RESOURCE DESCRIPTION AND ORGANIZATION: THE CASE OF AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

Organization of information resources is one of the basic business processes carried out by libraries and archives. Such allows users to effectively and efficiently navigate the system to generate relevant search results. Data production usually follows international standards (e.g., MARC (machine-readable cataloging), AACR (American Cataloguing Rules), or RDA (Resource Description and Access)), to make it easy to exchange records between systems. This study investigated the experiences of an academic library in the Philippines in organizing and describing information sources, particularly its journey towards transitioning from AACR2 to RDA. The development of its institutional repository is likewise discussed, recounting the initiatives, strategies, and challenges encountered along the way. The case study design was used, with data gathered from firsthand experiences, interviews, and document analysis. Recommendations are forwarded to help direct policies and encourage support and participation from stakeholders.

Keywords: information organization, RDA, institutional repository

INTRODUCTION

Organization of information resources is one of the basic business processes carried out by libraries and archives (Çakmak, 2019). It involves the creation of bibliographic records and full text retrieval in the networked environment (Hjørland, 2003). The goal of which is to allow users to effectively and efficiently navigate the system to generate relevant search results.

Technology has had a great influence on the organization and retrieval of information. For one, it has offered the means to retrieve information through keyword searching (Hjørland, 2003), providing users with broader options and a greater chance of discovery which would have otherwise been difficult to achieve in a nonautomated environment.

Data production usually follows international standards like MARC (machinereadable cataloging), AACR (Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules) or RDA (Resource Description and Access), making it easy to exchange records between systems (Çakmak, 2019). Integrated library systems and IR platforms, on the other hand, facilitate information organization, storage and retrieval.

There is abundant literature that accounts the experiences of libraries and archives in resource description and organization particularly as they adopt new standards or migrate to a new system or platform.

The adoption of RDA has prompted libraries all over the world to share their experiences as they transition to this new cataloging standard. The implementation process of the forerunners of RDA, namely the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine, was presented by Morris & Wiggins (2016). The study particularly highlighted the benefits of RDA specifically to the Library of Congress. Identified benefits were flexibility in decision-making involving cataloging, ease of sharing cataloging data, establishment of clear links between related works, enhanced cooperation among North American libraries, and availability of online learning platforms that provide real time training on a larger scale. The experiences of the Library of Kent State University when they participated in three RDA testing opportunities were shared by McCutcheon (2011). Based on these experiences, they were able to conclude that there really are minimal changes between AACR2 and RDA and that the new standard provides adequate support for the tasks performed by reference personnel. The University of Chicago Library's experience on the test period, on the other hand, focused on foreseen issues in the adoption of RDA, which include, among others, training of staff, changes in cataloging policies, ILS compliance with RDA metadata, integration of RDA-compliant records with the existing records, cost, and future implications to metadata infrastructure (Cronin, 2011). In the study of Wacker & Han (2014), the experiences of two libraries in the implementation of RDA, specifically the Columbia University Libraries and the University of Illinois Library, were compared. Similarities were noted in terms of ILS being used, trainings received, composition of the core group assigned to organize training sessions, use of wikis, blogs, and web pages in sharing crucial information among staff, consideration of webinars as an important training resource, and the keeping of record display changes at the minimum, specifically the ones for public viewing. Differences, on the contrary, were identified to be organizational culture, number of staff trained to handle the implementation, and the influence of consortia on internal cataloging policies and implementation process. Outside of the United States, countrywide experiences on the adoption of RDA were shared by Banfi & Gaudinat (2019) for Switzerland, Cullen (2016) for Ireland, Goldsmith & Adler (2014) for Israel, Çakmak (2018) for Turkey, Fresnido & Valerio (2019), Paredes Acedera (2014), and Santos (2016) for the Philippines, and, Dandan et al. (2019) for China and the whole of Asia.

Technology has made possible the sharing of resources in digital formats (Schwartz, 2005), thus providing opportunities for libraries and archives to showcase the scholarly outputs of their institutions through IRs. As described by Clifford Lynch, an IR is a "set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members.

It is most essentially an organizational commitment to the stewardship of these digital materials, including long-term preservation where appropriate, as well as organization and access or distribution" (Lynch in Yang & Li, 2015).

