

# The gap between users and cataloguers: perception of importance of bibliographic data for required reading and leisure reading

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## Abstract

This paper provides some insight into cataloguers' and end users' perception of the importance of bibliographic data for fiction for two purposes: required reading for school and leisure reading. To obtain information about opinion of cataloguers and users, we used multiple data collection methods: observation, think aloud protocol and in-depth interviews. Four studies were conducted: among 30 cataloguers in June 2014 and 32 cataloguers in February and March 2016, and among 105 high school students in November 2011 and 108 adults in July 2012. The focus was on Slovenian catalogers and users. The results revealed similarities between users' and cataloguers' view of the most important bibliographic data for fiction. Finally, we propose attributes, considered as important from cataloguers' as well as users' standpoint. Most of them could be included in the bibliographic record, regardless of the cataloguing rules and practice.

**KEYWORDS:** bibliographic data, cataloguers, information need, library catalogue, users

## Introduction

Library catalogues contain quality and rich data, especially in the sense of authority control, classification, and consistency, which remains one of the most important wishes of users (Christensen 2013, 12). However, the general image of bibliographic data is evolving along with the information environment and library catalogues run the risk of becoming irrelevant. Web search engines have become the preferred tool over the catalogues for finding information (Lewandowski 2010). Therefore, one might question the validity of bibliographic

data in a more fluid information environment, especially since diversity, inclusiveness, and flexibility are becoming increasingly important principles of information organization, as the consequence of higher user expectations.

A library catalogue serves different users with different needs. End users are as diverse as our population, with an equally diverse range of prior knowledge, research skills, and expectations. These differences may require specific demands regarding the description and organization of information objects.

To reaffirm their position and to better support users in their information seeking process, libraries should bring out the rich content of traditional bibliographic data and realise its potentials to the fullest with different users' needs in mind. The objectives of facilitating end user retrieval and maintaining the catalogue integrity represent two different perspectives, but both must be taken into account. It is important to fill the gap between end users and cataloguers, who are largely responsible for what is included in bibliographic records. Most cataloguers never face their users directly, on the other hand, the users' feedback cannot reach cataloguing process easily (Xiaojuan, and Na 2012). It is necessary to bear in mind also the current standards that determine which data elements should be recorded do not allow them a lot of freedom for additional elements and may not accurately reflect the needs of library users.

Therefore, we decided to investigate which information, in cataloguers' opinion, can best serve different users' needs and which elements users actually want to see in a library catalogue. This paper provides some insight into cataloguers' as well as end users' perception about the importance of bibliographic data for fiction for two purposes: required reading for school and leisure reading. Instead of looking at the cataloguing process and the formal output, we focused on data regardless of how they may be packaged (e.g., in bibliographic records) and on the users for whose benefit cataloguers prepare data. And instead of asking users what they think and expect of library catalogue, we gave them a set of tasks based on a hypothetical scenario that they wanted to borrow one novel, which has several editions. The comparison of these results can help and be important for the creators of bibliographic records.

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## Theoretical framework

Librarians as well as end users approach catalogues with a purpose. End users generally want to find and obtain a resource. On the other hand, librarians are more experienced users. They search on behalf of their users and in the context of other duties. In order to present the full picture, it is necessary to bridge the gap between end users' expectations and library professionals' perceptions about what constitutes a quality bibliographic description. In 2009, OCLC conducted a study *Online Catalogs: What Users and Librarians Want*, which describes a disconnection between the librarian's perception of catalogue quality and the

user's, caused by different viewpoints and objectives (Calhoun et al. 2009). End users' expectations of data quality are heavily influenced by search engines. Therefore they expect the library catalogue to function as a web search engine (Novotny 2004, 533). But unlike search engines, which retrieve data directly from full-text documents, search terms in online catalogues are provided by cataloguers in form of structured bibliographic data (Mi, and Weng 2008, 8). On the other hand, librarians' views of the data quality are often influenced by their work roles and experiences, specific demands of their position and traditional principles of information organization, which can have a great impact especially on cataloguing. They are focused on efficient and correct data entry, the elimination of duplicate records, and fixing MARC coding errors (Snow 2017; Calhoun et al. 2009, 49).

