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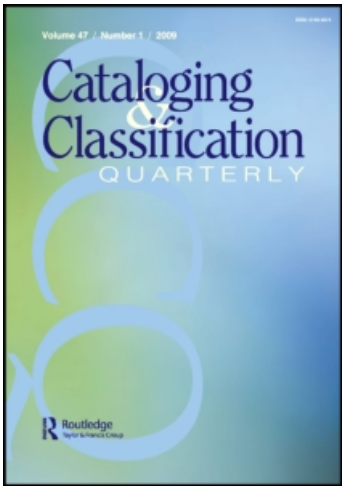

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Is There a New Bibliography?

Joseph T. Tennis[a]
[a] University of Washington-The Information School, Seattle, Washington, USA

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Is There a New Bibliography?

JOSEPH T. TENNIS
University of Washington–The Information School, Seattle, Washington, USA

Describes the position claiming that the contemporary technological, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic environment gives us pause to consider the core theory and practices of bibliography, combining bibliography of the work (in library and information science), bibliography of the text (in textual studies and scholarly editing), and bibliography of the artifact (in book history and now digital forensics), and calls for collaborative multidisciplinary research at the intersection of these fields to ask, is there a new bibliography?

KEYWORDS bibliography, metadata, social cataloging, types of materials, classification, cataloging

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INTRODUCTION

To understand the five-stage cycle of creation, publication, organization, access, and preservation constitutes the core concern for much of library and information science. It is also of concern to its progenitor fields like bibliography and cognate fields like textual studies, book history, and archival studies.[1] Increasingly, we see other (perhaps newer) fields at work in this space, from Semantic Web initiatives and digital humanities to educational technology. Each has its own perspective and focus, but they share this common concern.

However, the context in which this cycle operates today is different than it was. Technological innovations and new socioeconomic mandates have changed the means of creation and purposes for recorded knowledge,

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This position paper is a footnote to Richard P. Smiraglia's thinking on bibliography, including his course, written up in *CCQ*.[2] I also thank Bonnie Mak, Melanie Feinberg, Benjamin M. Good, Bradley P. Allen, Brian M. Reed, Adam G. Hooks, and Mike Crandall for reading and responding to this position paper.

Address correspondence to Joseph T. Tennis, University of Washington–The Information School, Box 352840, Mary Gates Hall, Suite 370, Seattle, WA 98195-2840, USA. E-mail: jtennis@uw.edu

writing, and documents. Dissemination of thought in recorded form has changed. Knowledge organization, access systems, and preservation institutions have also changed, even if we focus only on their management of writings, and not other forms of recorded knowledge. Thus, if we take a broad definition of bibliography to be *the systematic enumeration and description of writings* the question surfaces, what can hundreds of years of thinking and practice of bibliography tell us about the current state of the art? Is there now a new bibliography?

We have reason to think there is a new bibliography if we follow the current work and systems development. For example, Hendry and Carlyle[3] and Feinberg[4] examine the literature of bibliography in comparison with practices found in the contemporary environment. Likewise Mai questions the role of the social in social tagging, comparing it to extant work in indexing.[5] Mak, in a similar vein, charts the evolution of the hand written word, to print, and then to digital incarnations.[6] These works stand in innovative relation to a rich literature of methods and results of systematic enumeration and description of writings.[7]

The differences and similarities noted by these and other researchers constitute the guiding lights of inquiry for what could be a more synthesized look at the continued analysis of theory, methodology, and implementation of bibliography.

For example institutional repositories are now being seen as the official record of student theses and dissertations. In this case, they function as a bibliography of works generated by students at that institution. In some cases no print copy (save the student's private copy) exists.[8] In these cases, the question of systematic enumeration must be questioned. Who is listing these works? Is the list emergent from student requirements imposed by the institution? Is there an invisible hand at work editing these lists? Further, since the electronic theses and dissertations stand as records of what the student did in part to receive their degree, the authenticity of the texts must be attested to by the institutional repository. This means a systematic description of the text and the system that houses the digital copy of the text must be part of our understanding of the integrity of the system, and hence the authenticity of the thesis or dissertation.[9]

A new bibliography, as an orthogonal line of investigation, can also be seen in Semantic Web research—specifically in document "curation." Curation of scientific documents is an innovation without lineage, but akin to long-lived traditions. In this new practice, born, ex nihilo from innovations in personal and collaborative information management systems, biologists are systematically enumerating and describing and scientific literature. These appear as curated articles linked together through the Gene Ontology. This community is also interested in the creation of documents via wiki editing systems. These activities are of interest to a new bibliography, because the concept of access mechanisms is reinvented, and debates about their

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semantic and ontological merit are rehearsed again, but in a new context (biology and philosophy of science). Also, the concept of edition, impression, issue, or state dissolves in the wiki, or is at least transformed.[10]

Thus we can see the impetus for a more synthetic investigation. We have a number of disciplines pursuing particular lines of inquiry. What is needed is a clear synthesis of what we know, and what is left to be uncovered in this new environment.