The experiences of libraries and archives in establishing IRs has also been well documented. The approach of the National Taiwan University (NTU) in the establishment of its IR was shared by Chen & Hsiang (2009). The paper particularly discussed the importance of an IR as a means to disseminate scholarly outputs to consequently increase the number of citations, the status of NTU's IR development, the use of DSpace as their platform, as well as the enhancements they have so far made. A case study on the strategies employed by three universities in the United States, on development of their respective IRs was carried out by Palmer et al. (2008). The study examined the similarities and differences in the choices, strategies, and the factors that contribute to the activities that direct the course of the IR development of the three. Intellectual property concerns, implicit policies and goals, and the value of the IR for the faculty and the institution were the noted similarities. Differences, on the contrary, were observed on the acquisition of content and the provision of services. The Loughborough University's experience in the building of its IR was explored by Barwick (2007). The paper focused on issues and challenges encountered along the way and how they were able to overcome such. Choosing the appropriate platform, platform customization, licensing, and content acquisition were the major issues faced. The attitudes and awareness of faculty towards open access (OA) publishing and the IR of the Texas A & M University was the center of the investigation of Yang & Li (2015). Results showed that the faculty have positive attitude towards OA publishing but were unaware of the content deposit process of their IR, hence the low participation rate.

This study looked into the experience of an academic library in the Philippines in organizing and describing information sources, particularly its journey towards transitioning from AACR2 to RDA. Likewise, it recounted the development of its institutional repository highlighting the initiatives and strategies carried out and the challenges encountered along the way.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study method was used to investigate how the Library was able to transition from AACR2 to RDA, and likewise develop its institutional repository. Interviews were conducted with the catalogers as participants. Interview questions focused on the planning towards the implementation of RDA as well as the strategies adopted to facilitate the transition and the learning process. The participants' experiences and insights towards their journey on the use of the new cataloging standard were also explored.

Similarly, an interview was carried out with the IT personnel in charge of the repository as well as selected users of the new platform to dig into the issues and challenges they encountered along the way. Pertinent documents were likewise analyzed to gather historical data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transitioning to RDA

RDA is an international cataloging code (Bianchini & Guerrini, 2009) developed by the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA to replace AACR2 (Kuhagen, 2011; McCutcheon, 2011). Designed for the digital world, it provides instructions and guidelines for all types of materials. Its main difference from AACR2 is its scope and organization which could be summed up into two statements – that *"information should be recorded as found"* and that terms used should be easy for the user to understand (Anhalt & Stewart, 2012).

The Philippine Experience

In 2012, RDA was introduced in the Philippines by the late Atty. Antonio M. Santos (who was then the Director of the National Library of the Philippines (NLP)), through the holding of a salon on the topic "*What Now for RDA in the Philippines?*" This was attended by cataloging experts from selected academic libraries in the country. Said meeting of experts paved the way to the establishment of the National Committee on RDA (NCRDA) (Fresnido & Valerio, 2019), which was tasked to plan for the countrywide implementation of RDA.

One of the very first challenges that the Committee faced was the lack of RDA experts in the country that could be tapped to provide trainings. Thus, in partnership with the Philippine Association of Academic and Research Librarians, Inc. (PAARL) and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the National Committee on Library and Information Services (NCLIS), with the help of NLP, invited the Chief of the Cataloging Policy and Support Office of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Barbara Tillett, to conduct an RDA training to prospective trainers. Ms. Tillett accepted the invitation and the training of trainers finally pushed through in April 2013 (Fresnido & Valerio, 2019), which was held in one of the biggest libraries in the country (the ABC Library), situated at the heart of Manila.

With the said library sponsoring the venue, a number of its librarians (mainly those doing cataloging and indexing) were allowed to participate in the training-workshop. As the only library provided with the opportunity to have the most number of attendees in the said training, it is no wonder that this library became one of the early adopters of the new cataloging standard in the Philippines.

The ABC Library

The ABC Library is a system of libraries composed of a main library and six satellite libraries located in different campuses (Manila, Makati, and Laguna). Its collections consist of more than 500,000 items (to date) and it subscribes to more than a hundred databases. Processing of library materials is centralized. On average, four catalogers are assigned to work fulltime on the organization of materials. All four are considered generalists as they perform both the easy (e.g. add-to shelf-list, copy cataloging) and complex (e.g., original cataloging) tasks and handle cataloging of all types of materials in different formats and in varied subject areas.