In order to ensure that users can achieve the goals of their interactions with library catalogues, simply considering that quality cataloguing should be accurate and complete, or should follow specific standards, is not enough, though. Undoubtedly, technical details for bibliographic records must be observed, but the data also should be placed in contexts of use: Who is using this bibliographic data? What are the users' needs? How do we identify those needs? Are the tools sufficiently meeting users' needs? How and where do users obtain information, and how they explain the gathered data? Can we predict users' needs?

Several researchers have reported that bibliographic records are not as useful as expected by users (Petrucciani 2015; Hider, and Tan 2008). There is a lack of additional data (such as summary, cover image, contents, etc.) that could improve the functionality of the catalogue (Hypén 2014; Hider 2008) and the enriched bibliographic records were overall associated with higher circulation rates (Dinkins, and Kirkland 2006; Tosaka, and Weng 2011; Chercourt, and Maschall 2013). The most problematic are especially bibliographic records for fiction. Considering studies (Mikkonen, and Vakkari 2012; Goodall 1989; Švab, and Žumer 2016), the usage of library catalogue to access fiction is very low (between 10-22 percent). The reason could be that catalogues support mostly known-item searching and they do not show relationships, for example between related works and versions (Merčun 2014).

Any bibliographic information system, such as a library catalogue, is useful only if it meets its users' needs and requirements; therefore, in reflecting on bibliographic data, we first need to understand its users and uses. The extent to which users use bibliographic data in a catalogue is largely dependent on what data is available. Users use whatever they are given. Moreover, they use the principle of least effort in their information seeking. User tasks are often presented as secondary considerations instead of as primary motivators and the basis for functional cataloguing, if they are considered at all (Strader 2017). Toward providing richer discovery and delivery, IFLA Library Reference Model (Riva, Le Boeuf, and Žumer 2017) already offers a framework for the data and functionality required by end users (and intermediaries working on behalf of

end-users) to meet their information needs. IFLA LRM identifies five generic user tasks: to find, identify, select, obtain and explore. According to Rose (2012, 128), the first three tasks of finding, identifying, and selecting, are the tasks most affected by cataloguing practices.

Cataloguers should think about the impact and the benefit of cataloguing to library users and create enriched bibliographic records in order to establish the best connection between users and the library collection, based on users' expectations (Diao, and Hernandez 2014). In the literature we can trace a number of recommendations on how to provide more value-added information (Hypén 2014), but not enough concerning the relationship between users and cataloguing (Xiaojuan, and Na 2012).

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## Research questions

Our main research questions were:

Which attributes do cataloguers find the most important to help different types of users with different needs (for example leisure reading, required reading for school...) find, identify, select and obtain the publication?

Which bibliographic data are the most important for high school students when they identify and select books for assigned reading?

Which attributes are the most important for adults to identify and select fiction for leisure reading using the catalogue?

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## Methodology

Multiple data collection methods were used to obtain information about opinions of users and cataloguers about the importance of bibliographic elements: observation, think aloud protocol and in-depth interviews.

In the description of monographic publications study we used a think-aloud protocol to determine how cataloguers would describe publications in such a way to best support different types of users with different types of information needs in their tasks of finding, identifying, selecting and obtaining the appropriate publication, without the restrictions of a particular cataloguing tool.

The first study was conducted in June 2014 among 30 Slovenian cataloguers from seven libraries. *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare was selected to serve as a representative case for required reading. The second study was conducted in February and March 2016 among 32 participants from six different libraries. We used *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo for the leisure reading case. Both studies involved cataloguers from National and University Library of Slovenia,

University Library Maribor, several academic and public libraries. Participants were given different versions of monographic publications (actual copies of books). They were asked to describe the publications in a manner which best identifies and clearly defines those pieces of information which are of paramount importance for different types of users with different information needs in their tasks of finding, identifying, selecting and obtaining the appropriate publication. The task in both studies of the description of monographic publications was essentially the same.

