

March 28, 2006

To: Bernie Hurley, Chair, SOPAG

From: Jim Dooley, Chair, HOTS

Re: HOTS Comments on the Bibliographic Services Task Force Report

HOTS appreciates the opportunity to comment on this far-reaching report and commends the members of the Task Force for their ground-breaking efforts in analyzing these highly complex and important issues. Although our responses sometimes indicate a divergence from the thinking of the Task Force authors, we nevertheless support the goals of the report and consider it imperative that we, as a system, take these difficult but necessary first steps towards improved and integrated bibliographic services. In preparing our response, HOTS has held six conference calls and conducted extensive email discussion. Our response has been informed by parallel discussions conducted by the Shared Cataloging Program Advisory Committee and the Acquisitions Common Interest Group. Copies of their responses are attached.

**1. Which 3-5 of the fifteen major headings do you think are the most important for UC to address?**

In preparing our response to the report we were guided by two principles:

1. Bibliographic services are at the heart of the library; and
2. Improving bibliographic services should be user-focused; improved search and retrieval should drive everything else.

In that context, HOTS believes that the five most important major headings are

- II. 1 Create a single catalog interface for all of UC
- III. 1 Re-architect the cataloging workflow
- I. 5 Offer better navigation of large sets of search results
- II. 2 Support searching across the entire bibliographic information space
- I. 6 Deliver bibliographic services where the users are

**2. For each of the 3-5 major headings selected above:**

**Which of the sub-recommendations do you think should be given the highest priority; that is, which do you think UC should address first and why?**

Ranking sub-recommendations was difficult because in many cases we believe various sub-recommendations are of equally high priority. In addition, there are often conflicts between the time a particular recommendation will take to implement and its overall importance. The SCP Advisory Committee response contains a table listing their evaluation of all the sub-recommendations by priority and implementation time. HOTS recommendations are as follows:

III. 1 a and b We believe both of these sub-recommendations are of very high priority. *View UC cataloging as a single enterprise (III. 1a)* needs to be the overarching, guiding principle for UC cataloging. Consistency in bibliographic data (both MARC and other metadata) facilitates improved bibliographic control across the entire bibliographic information space. In addition to improving data quality, viewing UC cataloging as a single, integrated endeavor will provide many opportunities for efficiency and improved service. Creating a structure to coordinate cataloging/metadata services formally could focus our work strategically and give direction to local efforts. Work in this direction could be carried out along with the other selected recommendations and it could be an ongoing endeavor.

*Implement a single data store (III. 1b)*, be it a single file of bibliographic records or a single ILS, must be a very high priority because so many of the other recommendations rely on such a single data store.

I. 5 We believe that sub-recommendations I. 5a and I. 5b are of high priority, but

*Implement FRBR concepts (I. 5a)* will have the greater long-term positive impact for users. At the same time, we believe that this sub-recommendation will take the longest to accomplish. *(I. 5b) Present all variant serial titles through linking fields* is very useful and should be able to be accomplished relatively quickly. *Faceted browsing (I. 5c)* is desirable, but we are uncertain as to the amount of effort required to achieve it. Perhaps an analysis of the time and effort required for the North Carolina State Endeca implementation will help answer this question.

II. 2 We found it difficult to consider these two sub-recommendations in isolation. Both *Pre-harvest metadata (II. 2a)* and *Improve the display of result sets (II. 2b)* address different aspects of searching across the entire bibliographic information space. Pre-harvesting metadata will require extensive negotiation with vendors and may therefore take longer to accomplish. At the same time, it promises to greatly improve searching and retrieval for users. Improving result set display could be pursued in parallel with other OPAC improvements.

I. 6 While we believe that *Expose metadata to external search engines (I. 6c)* and *Improve the discovery of UC digital collections (I. 6d)* are both important, we believe that *Integrate library content and services into campus content management systems (I. 6a)* is the most important of these sub-recommendations. Utilizing such content management systems will greatly expand our ability to deliver both content and services to students, faculty and staff.