WHAT IS BIBLIOGRAPHY?

But what exactly do we mean when we speak of bibliography? It is a word with many meanings deployed in many contexts. Even if we define it as systematic enumeration and description of writings, most research papers with literature reviews could be seen as bibliography. After all it is the job of the scholar to review extant work, and put his or her own contribution in the *con-text* of pre-existing writing. We must be more precise.

The root of the word bibliography is *biblio* and *graphos*, Greek for books and writing. And in the English-speaking world this portmanteau has done different types of work for different thinkers.[11]

I take the position that there are three things we are concerned with when we discuss a bibliography: (a) the writing in relation to other writings, (b) the writing in relation to the author's intention, and (c) the writing in relation to the mechanisms of reproduction (e.g., printing, display on screen). With the first we have a rich body of literature and practice on indexing, classification, and systematic (e.g., subject) bibliography. With the second, we have analytical bibliography, diplomatics, and with both the second and third we have descriptive bibliography and issues of authenticity. The over-arching questions here include identifying what factors influence the quality of describing and enumerating writings such that we are clear about a writing's relationships, intention, and reproduction.

The contemporary environment asks us to pause and reflect on what components and assumptions of bibliographic thought persist and which have faded. By looking at this, we can also develop new theory about how we systematically enumerate and describe writings.

THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

In the above I have made reference to a contemporary environment or a new environment in which we do bibliography. This environment is one of personal computing, networked computing, and massive creation and reproduction of writing. It is an environment where the tools alone are not enough to fulfill the objectives of systematic enumeration and description of writings. We need a deeper understanding of methods and theories in

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relation to these tools and the concomitant work practices engendered by the keyboard and the Internet connection. But there are other factors that make this environment new. We are concerned in a real and deep way with the ecological impact of our work. What does it mean for bibliography to be sustainable? As a culture we are also concerned with collaboration, and bibliography is a part of that, as seen in publicly available bookmarks and descriptions (e.g., LibraryThing) on social tagging sites. Finally, we do our work of bibliography within belief systems about the value of pointing to what has come before, what the author intended, and whether we are working from an authentic copy. These other factors shape the tools and practices of bibliography, and too must be part of our investigation.

NEW BIBLIOGRAPHY AND THE NEW BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Early twentieth-century thinkers in analytical bibliography sought a new form of method in bibliography. It was a new bibliography (later The New Bibliography). And if we identify this work with Pollard (as most experts in the field seem to do), then we have to reckon with the fact that from its inception, the Anglophone tradition of The New Bibliography had nothing to do with descriptive cataloguing and library classification as disciplines. This schism has been enshrined in an article and a response in *The Library* by the Bibliographical Society, published in 1903.[12]

Given this debate, and given the maturity of extant work done for the purposes of analytical, historical, and systematic bibliography, I believe it is time for us to consider the commonalities and emergent research questions that surface in this new environment, and hence consider whether there is a new bibliography.

A new bibliography would consider the literatures and practices extant, but also investigate emerging concerns that impact the systematic writing about writings. For example, all provinces of scholarship and information professions are concerned with environmental concerns. It takes resources to create bibliography, whether you are using skin, papyrus, or paper. It takes resources to create and maintain bibliography in digital systems, running on electricity fueled by energy stored often on metals mined by developing countries. This means there is a growing need for an ethical and green bibliography.

There are other concerns as well. We can imagine a new bibliography that is economically and environmentally sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, shared in its authorship (and hence collaborative). Perhaps these are also elements of a new bibliography?

Looking at bibliography this way we can remind ourselves, and others, of the importance of this kind of work. Metaphorically we can say that bibliography is the foundation on which other work builds. Bibliography is

the stage on which the theater of scholarship, research, and the advancement of knowledge play out. Without firm floorboards, a wide proscenium, a deep backstage, and good lighting, we would not be witness to the creation of understanding through writing.

APPROACH

In order to approach this large, complex, and interdisciplinary project, we must use an approach that fits the object of study. Thus, it seems to me that we will need to approach this topic with many different studies, examining the various aspects of bibliography—old and new. There is no focus on the new without a firm understanding and synthesis of what has come before. We will also need to make sense of these different and varied studies. In order to accomplish this synthesis we will need to create models, glossaries and dictionaries, and other instruments as necessary. The varied studies might be organized along two axes: (1) the Work-Text-Artifact axis and (2) the Copy-System-Society axis. The first is, more-or-less, a disciplinary grouping. There are disciplines that have focused on bibliography of works and those that have been focused on bibliography of texts and still others concerned with artifacts. The second axis crosses disciplines and asks how we are describing and enumerating given input from the copy-at-hand, the information system (or descriptive standard) present, and finally given social constructions and/or mandates as input. Other positions and axes can be proposed. But we can imagine examining a scientific article, a digital scholarly edition of Shakespeare, and a *catalogue raisonné* of digital art along these axes—the copy, the system, and the social milieu of the article would inform the bibliographical methods of creation and evaluation. We could also combine axes and show intersections between artifact and copy, text and copy, and work and copy in bibliographical methods and theory.

