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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the extent of cataloging backlog in Ohio libraries and methods adopted to reduce such backlog. A review of the relevant literature is made in order to gain insight into the different ways in which the problem has been tackled across the country. Data on the situation in Ohio is collected through survey methodology using the heads of cataloging departments in major academic and public libraries as the population sample. The data are analyzed, and conclusions are drawn on the basis of the findings. The findings suggest that size of library has little to do with the presence of backlog and that backlog is created by factors other than volume of collection. There also appears to be no significant relationship between backlog and types of libraries, in that backlog exists both in academic and public libraries. However, there is indication that the volume of backlog appears to be low in public libraries and high in academic libraries. Gifts to libraries contribute to the problem of backlog. Overall, the main cause of backlog has to do with the inadequate number of cataloging staff as well as sudden staff departures. The paper concludes with some general insights drawn from the study and some recommendations. The survey instrument and cover letter are appended. (Contains 18 references.) (Author/TMK)

CATALOGING BACKLOG IN ACADEMIC AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES: THE CASE OF OHIO

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Adelaide F. Ocran

November, 1990

ABSTRACT

Cataloging backlog poses a problem because it results in unavailability of materials for use by a library's clientele. This paper investigates the extent of cataloging backlog in Ohio and methods adopted to reduce such backlog. A review of the relevant literature is made in order to gain insight into the different ways in which the problem has been tackled across the country. Data on the situation in Ohio is collected through survey methodology using the heads of cataloging departments in major academic and public libraries as the population sample. The data are analyzed and conclusions are drawn on the basis of the findings.

The findings suggest that size of library has little to do with the presence of backlog, and that backlog is created by factors other than volume of collection. There also appears to be no significant relationship between backlog and types of libraries, in that backlog exists both in academic and public libraries. However, the volume of backlog appears to be low in public libraries and high in academic libraries. Gifts to libraries contribute to the problem of backlog. Overall, the main cause of backlog has to do with the inadequate number of cataloging staff as well as sudden staff departures. The paper concludes with some general insights drawn from the study, and some recommendations for the solution of the problem of backlog.

Master's Research Paper by

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LL.B., University of Lagos, 1976

M.L.S., Kent State University, 1991

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PREFACE

The problem of cataloging backlog has been frustrating to many librarians and library users for sometime and is likely to get worse with the current information explosion. It does not seem to make any sense to spend so much money acquiring books which do not get cataloged until the information in them become dated. This study was undertaken to help throw some light on the delays in the cataloging process and solutions to the problem.

Many thanks to Dr. Lois Buttlar whose useful suggestions and comments were invaluable and to Modibo and the children for their patience and understanding.

I. Introduction

Statement of the Problem and the Need for the Study

The issue of cataloging backlogs in libraries has become a very important one to both librarians and the users of materials in the libraries. The problem differs from library to library. Sometimes the backlog is simply items not cataloged but still available to users even though on a limited basis. However, most of the time, the cataloging of the materials is delayed indefinitely while they are being segregated and housed in a separate area inaccessible to users. This latter situation denies users access to some materials.

The purpose of a library is to provide access to all available information for its users without delay. This purpose is fulfilled when the acquisition and cataloging of materials are done in a timely manner to prevent materials becoming dated. Studies have shown that many academic libraries have materials which have not been cataloged and, therefore, are not available for use by students or faculty. The problem is not confined to academic libraries but also exists in public libraries. A partial solution to this problem is to find a way to provide access to uncataloged materials. This could be achieved by allowing faculty and students to request and use an uncataloged item through rush cataloging. Another solution is to completely eliminate the backlog by using a task force and special funds to catalog all materials on backlog until caught up and timely cataloging of all subsequent material

can be done. With most academic and public libraries becoming automated, timely cataloging will mean that materials will be available on-line for use a few days after being received instead of a few years. In the meantime, the problem of cataloging backlogs remains with us, and we need to study the various ways in which the problem can be reduced.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine:

1. the number of academic and public libraries in Ohio with cataloging backlogs;
2. whether academic libraries are more likely than public libraries to have backlogs;
3. the causes of the backlogs, if any;
4. the size of the backlogs;
5. remedies for removing these backlogs and/or making backlogged materials available to users;

Definition of Terms

Backlog is defined as any materials remaining uncataloged twenty weeks after receipt and housed separately from accessible collections.