Implementation Strategies

As the catalogers of ABC Library were well versed with AACR2 (having used this throughout their professional lives), transitioning to RDA has been quite a challenge. This though, is expected, as even the Library of Congress had its own share of difficulties in the implementation of RDA, despite being one of the forerunners of the said cataloging standards (Morris & Wiggins, 2016). Nevertheless, mastery of AACR2 may be an advantage, as learning RDA alongside with AACR2 remains to be important at present (Lisius, 2015).

To make it easy for the catalogers to remember the rules and take note of the changes and differences between AACR2 and RDA, they devised a template, which served as a guide during the first few months of the implementation process. Contained in the template are MARC tags, their corresponding fields, and simplified rules (usually the core ones) for each of the fields and examples (for some of the fields). Local practices and in-house policies were likewise incorporated in the template. This enabled the catalogers to quickly identify required elements, depending on the format of the materials they are working on. Additions and notations were included onto the template as necessary (i.e., whenever they encounter "problematic" works). The usual practice was to keep notes of how they dealt with the "problem" and reproduce a copy of the title page, to serve as reference whenever a similar case arises.

The catalogers also made it a point to consult one another whenever they face difficulties in cataloging a particular work or encounter an unusual problem. This peer learning method is similar to the approach adopted by libraries in the United States as they transitioned to RDA (Park & Tosaka, 2015)

Since the Libraries' integrated system has the capability to import records from other systems such as the Library of Congress and OCLC, copy cataloging has significantly facilitated the transition process. The catalogers' daily encounter with RDA compliant records from these two systems was instrumental in helping them acquire familiarity on the use of the new standard. Just like catalogers in the U.S., they too regarded the *"learn-as-you-go"* approach as an effective way of gaining mastery on the use of RDA (Park & Tosaka, 2015).

One of the senior catalogers was also tasked to go over the works of the junior ones and mentor them based on their perceived weaknesses. This was done until such time that they were determined to be ready to work on their own.

Updating of Old records

Updating of old bibliographic records (to conform with RDA) was not included as part of the plan at the beginning. However, some of the catalogers revealed that they do update old records whenever they had the chance (i.e., when they do add-to-shelf list or copy catalog from the Library's own records, usually when working on a different edition and version of existing items). These catalogers think that it is important to update old records when a different edition or version of an existing work is acquired to allow related items to collocate, which is a feature of RDA (Short & Okuhara, 2014). However, despite the efforts of selected catalogers to update old records, only 8.34% of the total records are RDA compliant to date.

Issues and Challenges

In support of the transition process, the Library subscribed to the RDA toolkit during the first two years of its implementation. However, the catalogers expressed difficulty in interpreting the rules hence most of the time, they referred to the PowerPoint presentations provided to them during the training-workshop as they find the instructions there simpler and thus, easier to understand and follow.

Since it is the policy of the university to ensure that subscriptions are used maximally, subscription to the Toolkit was cancelled on the third year due to low usage. As RDA is continually updated, references published three years ago may already be regarded as outdated (Faith & Chrzanowski, 2015). Hence, the rules in the presentation that they are using as reference, which was prepared in 2012, may already be obsolete. The same is true for the *Cataloging Policy Statements and RDA Guidelines for Philippine Libraries* (which is some sort of a concise RDA manual that contains examples for Filipiniana materials), prepared and disseminated by PAARL in 2014 (Fresnido & Valerio, 2019) which they refer to when working on local materials.

Adaptability persists to be an issue as some catalogers find it difficult to unlearn AACR2. Librarians in other countries like China has had similar experiences as they tried to adapt to changes brought about by RDA (Luo et al., 2014). Remembering changes in constructing authorized access points is a struggle for catalogers, especially for conferences and preferred titles for expressions of work.

Almost all librarians assigned to do cataloging will be retiring in the next three years. The lack of replacement planning poses a challenge considering that it takes time to acquire the needed knowledge and skills. For skills to be transferred effectively, the person conducting the training should possess the particular skill. If prospective catalogers will not be trained at the soonest possible time, chances are, they will be left to train on their own.

Catalogers Insights on RDA

Despite the difficulties encountered in learning the new cataloging standard, most of the catalogers prefer RDA over ACCR2 because of its "*take-what-you-see*" principle, which frees them from remembering so many rules. This is similar to the insights of catalogers in Canada who regard RDA as a way towards achieving a more efficient cataloging process (Goldsmith & Adler, 2014).

