

Catalogue & Index

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September (216) issue of Catalogue & Index which features papers from this year's conference themed around 'metafutures'. Back in March the Metadata & Discovery Group's conference was held at Engineers' House, Bristol. Two packed, informative days, followed by a third day arranged by UKCoR on RDA. Whether you were unable to attend or were there in person joining in the conversations, we are now happy to share several conference papers written up specifically for C&I. We

will also be including some further papers in the December (217) issue.

The exploration of the use of AI features in several papers but one thing that appeared to stand out was the idea that "Just because we can..., doesn't mean we should..." and that we should always consider what is the right tool for the job. All the papers included will give you plenty to think about.

The papers are grouped and ordered in the same way they were presented at the conference.

Starting with AI use in cataloguing James T. Clark and Getaneh Alemu's paper looks into the possibilities of improving discoverability of material by using the time period of the subject. They assess the limitations of time periods within LCSH and the benefits of FAST utilising exact dates, before moving to discuss ways of automatically populating the 648 field which had only been used in a small proportion of their records. They experimented with generative AI, using Google's Gemini tool, but also tried some Python scripts for comparison, emphasising in their conclusion that a range of tools should be embraced.

Hannes Lowagie showcases the idea of utilising machine-readable cataloguing rules that provide documentation both for staff and for AI workflows, using JSON as the core structure behind a 'triangle model'. This has immediate benefit on a local level but also has the potential to lead to more interoperability between institutions – with a sharing of both metadata, rules, and the logic behind it all. This strategy has been implemented at the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR).

Adam Swann and Sally Bell provide a thought-provoking look at a project designed to help copy catalogue Russian books at the University of Glasgow Library. They explored the use of AI tools to OCR text and transliterate it in preparation for searches to be performed on World Cat to find records to use. Whilst they had a high success rate, they also began to question the legal, ethical and environmental risks of using AI and thus decided to repeat the project using Python. This was also successful and so they summarise the benefits of Python versus AI, whilst reminding us that human intervention is still always necessary.

Moving into metadata team management, Helen K. R. Williams shares the idea of a 'team purpose tree' that maps institutional strategy to a mission and vision for the metadata team, helping to put into context the work team members do. The presentation at the conference was part workshop and attendees discussed in small groups what they thought their Mission, Vision, and Strategy were, or should be. Williams provided examples from the LSE Library's Metadata team. This is an interesting and practical tool that many of us could benefit from applying in our own workplaces.

Helen K. R. Williams' second contribution rounded up the first day's Collaborative metadata-ing block, looking at the work the LSE Metadata team have done on improving institutional research visibility by improving the discoverability of researchers, their outputs, and their association with LSE departments. This work was achieved through engagement with Wikimedia platforms, something their team has been doing in relation to the library's collections since 2020 but has now been extended to enhancing research visibility.

Day two continued the collaboration theme with Blaithin Hurley providing an interesting look at four historic diocesan libraries in Ireland and explores how approaches to cataloguing their collections have impacted their discoverability and accessibility for both local and scholarly communities. She discusses the idea of metadata as a form of cultural stewardship by recording provenance, preserving context, and making items visible.

Chuin Peng Sim and Gandhimathy Durairaj provide a fascinating insight into the National University of Singapore Libraries' digitisation and digital stewardship programme. As a leading Southeast Asia resource hub there has been an extended programme on digitising a wide range of materials in different languages and formats, such as private papers, maps, photographs etc. They emphasise the importance of metadata for enabling contextual understanding as well as discoverability. Internal and external partnerships have been key in expanding expertise as well as broadening access to private resources. Digital Gems is the public platform through which all the material can be accessed.

On the topic of linked data Sarah Glaccum describes the project undertaken at the University of Southampton Library that experimented with using OCLC's Meridian to add linked data entities to two unique collections. Having been granted free access for one month to Meridian careful preparation was involved and as much data as possible was gathered to populate a spreadsheet before the trial began. Glaccum postulates that engaging with linked data entities made better use of her team's time than training to be NACO contributors, which is an interesting consideration.

Amy Staniforth ran a practical workshop at the MDG conference where a group of attendees catalogued resources for the Drawing Room Library (Bermondsey, London) using a variety of devices and working on a MARC template, without access to the usual Library Management Systems and tools. The workshop was based on work Staniforth had been doing as a freelance cataloguer for the Drawing Room Library on a basic LMS without access to Z39.50. The workshop aimed to test collaborative cataloguing, and discuss thoughts on unlicensed freely shared metadata.

Fran Frenzel describes a pilot project run at the LSE Library to turn metadata into computationally useful datasets. The project took the metadata from their print PhD theses collection and explored the processes needed. The article notes decisions made and lessons learned, and looks to developing skills across the team, demonstrating the relevance that metadata experience has beyond the traditional confines of a library catalogue.

Finally, we are delighted to highlight that from this issue onwards we are also including the minutes and reports from the CILIP Metadata & Discovery Group committee meetings. It was felt that the group should become more transparent to its

members and help keep them informed on current discussions, and reports from associated groups. Many years ago, when a print-based publication, C&I used to included relevant reports to help disseminate information to its members and it was considered that this would also be a benefit to members and readers now. This issue contains the minutes from the March 2026 meeting.

An a friendly reminder that the editors are always happy to receive article proposals, case-studies, feedback, and letters. C&I is a practitioner-focused journal, from the community for the community, and we welcome small, informal pieces as well as longer articles. Please contact us at catalogueandindex@gmail.com.

Karen F. Pierce & Fran Frenzel, September 2026