Materials are defined as acquisitions which need cataloging including books, monographs, microfilms, records or tapes.

Academic library is defined as any library which is part of a university or institution of higher learning. Public Library is

defined as any library which serves the general public in a community.

Limitations

This study does not deal with materials which do not pass through the cataloging department such as serials. The questionnaire was mailed only to the heads of cataloging departments and the opinions of other librarians such those in reference were not solicited. Since the study is limited to academic and public libraries in Ohio, the findings are not necessarily generalizable to all academic and public libraries.

II. Literature Review

The purpose of the literature search was to identify significant literature dealing with cataloging backlogs in academic and public libraries and the solutions to the problem. The sources searched were Dissertation Abstracts, Library Literature, Library and Information Science Abstracts, bibliographies in books and articles and the card catalog. Online sources such as DIALOG Information Retrieval System and BRS were also searched. Years searched were January 1969 to January 1990. De visu examination was made of all materials utilized in this study. Materials used were mostly journal articles some of which contained reports on experiments carried out in various academic and public libraries to manage or attempt to eliminate backlogs. Three areas of discussion are common to most of the articles: the extent of the backlog problem; the causes of backlog; and various ways of dealing with the problem, and the results attained from such experiments.

The most comprehensive study of backlogs in libraries is a survey of the 117 member libraries of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in 1984, in which sixty-eight out of the responding eighty-eight libraries indicated they had some kind of backlog.[1] Only 20 libraries had no backlog. The backlogs reported in the survey ranged from 500 to 159,000 titles. Fifty-one of the 67 respondents had had the backlog for more than ten years. Only two

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[1]Grace Agnew, Christina Landram, and Jane Richards, "Monograph Arrearages in Research Libraries," Library Resource & Technical Services 29:4 (Oct./Dec., 1985) : 343-359.

libraries had developed their backlog within the year preceding the survey. To the question as to the causes of the backlog 55.6% of the responding libraries indicated that increased acquisitions was a very important factor. A significant number thought inadequate budgets and staff contributed to the backlog. Out of the sixty-eight libraries with backlogs, fifty-five responded that they were currently working on reducing the backlog. The study found that 88.2% of the responding libraries believed automation will help reduce or eliminate the backlogs. Also shown was the fact that 41% of the libraries provided some kind of bibliographic access to materials on backlog.

Share, on the other hand, found that cooperative cataloging has significantly increased the cataloging backlog as more libraries try to avoid original cataloging and hold materials until others have cataloged them. While these can be purchased for 1/5th the cost of original cataloging, he found that it has resulted in poor service to the library users who have to wait indefinitely for materials to be cataloged.[2] Share discusses the "Code of Responsible Use" sent to members by OCLC. A section of the code implores participants to "input current cataloging promptly to promote resource sharing and collection development." To Share, this is what cooperative cataloging was meant to be until everyone decided to hold on to items and wait for other peoples cataloging. Although this reduces costs for technical services it denies

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[2]Donald Share, "Waiting for Cataloging," Technical Service Quarterly 4 (Fall 1986): 19.

library resources to users by reducing the available materials. A willingness to undertake original cataloging without waiting, streamlining backlogs into normal workflow and increased efficiency in technical services are what he sees as solutions to the backlog problems. In another report on a successful experiment at Rice University, Share reiterated that libraries have backlogs because they "can not cope efficiently with day-to-day cataloging workloads."[3] He recommended streamlining backlogged items into a library's regular workflow until every piece of material is cataloged. This was how he effectively eliminated cataloging backlog at the Fondren Library.

In a survey conducted by Behrens and Smith, it was found that 84.61% of the responding libraries had backlogs and only 15.38% did not.[4] This study found no relation between the size of the backlog and the size of the library. Of the forty-four libraries maintaining backlogs, twenty-eight (63.63%) offered some kind of access to backlogged material. There was some indication that most of the materials in the backlogs needed original cataloging and also that some libraries routinely place all new materials in the backlog.