Due to a relatively small sample size of cataloguers, we were interested to retrieve qualitative and not quantitative data from both studies. We were able to compare the results with those obtained in the study with users.

We conducted two studies with users in school libraries and in public libraries in 2011 and 2012. There were two groups of users: 105 high school students worked with a book for required reading and 108 users of public libraries worked with a book for leisure reading. Users were provided with printed bibliographic records, each of which represented a different version of the book. They were asked to select one of the versions based on the bibliographic records and to explain why they selected the version they did. Users had the opportunity to explain their decisions and list the criteria that were most important to them. At the same time, we noted how participants used the bibliographic records and what they looked for when examining the records.

For the first study with high school students, we created enriched bibliographic records for 11 different versions of *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. The attributes were presented as mind map where the elements were logically grouped.

For the second study with adult readers, we used three different types of bibliographic records for six versions of *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo (Figure 2). One type of bibliographic record was taken from current Slovenian library catalogue COBISS, the other two types were created as enriched bibliographic records: the second one was the same as in the study with the high school students (mind map) and the third one was based on FRBR model where the elements were grouped by entities.

The nature of publications selected was quite similar in both studies, with a variety of distinctive elements, such as different translations, an illustrated edition and type of illustrations, different series, publication with the foreword, editions in two or four volumes, length (abridged or unabridged), font size, binding (hardcover or paperback), publication year, book size, design of book, etc. The physical condition differed as some books were well preserved and others were not (torn protective foil or damaged spine).

## Participants

Out of the 46 cataloguers (16 cataloguers participated in both rounds), only two were male. Twelve of them had a formal library and information science educa-

tion, the rest came from other fields. At the time of the study, the participants had been working as cataloguers from one to over 15 years. 28 participants had more than 15 years of cataloguing experience, 4 participants had 10 to 15 years of experience, while 8 of them had 5 to 10 years of cataloguing experience. Only six participants had been working as cataloguers for less than five years.

Their workloads dedicated to cataloguing vary from 10 % to almost 100 %. Original cataloguing was the primary responsibility for two-thirds of them. For the others it was only a part of their job, especially for those in small public libraries and some academic libraries, who are generally responsible for several or all tasks within the library.

We interviewed 105 high school students (14–18 years) from two different Slovenian secondary schools. We got the permission of the headmasters who took care of the ethical issues. The proportion of male and female was almost the same as proportion at Slovenian secondary schools (63 percent of female; 37 percent of male). Their information seeking behaviour depended on the training received by librarians. High school students who borrowed books for assigned reading in public libraries reported to more frequently use the library catalogue. The reason could be the arrangement of books in the library and library size.

The convenience sample of 108 adults was interviewed outside and inside of public libraries in three towns. There were more female (64 percent) than male and half of the users were employed (54 percent). Most of them had a university degree and were aged between 18 and 40. Only 55 percent of the users used library catalogues for different purposes and 25 percent (mostly pensioners) did not know and did not use the catalogue. When they were looking for fiction, half of them (49 percent) asked librarians for help.

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## Research results

The purpose of the analysis carried out for this paper was to investigate what kind of information, in cataloguers' opinion, might be beneficial for users in different information seeking situations in comparison with end users' expectations.

The elements that in cataloguers' opinion can best serve users for leisure reading and were mentioned more than three times can be found in Figure 1. While some cataloguers compared different versions of the books and stressed detailed information that would allow users with more specific needs to determine the differences between these similar publications, others provided a brief description with a small number of elements. Only a few elements were mentioned twenty times or more: binding, number of volumes, translator, publisher, and publication date. There was a lot of emphasis on information about the format (binding and book size), as seen in Figure 1. Most cataloguers (25) emphasised especially the paperback binding, as one of the particular characteristics of the

books for leisure reading and as one of the most important data for users. They explained that it is easier to take several paperbacks versus one or two hardcovers on vacation. Hardcover books are more robust and physically larger for the same reading content. According to many librarians, the physical characteristics of the book are also of interest to users who read for pleasure. Cataloguers for example pointed out the number of volumes, book size, illustrations, print size, and number of pages.