THE POSITION

I believe there is a new bibliography that builds on extant work, but hones our understanding of bibliographical theory and methods because it accounts for the technological and social constraints and affordances in the contemporary environment. I believe that there is a new way of doing bibliography, that it is a synthesis of what has come before combined with a clarity of concepts in relation to current work.

NOTES

1. Which includes records management, diplomatics, paleography, and codicology.

2. Richard P. Smiraglia, "Rethinking What We Catalog: Documents as Cultural Artifacts," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2008): 25–37.

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3. David Hendry and Allyson Carlyle, "Hotlist or Bibliography? A Case of Genre on the Web," in *Proceedings of the 39th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (HICSS'06) Track 3 (IEEE Computer Society, 2006), http://www.computer.org/portal/web/csdl/doi/10.1109/HICSS.2006.203

4. Melanie Feinberg, "Expressive Bibliography: Personal Collections in Public Space," *Knowledge Organization* 38 (forthcoming).

5. Jens-Erik Mai, "Folksonomies and the New Order: Authority in the Digital Disorder," *Knowledge Organization* 38 (forthcoming).

6. Bonnie Mak, "(Re)Defining the Page for a Digital World" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004).

7. Rudolf Blum, *Bibliographia: An Inquiry into its Definition and Designations* (Dawson: American Library Association, 1980); Fredson T. Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949); Roy Stokes, *The Function of Bibliography* (London: André Deutsch, 1969); Marcia Bates, "Rigorous Systematic Bibliography," *RQ* 16 (1974): 7–26; Cheryl Boettcher Tarsala, *What is an Author in the* Sikuquanshu*?: Evidential Research and Authorship in Late Qianlong Era China (1771–1795).* (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2001); David G. Hendry, J. R. Jenkins, and Joseph F. McCarthy, "Collaborative Bibliography," *Information Processing and Management* 42, no. 3 (2006): 805–825; G. Thomas Tanselle, "Descriptive Bibliography and Library Cataloguing," *Studies in Bibliography* 30 (1977): 1–56; A. J. Colaianne, "The Aims and Methods of Annotated Bibliography," *Scholarly Publishing* July (1980): 321–331; David McKitterick, "Books, Libraries, and Society: The Past Ever with Us," *Libraries and Culture* 27 (1992): 231–251; N. Frederick Nash, "Enumerative Bibliography from Gesner to James," *Library History* 7 (1985): 10–20; Coolie Verner, "Carto-Bibliography," *Western Association of Map Libraries Bulletin* 7, no. 2 (1976): 31–38; J. L. Winter, "Bibliography and the Analysis of Literary Culture," *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* (1981): 51–58.

8. In the case of the University of British Columbia's institutional repository they are only taking digital dissertations and theses from 2008 onward. No print copy exists as a record. The only record is the digital thesis or dissertation in the institutional repository.

9. See InterPARES Benchmark requirements for preserving authentic digital records in Authenticity Task Force, *Requirements for Assessing and Maintaining the Authenticity of Electronic Records.* The Long-Term Preservation of Authentic Electronic Records: Findings of the InterPARES Project (San Miniato: Archilab, 2004). And see also, Heather MacNeil's account: "Providing Grounds for Trust II: The Findings of the Authenticity Task Force of InterPARES," *Archivaria* 54 (Fall 2002): 24–58.

10. Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New Castle: Oak Knoll, 1995).

11. See page 22 in Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan, *Social Bibliography or Physical Bibliography for Librarians* (Delhi: University of Delhi, 1952). S. R. Ranganathan, a scholar of classification and bibliography, describes an integrated model of bibliography. Ranganathan describes a brief history of the term bibliography, as starting narrow, and moving toward a broader extension. His working definition of bibliography is the "science of books." This means he has to define book. For him a book has three parts. It has a soul, a subtle body, and a gross body. That is to say, each book has a particular topic or theme (soul), a language used to communicate that topic or theme (subtle body), and a physical instantiation (gross body). And bibliography, when defined as the science of books, studies all three. This accords with our own conception of work, text, and artifact.

12. Discussed in Stephen Bury, "The Tradition of A. W. Pollard and the World of Literary Scholarship," *The History of the Book and Literary Cultures*, July 12–14, 2004, London, UK. The source of Bury's discussion is James Duff Brown, "Practical Bibliography," *The Library* (1903): 144–162. Pollard's response is appended to Brown's paper in this issue of *The Library.*

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