Miller and Ford report on the backlog created at Trinity University Library by increased acquisition and a lack of a

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[3]Donald Share, "Management of Backlogs." Library Journal 111 (September 1, 1986); 160-1.

[4]Beth Behrens, and Phillip Smith, "Cataloging Backlogs in Academic Libraries," Tennessee Librarian 39 (Winter 1987) : 14-17.

corresponding increase in cataloging staff.[5] Initially, some access was provided to materials in the backlog but as the collection grew it became impossible to locate materials in the backlog. To provide ease of access, the books were arranged by language and then by OCLC type number in accession number order. A locally produced Computer Output on Microform (COM) catalog was used to provide a database to the backlog. Students and faculty members were allowed to ask for uncataloged books at the reference desk by filling out a card. The books were then retrieved from the backlog and cataloged within forty-eight hours for circulation. There is a general tendency to assume that all cataloging delays are caused by the traditional cataloging problems. While there is no question that the latter constitutes the primary cause of such delays, Hellen has pointed out that some of the obstacles to the smoother flow of proof slip receipts have nothing to do with the cataloging process.[6]

Using the Library of Congress as a case study, Hellen discovered that one main obstacle was budgetary in nature, i.e. inadequate appropriations, uncertainties in other appropriations, and miscellaneous fiscal obstacles. In particular the shortage of staff had severe effects on production.

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[5]Ruby Miller, and Barbara Ford, " 'Ask at Reference' for Backlogged Books," College & Research Libraries News 1 (January 1988) : 12.

[6]George B Hellen, "An Inquiry Into Library of Congress Cataloging Delays," Library Resources & Technical Services 15 (Summer 1971): 364.

The other obstacle reported by Hellen had to do with the fact that as high as 14% of titles on the list of receipts for proof slips were never really received by the Library of Congress, owing to an alarming printing backlog in the Library Branch of the Government Printing Office. The study indicates that these problems could be passed on to other libraries, since some of them, e.g. the North Carolina State Library Processing Center, depend on Library of Congress proof slips for cataloging the majority of titles they handle. From the standpoint of the "recipient" libraries, a related problem concerns the implications of the priority system employed by the Library of Congress.

On the basis of this study, Hellen strongly suggests that the printing delays ought to be tackled, and that the Library of Congress should identify more clearly the criteria used to cast individual titles into certain priorities so that librarians at the local level can decide whether to go ahead with original cataloging or to hold the title for a proof slip, assuming that staffing and printing problems are solved.

White and Roos note that backlogs have generally been treated as a management problem which could be solved by adjusting staffing patterns or adopting less arduous cataloging criteria.[7] They point out that it is also important to consider the specific conditions in particular libraries that contribute to persistent backlogs, as well as the nature of the materials consigned to backlogs. Among

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[7]Carol White and Tedine Roos, "Sampling the Cataloging Backlog: The University of Wyoming Library's Experience," Technical Services Quarterly 6 (1988): 15.

such conditions are the relationship between the materials budge' and the available cataloging staff, staffing levels within the cataloging department, special projects such as retrospective conversion that compete in time resources with new title cataloging, and the collection-development policies of the particular library.

A more pointed aspect of the study by White and Roos has to do with the materials that tend to be backlogged, rather than ways to eliminate existing backlogs. Utilizing variables such as Library of Congress (LC) cataloging priority and subject discipline, their case study of the situation at the University of Wyoming indicated that backlogged materials tended to have lower LC cataloging priorities, to be published more by foreign publishers, to be more likely to be direct orders, and to be primarily from the academic disciplines of language and literature, history, fine and applied arts.

In discussing the various approaches towards a solution of the cataloging problem, Intner poses an interesting analogy with the practice of "triage" in medical treatment, a prioritization process used during crisis to reduce an impossible caseload to manageable proportion by eliminating from immediate medical care those who cannot be saved with the best possible treatment under the sun.[8] Intner believes that " bibliographic triage" might help librarians facing acute backlog problems to select which items should be

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[8]Sheila S. Intner, "Bibliographic Triage Revisited," Technicalities 8 (October 1988): 3.

cataloged first, in order to maximize the benefits derived from the particular library's staff time and money.