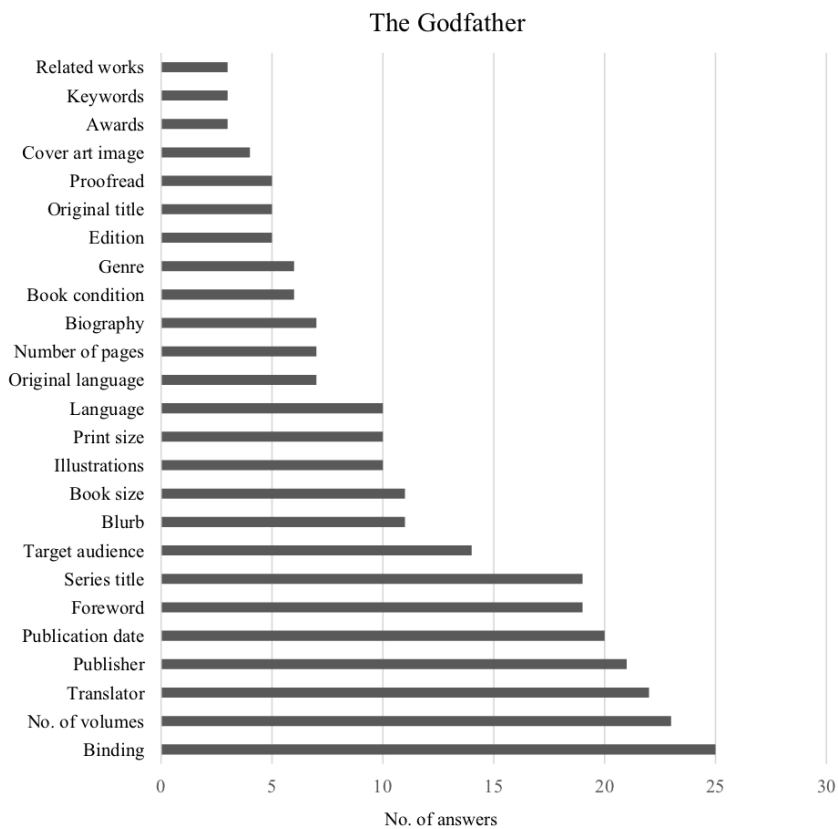


Figure 1. Important attributes for leisure reading from cataloguer's point of view: The Godfather example

This was confirmed also with the research with users. Those attributes are difficult to describe, since users have different personal perspectives. Because of this, the display of a sample page is very useful for users to determine some basic physical characteristics like font size, illustrations, line spacing, page layout, etc.