**Are there any recommendations you think should be added?**

While not an additional recommendation as such, we suggest that follow-up work on these topics views and takes into full account the broader spectrum of bibliographic services beyond cataloging.

**Are there any recommendations that you think should not be pursued? Why not?**

With one exception, HOTS members are strongly opposed to the implementation of sub-recommendation (*III. 2c*) *Abandon controlled vocabularies for topical subjects*. While we support ongoing research in the development of full-text searching techniques, we believe that for the foreseeable future continued use of controlled subject vocabularies will remain important for the following reasons:

- Controlled subject vocabularies have value in searching, browsing and narrowing search results. In fact, many of the recommendations for improved sorting and display of search results contained in the report rely on controlled subject vocabularies.
- National cataloging standards require subject analysis in full-level bibliographic records. If the UC Libraries wish to continue to contribute to CONSER and OCLC, for example, we must continue to follow these standards.
- Keyword searches often produce meaningful results from subject headings rather than from words in the text.
- For foreign language texts, subject headings often provide the only English language access to these materials as well as consistency of terminology across languages.

We also do not believe that the amount of time spent on controlled subject vocabularies is such that abandoning this practice would allow meaningful redeployment of staff to other activities, unless we also abandon the corresponding LC subject classification of materials. In any event, for mainstream materials, in our current cooperative cataloging environment much of the subject analysis is already done at the time we acquire the materials.

Sub-recommendation (*III. 2b*) *Consider FAST techniques* should be employed as a supplement in support of faceted browse capability, but not as a replacement for the pre-coordinate strings currently used.

Concerning sub-recommendation (*III. 2d*) *Consider automated techniques for all textual materials*, we question whether automatic techniques can in fact be applied to all textual materials. Perhaps if the recommendation were reworded to say *some textual materials available online*, it would be more realistic.

While HOTS is strongly in favor of making materials available to users sooner, we have serious reservations about the practicality of sub-recommendation (*III. 4d*) *Support the processing workflow with ongoing metadata enhancement*.

Our experience leads us to question whether there will be the ongoing institutional staff and budgetary commitment to go back and re-catalog materials already on the shelves. Will “acquire-put on shelf with existing metadata-begin ongoing metadata enhancement” become instead “acquire-put on shelf-forget?”

**3. Section II. 1 recommends creating a single public catalog interface for all of UC while recognizing that more debate and discussion is needed to identify the best option for that single interface.**

HOTS endorses the creation of a single public catalog interface for all of UC.

HOTS members felt that it is essential that users be able to navigate easily between a local view and a union view, but that the catalog should behave the same and produce the same types of results regardless of what view is chosen. This single interface should be part of a larger federated searching tool.

HOTS members also desire a flexible and scalable tool that will allow for FRBRized displays, specialized searching, more intuitive searching and links to related information. It should also be noted that such an interface would derive information from a number of different record types, so a file consisting solely of MARC bibliographic records would not be satisfactory. The interface should display information such as call numbers and specific location information, complete holdings information and In Process/On Order flags, which, depending on the ILS, may be derived from records other than bibliographic records. There may also be other information that would be desirable for OPAC display.

While a strong majority in HOTS supports the recommendation for a single OPAC, opinion was not unanimous. It was noted that no OPAC currently on the market has the functionality that HOTS desires, and that some local OPAC customization and flexibility could be lost by implementing a single OPAC. It was also noted that there are some benefits in redundancy: when a system is down there is an alternative, deleted records can be discovered in a relatively straightforward manner and there is continuity in the event of vendor failure. HOTS does believe that UC would be wise to consider these eventualities in planning for a single public interface.

**If a decision is made to pursue this recommendation, which of the two options that the Task Force analyzed would you recommend and why?**

HOTS does not recommend that UC create its own OPAC. While having a system developed in-house would offer a high level of local control that would initially appear attractive, there are concerns about the sustainability of such an effort. New functionality would need to be added, errors corrected and basic software and interfaces upgraded. All of these would represent a substantial ongoing cost and sustained programming expertise. HOTS members’ experience with in-house systems does not suggest that it would be likely that the costs of

upgrades would be reliably funded. A UC-developed system might also be outstripped by commercial OPAC developers. Another concern would be the interoperability of such a system. We may form new partnerships in the future, and a UC-developed system might make it more difficult to share data.