In pursuit of this approach, Intner offers three different ways to select the "treatable" materials, with each alternative producing a different outcome and serving different goals: choosing materials that are easiest to catalog, thereby cataloging the most material; choosing materials that are most important to the library's clients, thereby giving the best local service; and choosing unique materials, thereby supplying the librarian's network with the greatest number of different titles. She also notes the tradeoffs with some of these alternatives. The second alternative would, for example, require a more sophisticated selection process and is therefore likely to cost more and result in fewer cataloged materials; and while the third alternative makes the greatest contribution to total library service, it is also the most costly and produces the fewest cataloged materials. The basic rule of choosing one alternative over another is to know one's costs, consider long-range effects, and draw up a series of short and long-range plans for consideration.

Some large libraries have utilized the benefits of HEA Title II-C grants to tackle the problem of backlogs. One such library is the Western History Collections Division of the University of Oklahoma which, as a division, had accumulated an uncataloged backlog of some 42,000 volumes by 1982.[9] In devising their anti-

[9]Jill Harcourt, "Cataloging Rare Book Backlogs," College & Research Library News 2 (February 1986): 127.

backlog program, the Division aimed to catalog within one year one-half of the uncataloged published book holdings in Western history and to facilitate the bibliographic control of this special research collection by placing the holdings in an in-house circulation system. By the beginning of the project, the backlog had grown to 45,000 volumes, and the action committee had raised its statistical objective to 22,500 cataloged volumes for the first year of the grant. The grant personnel utilized two part-time administrators, one professional cataloger, three paraprofessionals and an allocation of 160 hours per week for student assistants. There were two RLIN Zentec 40 terminals for access and input into the RLIN system. After 20 months, they had reduced the backlog to about 25,000 volumes and had managed to characterize and partially organize that Division for future efforts. Harcourt, however, emphasizes that the measure of real success in any cataloging operation is the number of volumes that are actually cataloged.[10]

Other attempts at fighting cataloging backlog have been funded through more modest means than HEA grants. In 1984, the Processing Division of the Texas A & M University Library conducted an exercise in reducing backlogged monographs (exclusive of microforms and other special format materials), which was funded from salary savings. The project, named the "Bonus Baby Project" consisted of three separate parts: the identification and cataloging of a special category of materials on receipt; the expedition of monographs that had non-Library of Congress cataloging copy on

[10]Ibid., 129.

OCLC; and the assignment to professional librarians of the task of subject and call-number analysis, and some degree of weeding and correction of location information in the circulation database.[11]

A special category of materials was selected for quick cataloging at the time of receipt; and some staff were made responsible for pre-catalog searching for materials received on approval plans. As a result of this exercise, the number of monographic volumes cataloged during a 7-month period increased by 70%. No new materials were added to the monographic backlog in a year in which several large collections were also purchased and a record-breaking volume of approval plan books were received.

Libraries with small staff have also found simple, unsophisticated ways of dealing with backlog while awaiting the receipt of Library of Congress cards. One such method is the Scilken Frontlog System, installed in the late 1960s at the Orange Public Library in New Jersey to deal with new adult non fiction books.[12] It was a form of temporary classification which made such books immediately available to the public. Through this method, a book could be browsed, borrowed, or easily located by a single entry in a public catalog, while awaiting LC cards.

Different libraries have experimented with alternatives to complete, original cataloging of materials. Marko and von Wahlde report one such attempt at the University of Michigan in 1984/85,

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[11]Jacque Halverson, Ava Nell Harris, and Leila Payne, "Bonus Babies: A Special Project," Technicalities 5 (November 1985): 12.

[12]Marvin H. Scilken, "Backlog to Frontlog," Library Journal 94 (September 1969): 3014.

called Brief Record Cataloging (BRC), which aimed at utilizing a non-traditional approach to the handling of the majority of original cataloging items as a means of controlling backlog growth, as well as offering better access to materials organized in "managed backlogs."[13] All incoming materials would receive immediate cataloging treatment; bibliographic records, in card as well as machine form, would be provided; and staff time required to handle materials would be minimized.