Moreover, they appreciate the fact that the terminologies being used now can be easily understood by the clients, as the use of Latin words and abbreviations had been discontinued. In the study conducted by Park & Tosaka (2015), these very same observations were noted by librarians across the United States.

The participants also believe that RDA helps improve the discovery of materials which greatly benefits library clients. It is no surprise, therefore, that clients indeed find that with RDA, searching has become more efficient (Do et al., 2015)

However, they feel that despite having adopted RDA for more than eight years now, they are still struggling with the construction of authorized access points particularly for expressions of works. Piecing together the elements that should be put together continue to be a "nightmare" to them.

Development of the Institutional Repository

The Archives forms part of the Library, hence it is no surprise that some decisions for the Library impact the Archives, that is, despite the striking difference in the practice of the two professions (Nimer, 2010). Decisions regarding automation and standardization of descriptive practices are the major ones that have significantly affected the Archives.

Both the Library and the Archives made use of the same systems to organize its materials ever since; that is, from CDS-ISIS (an information retrieval system) in 1992; to TINLIB/T-Series (non-MARC-compliant ILS), from 1994 to 2002; and Millennium/ Sierra (MARC-compliant ILS), from 2003 to 2020) (Fresnido, 2011). As such, metadata for archival materials, particularly those forming part of the IR (i.e., theses, faculty research and creative works, institutional diary, university publications, and oral history), were created in accordance with library standards (MARC, AACR2, RDA). This is despite awareness of the systems' limitations to accommodate requirements for the description of archival materials, since these were specifically for designed library materials.

While the Archives has for a long time been collecting the intellectual outputs of the university, the direction as to where such initiative was heading seemed to be unclear. In the 2007 meeting of the AUNILO (libraries of ASEAN University Network), the concept of IR was introduced to its members (Fresnido, 2011) and this provided directions as to how the IR should be developed and managed so that it is able to go beyond "*content acquisition*" and preservation and extend to "*service provision*," that is, to help authors address problems regarding data curation and information management (Palmer et al., 2008), while at the same time providing wider research visibility of the scholarly outputs of the university (*Beyond Preservation: DLSU Libraries Launches Animo Repository*, 2020).

Moving forward has been a struggle due to a number of issues. The lack of expertise has been a major source of delay and so is high staff turnover. Funding was also an issue, hence for several years the Library had been contemplating on using an open source platform. Since open source systems would require heavy reliance on staff expertise, the Library finally decided to scrap the idea altogether.

To resolve the staffing issues (i.e., lack of expertise and high staff turnover), the Library established an ICT Committee tasked to identify a platform that would best respond to the need of the University. Thus, after stalling for more than a decade, the Committee proposed the use of separate systems for library and archival materials. In mid 2020, the Library replaced Sierra with Alma ILS (for library materials) and subscribed to Digital Commons for the IR. Compared to other commonly used IR platforms, features of the Digital Commons proved to be robust (Bankier & Gleason, 2014). Moreover, it has a large number of installations worldwide and is slowly gaining popularity among academic libraries and archives in the Philippines.

Migration

Once the decision was made, available contents were migrated into the Digital Commons. Migration started in September 2020 with 928 electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) initially uploaded. After a month, the number of ETD uploaded totaled to 10,199. Simultaneous with the ETD, the oral history collection consisting of 423 transcripts and audio files of interviews of prominent personalities (Fresnido, 2011) were uploaded. Came next were published faculty works extracted from Scopus, which summed up to 3,036. To date, the IR has more than 16,000 papers.

In the coming months, the migration of other contents such as faculty research and creative works, diary of the university, photo gallery, and university publications is expected to accelerate the building of IR contents.

Branding

Since it is important for a repository to have its own branding (*The rewards of platform unity: Moving to one repository at Universidad de La Salle delivers benefits*, 2021) the repository was given a name, which is the same as the battle cry of the academic community, often heard during UAAP (University Athletic Association of the Philippines) basketball championships (Cruz, 2013).

The Launch

After a month of migrating to the new IR, the formal launch was held online in October 2020. The event was attended by the president of the University, other administrators, faculty, library personnel and representatives from Bepress.