Most HOTS members endorse the idea of outsourcing the UC OPAC. There is interest in the North Carolina State/Endeca model of shared development. There was no agreement on a specific system or vendor. The flexibility and responsiveness of OCLC and RLG (RedLightGreen) was questioned. OCLC, however, has apparently talked at Users Council about becoming a centralized union catalog and is actively querying its members about their needs in this arena. Google remains an unknown entity as far as its ability to provide an OPAC is concerned, and software development for libraries is unlikely to be a major part of its business plan. Current ILS vendors do not offer the features that we would like to see for our union OPAC. The question is, then, whether there is a vendor who would be willing to work with us to create an “ultimate OPAC.”

**If you agree that we should pursue the recommendation to create a single point of entry for our users, are there other options we should consider? If you disagree that we should pursue the recommendation, what alternative action would you recommend?**

Again, a shared development model, working with a commercial vendor, should be considered. Sustainability must be a paramount concern. An OPAC constructed only for the immediate future that does not take into consideration the need to keep pace with changing technology and changing user needs will not best serve the University of California libraries. A viable commercial vendor should have a revenue stream that makes continued development possible. Although it is probable that such an approach will not get us everything we could possibly want, we will be more likely to benefit more from the vendor’s need to compete in the marketplace than we would suffer from lack of ability to have everything exactly the way we think it should be.

**4. Section III. 1 recommends re-architecting cataloging workflow to view UC cataloging as a single enterprise while recognizing that more debate and discussion is needed to identify the appropriate mechanism for implementing such a single enterprise vision.**

**a. If a decision is made to pursue this recommendation, which of the three organization options that the Task Force analyzed would you recommend, and why?**

**Option 1. Coordinate cataloging expertise and practice across the entire system.**

HOTS supports coordinating cataloging expertise and practice. Coordination of cataloging would include the use of outsourcing when cost-effective, and could also include the concentration of specialized expertise on one or more campuses if appropriate.

To support coordination of cataloging HOTS recommends:

Create an infrastructure that would support coordination efforts. Such an infrastructure would make it possible to set priorities effectively, would make it possible to set system-wide cataloging standards and policies and would have the power to allocate resources to support coordination efforts. There would also have to be a means of compensating each other for sharing expertise. The SCP is a model that has proven successful for coordinating the cataloging of electronic resources, and it has an infrastructure (provided by CDL, CDC and the SCP AC) that performs these three functions.

### **Option 2. Consolidate cataloging in one or two centers within UC.**

HOTS does not support the consolidation of all cataloging into one or two centers. HOTS believes that this consolidation would be detrimental to the services that we provide, and would be both time-consuming and costly to implement. HOTS identified the following problems with consolidation:

#### *Effect on other library functions*

- Consolidating cataloging without consolidating acquisitions in the same centers will cause logistical problems. However, consolidating acquisitions in centers away from selectors will cause its own set of logistical problems.
- Removing cataloging staff from the campuses affects other services and activities on some campuses in which cataloging staff currently participate, including
  - Serving at public service desks
  - Performing collection development
  - Advising on OPAC configuration issues
  - Consulting on metadata projects originating outside the cataloging department
  - Advising on batch cataloging record management

Removing cataloging staff would reduce the flexibility in managing the tasks in which these staff participate, and would make it more difficult to manage workflow.

Many campuses are purchasing and batch loading large files of bibliographic records into the ILS. Batch record management does not

only require systems expertise, but also cataloging knowledge from campus cataloging personnel. The same is true for even automatic metadata creation. Removing essential cataloging expertise from local campuses will be detrimental to the integrity of the single data store.

- Cataloging is an essential element of our profession. We can not separate it from our individual organizations without causing loss throughout each organization.