Among the bibliographic data elements included in BRC were: the Library of Congress Card Number; the International Standard Book Number which matched the book; the choice of main entry; the title proper and first subtitle; edition statement; the first place and first publisher only; and a series statement. The study reports that the BRC experimental year achieved many of its objectives. For example, all incoming monographic materials were cataloged with available copy, brief record or full cataloging. No monograph was added to the standing backlogs since the experiment began. Cataloging costs were also contained; and all incoming monographs were given cataloging treatment without additional staff.

It is worthy of note that none of these studies dealt specifically with the State of Ohio and not every one of them

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[13]Lynn Marko and Barbara von Wahlde, "BRC (Brief Record Cataloging) at Michigan," Journal of Academic Librarianship 11 (January 1986): 339.

considered backlogs in public libraries. Some of the studies were only concerned with transitory or temporary solutions to the problem.

III. Procedure

Methodology and Population Sample

This research is descriptive in nature and the survey methodology has been adopted. The population of this study is the heads of cataloging departments at all major academic and public libraries in Ohio. Names and addresses were obtained from the American Library Directory and the Faculty and Staff Directory of the academic libraries involved.

A questionnaire was mailed to a total of 50 academic and 50 public libraries studied in this project. The questionnaire consists of twelve questions some of which are open-ended (see Appendix B). A combination of dichotomous scale, Likert scale and multiple choice responses is employed. Six questions are directed to both those who may have backlogs and those who do not. For those who have backlogs, the questions are geared towards finding how they came about and how they are being handled. The cover letter explains the purpose of the survey and the time limit to return the survey. Reminder cards were mailed to each person who did not respond within the first two weeks. A follow-up letter and duplicate questionnaire were mailed to all those who did not respond three weeks after the mailing of the initial questionnaire. Samples of the proposed cover letter and questionnaire are attached as Appendix A and B respectively.

Method of Analysis

Data from libraries reporting backlogs are separated from those who do not. A statistical analysis of the data in a comprehensive report reveals all the various aspects of cataloging backlog in Ohio. Cross-tabulation, a descriptive statistic, is used to analyze the data. Cross-tabulation shows the frequencies and percentages of one variable across the categories of one or more variable. Cross-tabulations of volume of collection by catalog backlog is attached as Appendix C while cross-tabulation of library type by catalog backlog is Appendix D.

The choice of this technique of analysis is based on the type of data (ie., nominal) collected, coupled with the small sample size which does not readily lend itself to more advanced techniques such as multiple regression. However, one attribute of cross-tabulation which makes it most suitable for this study is its capability to simultaneously present comparisons of the distributions or characteristics of one or more variables.

Frequencies for all the selected variables of interest were run for both academic and public libraries combined and then separately for each type of library. Then cross-tabulations of particular sets of variables relevant to the stated objectives of this study were also run for comparative analysis.

Chi-square is also used to determine whether there is any significant differences in the level of backlog between academic and public libraries.

IV. Results

The response to the survey is surprisingly and overwhelmingly high. Out of a total of fifty academic libraries surveyed, forty-one or 82% responded and for public libraries the response rate is forty-three or 86% libraries.

The size of responding libraries varies. Nearly 26% of the academic libraries have a total volume collection of less than 100,000. The majority, 31% have a total collection of between 100,000 and 250,000. Only 19.5% have collections of over one million items. In the case of public libraries, 27% have a total volume of less than 100,000, 53% have between 100,000 and 250,000, and 11.6% have over one million titles in their collection. The average number of titles added annually is less than five thousand for twenty-six of the academic libraries, with nine adding more than fifteen thousand items annually. However, only six of the public libraries add less than five-thousand titles annually while ten add more than fifteen thousand.

The number of catalogers employed by all cataloging departments is low. Twenty-seven of the academic libraries, nearly 70%, have between one and three catalogers. This includes both part-time and full-time staff. More than thirty-five of the public libraries, representing 81% have the same number of catalogers.