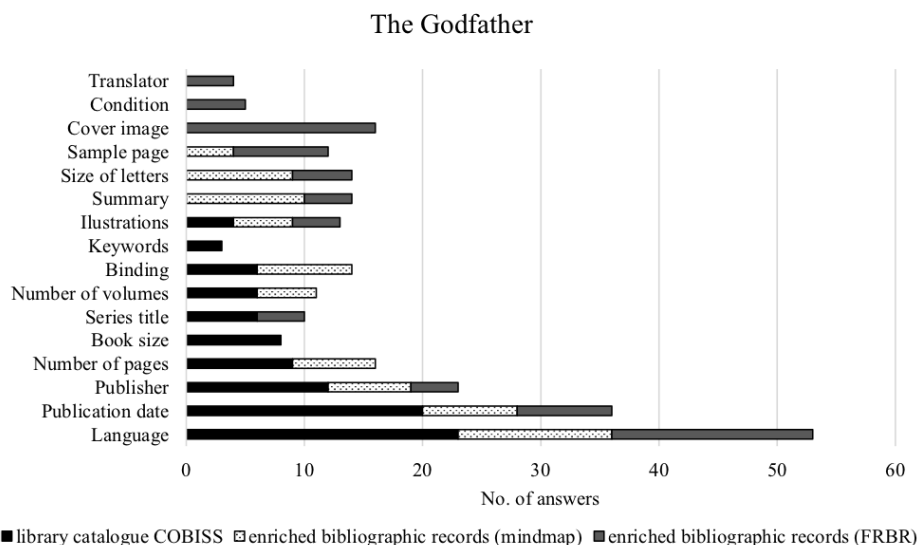


Figure 2. Important attributes for leisure reading from users' point of view: The Godfather example

Most users in our research have not read *The Godfather* (75 percent) and that is why they were disappointed if the bibliographic records included only keywords and not summary. Language was the most important for them (Figure 2), because they want to read in their mother tongue and some young adults preferred English version. Publication date was related to their assumption of good condition of the item and updated language or translation. Many users expressed that publisher was an important attribute because some publishers are trustworthy and known for quality of translation, proofreading, quality of binding, and paper. Number of pages was important if the users were offered many different versions like retold or abridged version. Some users mentioned that more pages and a larger size of a book mean large size of letters (especially in first two type of bibliographic records, which were without image of a sample page).

Our research revealed that the attributes, chosen by users, varied depending on different bibliographic records that were given to them, for example including the cover image or sample page, condition of item, size of letters.

It is interesting to note that the information about the translation did not seem as important to the users as it did to the cataloguers.



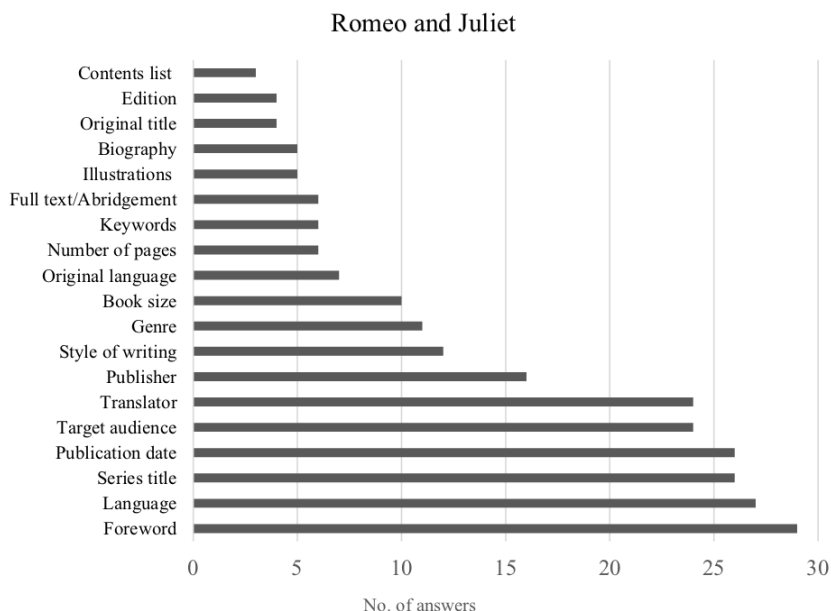


Figure 3. Important attributes for required reading for school from cataloguer's point of view: Romeo and Juliet example

The picture changes somewhat, however, if cataloguers take into consideration the likelihood that publication is intended for assigned reading, namely cataloguers assumed that the users do not have the same mental model when searching for leisure reading and for required reading. During the description of a typical publication for assigned reading, they paid most attention to the foreword, series title, language, the publication date, the translator, and stated intended audience, emphasizing that these elements are often the most important for high school students, as seen in Figure 3.

Several cataloguers commented on user requests in their library. For example, "Students are often looking for publications with additional materials, such as commentaries or even for particular series". Students may have different expectations than older generation of users.