#### *Logistical issues*

- Shipping materials or their surrogates around the state takes time and effort and would therefore be costly. Materials could be lost or damaged. At best there would be delays in getting materials into the hands of our users, thus working against several other recommendations in the report.

#### *Staffing issues*

- Individual campuses would still need technical processing staff to 'check in' materials at the campuses.
- Bibliographic maintenance would still need to be done by cataloging staff, either on the campuses (where the materials reside) or centrally (where cataloging staff would not be able to consult the collections easily or efficiently).
- Good staff morale is important for both the quality and quantity of cataloging. If cataloging staff are removed from the life of the campus libraries and placed in what could be seen as a cataloging factory, maintaining good morale could be difficult. There would also be many union issues to be resolved.

#### *Financial and management issues*

- Unless cataloging costs were allocated at the system-wide level, complex recharging would need to be done for each campus.
- Assuring that the needs of the smaller campuses were not overwhelmed by the needs of the larger campuses could be difficult. One of the smaller campuses expressed concern that their relatively small backlog could disappear into the larger backlogs of the larger campuses and be forgotten.
- ARL rankings might be affected by the removal of staff from campuses.

### **Option 3. Outsource a greater proportion of standard cataloging work.**

HOTS supports this option in the context of coordinating cataloging (Option 1).

- Most UC campuses already acquire some cataloging, both standard and specialized, through outsourcing. Many UC campuses already outsource authority control.
- A greater proportion of cataloging could be outsourced if the vendors provided quality work at an affordable price.

#### **b. If a decision is made to pursue this recommendation, which of the three architecture options that the Task Force analyzed would you recommend, and why?**

HOTS is unanimously in favor of recommendation III. 1b—implement a single data store for UC—which is a basic, underlying design that is crucial to improving UC-wide efficiency and effectiveness. UC is not well served by endless metadata replication, synchronization and merging. Data should be stored once on the back end, and viewed and re-purposed on the front end. Files, functions and systems should be smoothly integrated and redundancy should be eliminated.

HOTS encourages broader thinking than the catalog-centric approach of the report. Cataloging is not an isolated enterprise, and technical services activities are increasingly interrelated and integrated, as we have seen in the emerging ERMS effort. The bibliographic services cycle often begins at the point of selection and acquisition as we rely on more vendor records and as UC engages in more formalized cooperative collection development. Therefore, it is important to examine the flow of bibliographic information from the very beginning and not just as a result of the cataloging process.

HOTS has a strong consensus for a single ILS for the entire UC system, with a minority supporting the idea of a shared central file but not necessarily a single ILS. HOTS ranks the three options as follows, with more detail provided below.

1. Single ILS
2. Shared central file
3. Rely on OCLC

### **Option 1. Adopt a single ILS for the entire University of California system.**

While there are many concerns about the social issues (e.g., reaching agreement about a specific product, agreeing on standards and processes) and the technical difficulties (e.g., interfacing with each campus accounting system, adequate



performance), these should not stop UC from moving ahead to explore the adoption of a single ILS. HOTS notes that this is not a cutting-edge idea and has been done by other large institutions (the University of Maryland System and Affiliated Institutions, for example). In fact, HOTS began to examine the feasibility of a single ILS well over a year ago.

We recognize that a single system will not do everything we want it to. However, to justify such substantive change, a single system must actually be better than what we have now. "Better than what we have now" should be assessed from the point of view both of the user and of the technical services enterprise. While we are already moving ahead with increased cooperation in cataloging, the shared pursuit of a single ILS would act as a significant catalyst for change.

A single ILS would

- enable the full suite of technical services activities to add value to the catalog (e.g., acquisitions, ILL, ERMS);
- dramatically reduce the amount of record copying and transferring;
- eliminate the need for labor-intensive coordination between separate files;
- eliminate the need to merge records in a union catalog;
- allow all campuses to benefit from the maintenance work done by one campus;
- allow all campuses to benefit from database enhancements (e.g., Tables of Contents, jacket covers)
- allow all campuses to benefit from programming expertise located at CDL or at certain campuses.