On the question of backlog, twenty-eight academic libraries or 68.3% have backlogs and thirteen or 31.7% have no backlogs. For

public libraries 62.8% or twenty-seven libraries have backlogs while 37.2% or sixteen libraries have no backlog. Out of the thirteen academic libraries that report no backlog, only four have never had a backlog. There are only two public libraries reporting that they have never had a backlog. Libraries that report no current backlog, but have at some other time dealt with cataloging backlog, were asked how they had dealt with the problem. Fifty percent of those responding from academic libraries attribute the lack of backlog to staff increases, 16.7% to being given special funds, 33% to increases in budget. None of these libraries report using outside contractors to eliminate the backlog. The rest assign numerous means for having dealt with the backlog.

Regarding the volume of materials in their backlogs, 51% or fourteen of the academic libraries with backlogs report they have less than one thousand materials in their backlog. Nearly 15% have between 1,501 and two thousand materials in backlog, and 7.4% have between 2,501 and three thousand, while the same number have between 3,501 and four thousand materials. Five libraries (representing 18.5%) have over four thousand materials in their backlog with one library reporting that it has approximately 100,000 items in its backlog. The figures are low for public libraries since 45.8%, or eleven, of those with backlogs have five hundred or less materials in their backlogs. Out of nine public libraries, 37.5% have between 1,001 and fifteen hundred materials in backlog, while 12.5%, representing three libraries, have between 2,001 and twenty-five hundred materials. One public library

reported thirty-eight thousand materials in its backlog.

With regards to the type of materials in the backlog, new materials represent 28.6% of the backlog materials in academic libraries while they represent 59.3% of the backlog materials in public libraries. Over 53% of the backlog in the academic libraries are gifts, while public libraries have 26% of this category. While only 32% of the materials in academic library backlog need original cataloging, this is not true of the backlog in public libraries where 52% of the backlog item need original cataloging.

Cataloging backlogs seem to have become a way of life in academic libraries. Fifty percent of responding academic libraries with backlogs have had such backlogs for more than five years, while only 12% of those in public libraries have had them for that long. While 44% of the public libraries have had a backlog for less than a year, only 14% of academic libraries have had the backlog for that period of time. A little over 28% of the academic libraries have had the backlog for a period of one to two years as opposed to 24% of the public libraries. Seven percent of the academic libraries and 20% of the public libraries have had the backlog for between two and five years.

Asked to assign causes to their current backlog, over 46% of academic libraries and 48% of the public libraries attribute their backlog to increased acquisition. There is agreement on the impact that inadequate staff levels has had on cataloging backlogs. Sixty-three percent of the public and 64% of academic libraries

point to inadequate staff as the cause of the backlog. Interestingly, very few of the libraries think inadequate budgets had caused the backlogs: only 7% of academic and 11% of public libraries reported thus.

Most of the public libraries, (up to 85.2%), do not allow user access to backlog materials, while 50% of academic libraries allow access to materials on backlog. Since this is a survey of heads of cataloging departments, they were asked to rate how various solutions could help alleviate backlog. The suggested solutions included increase in budget and staff, automation and use of outside contractors. Over 34% of the public and 50% of the academic librarians think an increase in budget would help while 21% of public and 23% of academic libraries do not believe it would help alleviate the problem. On the question of increase in staff as a solution, over 80% of the academic and nearly 60% of the public librarians think it would be very helpful. Only 3.8% of academic and public librarians do not think this would help. Most of the academic libraries are already automated but over 41% of academic librarians think automation would not help the problem. Conversely, over 45% of the public librarians think automation would be very helpful in alleviating backlog. There is consensus on the question of using outside contractors to clear backlog. More than 78% of the academic libraries and 66% of the public libraries assigned "not helpful" to using outside contractors.

As indicated by the Chi-square in Table B, there is no significant relative difference between backlogs in academic and public libraries.

V. Summary And Conclusions

The overwhelming response rate of this survey indicates the high level of concern among catalogers about the problem of cataloging backlog in both academic and public libraries. Also the response given by nearly half of all the libraries to the effect that they always worked on their backlogs showed that attempts are being made daily to eliminate the problem.

This study reveals that the size of the volume of materials in a library has little to do with the presence of backlog. Both libraries with large volume materials and those with small volumes have backlogs. This shows that factors other than volume of collection create the backlog.