Cataloguers listed few additional elements beside those normally used to identify and select items, for example: explanation of the foreword, table of contents, summaries, bibliographies, page layout, font size, and information about the condition of the book. The results of this study have only confirmed that the enhancement of library catalogues with additional valuable information is important to both cataloguers and end users.

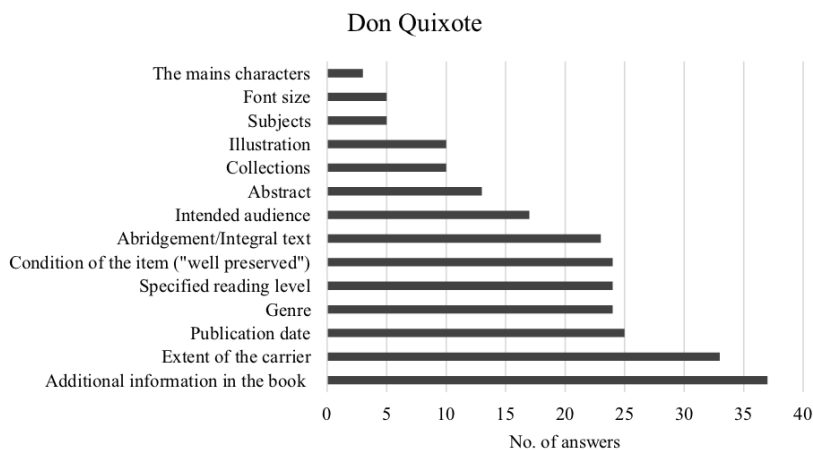


Figure 4. Important attributes for required reading for school from users' point of view: Don Quixote example

The most important attributes for high school students were additional information in the book (preface, author bibliography, context of the work, etc.) and extent of the carrier, which were related with abridgement or integral text and the excuse that they do not have time to read (Figure 4). High school students paid attention also to the date of publication, because they assumed that the newest version has updated and improved language without archaic words, better condition of the item, more footnotes, and a modern cover.

Then we were able to identify and compare which attributes both cataloguers and end users found the most important for fiction in both studies (see Table 1).

Author and title, as the most obvious information, were not taken into account. We took into account only attributes that were identified by at least three participants. On average, cataloguers mentioned seven (*Romeo and Juliet*) or eight (*The Godfather*) descriptive elements, while adults and high school students pointed out only three.

A quick comparison of the most common attributes shows that there are many parallels (Table 1):

In general it seemed that the most important attributes for both users and cataloguers are: publication date, number of pages, and illustrations.

Attributes for assigned reading: foreword, publication date, series title, target audience, style of writing, genre, number of pages, original or abridged version or an adaptation, illustrations, contents list, and summary.

Attributes for leisure reading: language, publication date, translator, publisher, genre, number of pages, illustrations, information about format (binding, book size), print size, condition of the item, cover image. The selection of attributes by users depends on offered attributes. Cover image and sample page were offered only in enriched bibliographic records (*The Godfather*).

Attributes mentioned only by cataloguers: original language, original title, edition.

Table 1. Important attributes from cataloguer's and users' point of view

	Cataloguers		Users		
	Required reading	Leisure reading	Required reading (enriched bibliographic records)	Leisure reading (library catalog COBISS)	Leisure reading (enriched bibliographic records)
Foreword	✓	✓	✓		✓
Language	✓	✓		✓	✓
Publication date	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Series title	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Translator	✓	✓		✓	✓
Target audience	✓	✓	✓		
Publisher	✓	✓		✓	✓
Style of writing	✓		✓		✓
Genre	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Original language	✓	✓			
No. of pages	✓		✓	✓	✓
Keywords	✓	✓		✓	
Original/abridged version/adaptation	✓		✓		
Illustrations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bibliography	✓	✓			
Original title	✓	✓			
Contents list	✓				
Binding		✓	✓	✓	✓
Book size		✓		✓	
Print size		✓	✓		✓
Edition		✓			
Cover image		✓	✓		✓
Related works		✓			
Condition of the item		✓	✓		✓
Proofread		✓			
Summary	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sample page					✓
No. of volumes		✓	✓	✓	✓

An examination of the frequencies of data elements in both contexts reveals that the most frequently elements correspond to those that usually appear in bibliographic records, with some exceptions: binding, content list, print size, condition of the item, etc.