UC would need to ensure sufficient redundancy, security and backup.

### **Option 2. Create a shared central file with a single copy of each bibliographic record.**

A central file might be more easily accomplished than a shared ILS. A consortium of academic libraries in Austria has implemented this model, which involves a bibliographic record dataflow from the central file to the local ILS. HOTS believes that UC would lose efficiencies if bibliographic data was disconnected from the other data that is crucial for technical services work. Technical services functions cannot easily be split from each other. For example, cooperative collection development would depend on the presence of on-order records in the central file.

One HOTS member suggested that the shared central file (as a single data store) could be a step in the direction of a single ILS, which would be a very long-term solution. A shared central file could be a medium-range solution which would lay a foundation for establishing the single ILS, moving UC in the direction it wants to go. A single data store could be hosted by OCLC, thereby minimizing

potential vendor costs and making use of services and technology that already exist. If this decision were paired with a long-term strategy that does not rely on OCLC as the permanent host, it could alleviate concerns about relying too completely on OCLC in the future.

For both the single ILS and the shared central file, provision must be made for the retention of campus-specific information in bibliographic records.

### **Option 3. Rely on OCLC as the single UC database of record for bibliographic data.**

This option could be as simple as using WorldCat to display UC's holdings on master records (as we do now), or as complex as contracting with OCLC to add, retain and display customized information. One concern, though, is that OCLC's current business model does not support the integrated data or functionality that the work of technical services requires.

Recognizing that WorldCat does not have full ILS functionality, HOTS stepped back to examine a model of "WorldCat as replacement for (the current) Melvyl." This would reduce by one the number of online systems with which UC must coordinate and synchronize, which is a step in the right direction. If OCLC was able to limit to various views (e.g., all UC, northern/southern campuses, individual campuses), and could include local bibliographic fields (which it does not currently), could WorldCat serve as our database of record for bibliographic data?

HOTS raised the following concerns about this model:

- campus ILSs would still be needed to manage acquisitions, circulation and serial check in;
- coordinated collection development might still be difficult;
- not all bibliographic records in campus systems are in OCLC (e.g., vendor-supplied records, RLIN records, local brief records)
- some bibliographic records and some portions of others (e.g., TOC) are proprietary and currently cannot be stored in OCLC;
- we would not necessarily retain control over the cost of searching and using the records;
- ability to edit records would be limited to those with authorization to replace the master record (usually higher-level staff)
- local, copy-specific notes and non-universal URLs would need to be stored somewhere.

**5. Are there any other comments or suggestions you have with regard to the next steps that should be taken in following up the recommendations of the report?**

We did not include recommendation IVa institutionalize an ongoing process of identifying and prioritizing improvements in our answer to question one. At the same time, we feel that institutionalizing such a process is essential if the UC libraries are to be able to support our users' information needs. Indeed, many of the issues ably documented in the report are the result of the absence of such an ongoing process of evaluation. Our users didn't discover Google yesterday; neither did we discover our dataflow problems yesterday.

We believe that, given the important and far-reaching nature of the report, all qualified bodies within UC, not just the Task Force, need to be involved in planning and implementation.

#### **6. Is there anything else you think UC should be doing in pursuit of improving bibliographic services?**

Libraries continue to make a considerable investment in authority control and the creation of authority records. Methods should be developed to leverage this ongoing investment to facilitate improved search and retrieval.

The ACIG "observed most particularly the brief attention given in the report to acquisitions functions as they relate to bibliographic services, which may reflect an underestimation of the contributions make to the collective bibliographic record. The functional lines between acquisitions and cataloging tasks frequently blur across organizational divisions, especially as acquisitions units take on an increasing amount of quick-cataloging."

HOTS strongly supports the statement of the SCP Advisory Committee: "In so far as the BSTF report represents a lot of new tasks that libraries need to take on in responding to user needs, every functional area in libraries should be looked at for work that could be done differently or discontinued, to free up resources to address the new work. It will not be enough to examine cataloging and technical services alone."