A primary cause of cataloging backlogs that emerged from this study is the low level of cataloging staff maintained by most libraries. There is no corresponding link between the level of acquisition and the number of catalogers. The findings show that increases in acquisition have had a significant impact on the volume of backlogs while staffing levels have stayed the same or in some instances decreased. Some indication from a few libraries shows that cataloging backlogs are exacerbated by sudden staff departures or sick leave and an inability to fill such vacancies immediately. This is supported by the fact that most of the libraries which had successfully dealt with backlog did so with an increase in staff.

One insight that this study reveals is that there is no significant relationship between backlog and type of library. Public libraries are as likely as academic libraries to have backlogs. However, it seems that academic libraries can not cope with the backlog and therefore keep materials longer in the backlog while public libraries tend to keep materials in backlog only for short periods. Even though materials stay longer in backlog, the majority of the academic libraries allow some access to these materials while most of the public libraries do not provide for access to materials in backlog.

Share, in his reports, had expressed reservations about cooperative cataloging which he thought had contributed significantly to cataloging backlogs in academic libraries.[14] The findings of this study show that only a small percentage of the materials in Ohio's academic libraries are new materials or need original cataloging. However, Share's findings are true for the public libraries studied in this survey.

A problem which has not been discussed much in the literature, but which was revealed by this study, is that gifts make up a large portion of the backlog in libraries. It seems that gifts are given low priority in the cataloger's work schedule while at the same time more materials are being accepted as gifts. A filtering system whereby gifts are evaluated up front for their usefulness to a particular library before acceptance would seem to be more beneficial in the long run by reducing the number of such materials

[14]Share, Waiting for Cataloging, 19.

in the backlog.

Another significant result of this study is that there is a link between the volume of backlog materials and type of libraries. Public libraries have low volume of materials in backlog while academic libraries tend to have a rather high volume of materials in backlogs. This can be attributed to the type of materials, e.g. difficult languages, that academic libraries collect and the high level of difficulty involved in cataloging such materials.

On the whole this study demonstrates that a large number of both academic and public libraries in Ohio have cataloging problems. By examining the cataloging backlogs of academic and public libraries, an insight was gained into how these backlogs develop and what measures can be taken to reduce or eliminate such backlogs. It is comforting to note that Ohio's libraries are well funded and that budget cutbacks are not the reasons backlogs exist. Inadequate cataloging staff, coupled with increased acquisition, seems to be the major cause of most of the backlogs. This being the case, Ohio's libraries might be able to solve the problem by having the collection development, acquisition and cataloging departments cooperate fully with each other. Acquisition of some materials can be slowed when backlogs are developing or, in the alternative, part time staff can be used to deal with each period of increased acquisition. Moreover, the fact that those in collection management are made aware of such backlogs would mean that greater effort would be put in acquiring only materials needed by the users of a particular library.

One approach that libraries facing cataloging backlogs may consider is the brief record cataloging discussed by Marko and von Wahlde.[15] Minimum cataloging of materials would move materials faster from the backlog to the users and in many cases would provide all the necessary information needed for the identification of the materials.

This study suggests that public libraries should be encouraged to offer some degree of public access to backlog materials. Denial of any sort of access to these materials has the same effect, at least while stuck in the backlogs, as if the materials had never been purchased by the library.

One of the most important findings of this study is that some libraries have been able to eliminate backlogs. Based on their experiences, it would be reasonable to conclude that investment in staff resources, cooperation between departments, supplemented by some degree of experimentation, would help alleviate the backlog problems in our libraries.

Finally, while this study was confined to the academic and public libraries in Ohio, it seems certain that other libraries outside Ohio could utilize its results to help them better understand their cataloging backlog.

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[15]Marko, BRC (Brief Record Cataloging) at Michigan, 339.

Appendix A

School of Library Science
Kent State University
Kent, OH 44242

September 7, 1990

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Dear Department Head:

Cataloging Backlogs In Libraries: The Case of Ohio

I am conducting a survey of heads of cataloging departments in academic and public libraries in Ohio in fulfillment of my masters degree at the School of Library Science, Kent State University.