Issues and Challenges

Past mistakes in metadata creation hampered the migration process, particularly because a number of records had missing fields (e.g., degree program, name of college, and department). Since these are required fields, migration of these records were put on hold. To accurately determine the information needed to be inputted into the missing fields, the staff had to painstakingly go over the students' records.

Aside from the required missing fields, subject keywords (though not required by the system to be filled), most of the time, were also lacking as metadata creation was performed by paraprofessionals. Given that the subject is the most important access point (Fricke, 2013), the staff had to go over all the migrated records to provide these.

As records extracted from the old ILS and that of Scopus were initially converted to Excel, special characters (e.g., ñ, subscript and superscript, mathematical and chemical formulas, and selected symbols like **(R)** were distorted and replaced upon conversion, and thus, displayed differently. Correcting these meant referring back to the records in the old system and in Scopus. While these "errors" seem menial, they caused delay to the migration timetable.

"Service provision" (Palmer et al., 2008) is one of the main functions of an IR, hence trainings on how to deposit contents should be a regular thing. The Library has started

conducting trainings for graduating students (who were in their thesis writing stage) and department coordinators (those tasked to "accept" or "approve" student submissions to make sure that the copy deposited is indeed the approved and final version) on depositing ETDs. While students seem eager to deposit their works, some department coordinators had to be reminded, to "accept" the submissions so the Library can do its part of updating and posting the submissions. As the number of deposited contents is expected to increase in the coming months, the coordinators will eventually find it more difficult to manage the number of ETDs for approval.

Since no training has been provided yet for faculty members, deposits are currently limited to ETDs. In the past, bulk of the scholarly outputs collected by the Archives were sourced from the administrative office that handles faculty recruitment and promotion. This office regularly deposits printed copies of works authored by faculty members used for hiring and promotion. Before these copies are filed (as part of their records), metadata are created to form part of the IR, that is, without the digital content. Since only the Library and the administrative office are involved in the process, awareness on the existence of the IR is very limited. For the IR to be successful, it is important that stakeholders are made aware of its existence as well as its value and how their contribution to such can help in the realization of its full potential (Yang & Li, 2015). The Library, on the other hand, should do its part in promoting the IR, through regular trainings and dissemination of its value and functionalities through email announcements, newsletters, social media posts, and other promotional materials.

A big part of the ETD is already dated, and since the Library has no means of getting permission from the authors (being the copyright owners) to make the full text of their works available in the IR, only selected chapters (preliminary pages, introduction, review of related literature, and methodology) are uploaded. Editing the full text is done (using Adobe Acrobat) prior to uploading, deleting the most important chapters of the ETD (results and discussion, conclusion, and appendices). More than the additional step added to the workflow, this defeats the IR's open access goal. The same concern goes for newly deposited ETDs as some authors would opt for a six year embargo. By the time the full text of these ETDs are made available, the information may already be obsolete.

Considering that ABC University is one of the leading research universities in the country, it is expected to amass extensive amount of scholarly outputs. The major concern though, is copyright and content licensing issues, specifically for published works. Simply put, the authors and the Library will need to be well versed on the types of contents that may be deposited into the repository. At the moment, the Library has partnered with the Intellectual Property (IP) Office of the University to educate its stakeholders on IP rights. Given the complexity and technicalities involved, providing occasional lectures on IP will definitely be insufficient to address the issue. The Library would need the commitment of the IP Office to help in the drafting of guidelines and policies on the nature of content to be deposited (e.g., pre-prints, post-prints, etc.) and in the process of reviewing the publishers' copyright policies, to help determine what could and could not be deposited into the IR.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The abundance of information in various formats coupled with the evolving technologies and standards have brought a number of issues and challenges to information organization, including (among others) staff training, funding, technology selection, content, and intellectual property rights. It is therefore crucial for libraries to carefully plan before embarking on new information organization initiatives. Since every institution is unique, there really is no "one size, fits all" solution to change. However, it would do well for libraries to look at the experiences and best practices of early adopters, be it a new standard or a new platform, as this would greatly aid in drawing out an effective and efficient plan and consequently help avoid committing costly mistakes.

As IP issues are major deterrents to recruiting contents for the IR, libraries and archives are challenged to find ways to help faculty to better understand their rights as publishing stakeholders. Forging a strong partnership with the university's IP Office is crucial in the attainment of this goal.

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