screens, also need to be available in Spanish (Adamich, 2009; Jensen, 2001). Spanish speaking users need to be able to understand where and how they are supposed to enter their searches. Jensen (2001) proclaims the bibliographic record Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) tags 245 (title), 500 (note), 505 (contents note), 520 (summary), 600 (subject—personal name), and 650 (subject) the "guts of the catalog," or, the data fields which "make or break" OPAC search matches depending on the data entered in them.

Of course, improvements typically require increases in costs and time commitment. As one librarian in Jensen's 2001 article says, extensively creating and editing Spanish records "is indeed costly and time-consuming … but necessary to meet the needs of our users" (Exemplary Exceptions section, para. 11). Institutional collaboration could help defray costs and facilitate efficient and effective cataloging, especially for institutions with little or no in-house language or subject expertise.

Molavi (2006) also mentions some valuable recommendations in her article for assisting in cataloging Persian language materials, which one could extend to Spanish language materials: Submission of names to international authority files, hosting of a webpage within the website of the particular cultural library association for catalogers to discuss issues, and preparation of a language-specific cataloging manual with help from Library of Congress colleagues.

Conclusion

An important consideration rarely mentioned in the literature—except by Hall-Ellis—is language training. Should catalogers be trained in particular languages in library school? Is it necessary for U.S. catalogers to know Spanish? Can or should they learn Spanish once they are in cataloging positions? Ultimately, however, the literature indicates that collaboration, rather than individual training, proves to be the most efficient practice, although language expertise undoubtedly helps a cataloging job candidate.

The literature and the author suggest more, current research to bring awareness to emerging issues and possible solutions. As the country further diversifies, catalogers will encounter more and more Spanish language materials, and they—and their organizations—need to be prepared to provide access or to collaborate with other professionals or organizations to

provide access. Otherwise some of their users may suffer. Collaboration is one of the most

important actions that can be taken to ensure that Spanish materials are efficiently cataloged. It

is in the best interest of the worker and the served for multiple institutions to pool their

cataloging resources and share in the benefit. If this cannot be done, each organization must

decide what *can* from the recommendations above to achieve the goal of equitable access for

Spanish speaking users.

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