I am interested in finding out the cause(s), size of and remedies for cataloging backlogs in Ohio's libraries. Few studies have been done in this area and I am hoping that participating libraries will help throw some light on the situation.

Please complete and return the questionnaire in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope by September 20, 1990. Results of the study will be available on request. Your participation is essential to the success of this survey and it is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Adelaide Ocran

Appendix B

Cataloging Backlog in Libraries: The Case of Ohio

Type of Library ___Academic ---Public

Please attach to this questionnaire any further explanations or qualifications to your answers.

1. The approximate volume of your collection is:
   ___ Less than 100,000 ___ 100,000 - 249,000
   ___ 250,000 - 499,000 ___ 500,000 - 699,000
   ___ 750,000 - 999,000 ___ Over 1 million

2. The approximate number of titles acquired each year is:
   ___ Less than 5,000 ___ 5,001 - 9,999
   ___ 10,00 - 14,999 ___ Over 15,000

3. How many catalogers are there in your department?
   (Please include professional and para-professional)
   ___1-3 ___4-6 ___7-10 ___10+

4. How many of your catalogers are
   Full Time Faculty_____ Part Time Faculty _____
   Full Time Staff _____ Part Time Staff _____

5. The average number of books cataloged each week is
   __ Less than 50 titles ___ 50 - 60 titles
   __ 70 - 80 titles ___ over 80 titles

6. Do you have a cataloging backlog in your library?
   ___ Yes ___ No

If you answered No to question 6, please answer only questions 7a and 7b and return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope. If you answered Yes, please go directly to question 8 and complete the questionnaire.

7. Have you ever had a cataloging backlog? ___ No ___ Yes

7b. If yes, how was it eliminated?
   ___ Increase in staff ___ Increase in budget
   ___ Special Funds ___ Outside contractor

8. What is the approximate number of materials in your backlog
____0-500 ____501-1000 ____1001-1500 ____1501-2000
____2001-2500 ____2501-3000 ____3001-3500 ____3501-4000
____4001-4500 ____4501-5000 ____5001+ _____

9. Most of the materials in the backlog are
___ New materials ____Gifts ____Needs original cataloging

____Other (Please specify) _____

10. How long have you had the backlog?
___ Less than one year ___ 1 - 2 years

___ 2 - 5 years ___ Over 5 years

11. There is a backlog in your library because of
___ Increased acquisition ___ Inadequate Staff

___ Inadequate Budget ___ Other (Please explain)
_____

12. Do you have staff members working on the backlog?
___ Rarely ___ Sometimes ___ Always ___ Never

13. Are users allowed check out materials on backlog?
___ Yes ___ No

12. Which of the following do you think could help alleviate backlogs. (Please check one answer only for each category.)

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Helpful	Not Helpful
Increased Budget	___	___	___	___
Increased Staff	___	___	___	___
Automation	___	___	___	___
Contracting to Outsiders	___	___	___	___

Other (Please specify) _____

13. Any other comments? _____

Table A

CROSSTABULATION OF

V2 VOLUME OF COLLECTION

BY

V10 CATALOG BACKLOG

V2	TOT PCT	V10 YES (1)	V10 NO (2)	ROW TOTAL
LESS 100,000	1	20.2	7.1	23 / 27.4
250,000-499,000	2	7.1	4.8	10 / 11.9
750,000-999,000	3	2.4		2 / 2.4
100,000-249,000	4	23.8	19.0	36 / 42.9
OVER 1 MILLION	5	11.9	3.6	13 / 15.5
COLUMN TOTAL		55 / 65.5	29 / 34.5	84 / 100.0

Table B

CROSSTABULATION OF
V34 LIBRARY TYPE
BY
V10 CATALOG BACKLOG

	V10 COL PCT / TOT PCT	YES	NO	ROW
		1	2	
V34				
ACADEMIC	1	50.9	44.8	41
		33.3	15.5	48.8
PUBLIC	2	49.1	55.2	43
		32.1	19.0	51.2
	COLUMN TOTAL	55	29	84
		65.5	34.5	100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.<5
0.09036	1	0.7637	14.155	NONE
0.28107	1	0.5960	(BEFORE YATES CORRECTION)	

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS = 0

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