Users do not know the meaning of all attributes (e.g. UDC, ISBN, place of publication, edition) nevertheless they expressed that those attributes must be important for librarians.

Even though cataloguers were instructed to pay attention to different types of users with different types of information needs, only few of them bear in mind users with special needs. There are users who have difficulties reading, for example dyslexia, elderly or visually impaired, etc. Additional data need to be considered to offer support to users with a disability, too. Data about the book size and weight, font size, binding, versions, condition of the items, reading levels, etc. should be available as well.

## Discussion & conclusion

The results show that in general there are more similarities than differences between the cataloguers' and users' perception about the importance of bibliographic data for fiction and that there is obviously a lack of some data elements in bibliographic records. They left some open questions about the reasons behind the gap between users and cataloguers in the actual environment. Why cataloguers do not think of the users when they actually perform cataloguing?

While not the sole factor, obsolete cataloguing standards and practice have resulted in a lacking quality of bibliographic records and that seems to be among the biggest problem. Unfortunately, cataloguers are very constrained by rules, guidelines and formats, which force them to include particular elements and do not allow them a lot of freedom for additional elements (Hider, and Tan 2008). The Slovenian cataloguing practice is still based on practices that date back to the card catalogues and definitely does not provide solutions for all the problems cataloguers might face in their everyday work in order to satisfy the users' complex needs for accurate information. Cataloguing practice is based on two national cataloguing codes: *Pravilnik i priručnik za izradbu abecednih kataloga (PPIAK)* by Eva Verona (1986; 1983) is the foundation, with only some of the PPIAK rules being replaced by the provisions of *Abecedni imenski katalog* (Kalan 1967). The contemporary manuals *PREKAT* (2000) and *ZNAČKA* (2001) together with *COMARC/B, Format za bibliografske podatke*, are used as a basic tool for cataloguers.

Another reason behind the gap is probably the cataloguing tools, which have a great influence on the cataloguer's principles of information organization. The cataloguing process usually follows the field order of the MARC format just like they appear in the cataloguing module. Moreover, Slovenian cataloguers are used to a single cataloguing module (*Cobiss3/Cataloguing*). They are frustrated by the differences between the ideal and the limitations of cataloguing tools.

The cataloguing community should respond to new requirements as soon as possible. Re-examination of the cataloguing framework is essential and should also result in the development of more efficient and intuitive cataloguing tools.

Solutions for many cataloguing problems lie in changing the cataloguing rules and practice. Regarding the implementation of RDA in Slovenia, a wait-and-see approach was taken until more international institutions start following the standard (Kanič 2014).

On the other hand, we should not ignore different practices in different types and sizes of libraries. In most of the smaller libraries and some academic libraries, the cataloguing staff also perform other tasks, aside from cataloguing. We noticed that some cataloguers, especially those who occasionally work as a reference librarians, try to understand the user's viewpoints, while others just follow the cataloguing practice. One participant suggested that all cataloguers should have at least occasional contact with their users.

To fill the gap between end users and cataloguers, who are largely responsible for what is included in bibliographic records, libraries need to bring the objectives of maintaining the catalogue integrity and facilitating end user retrieval closer together. It is important to understand which elements should be included in bibliographic records to create the desired output. The decisions should be aligned with the expectations of the end users and with final output in mind.

Comprehensive bibliographic records provide users with enough information to determine if the resource will meet their needs without actually having to view the item directly. Therefore, an end user needs to be presented with bibliographic records that can be easily examined and correctly interpreted. The lack of elements in current bibliographic records leads users to make assumptions based on the data that is provided.

In our study, users frequently asked librarians for help, but according to Applegate (2008), the communication between users and librarians is in decline. Probably this decline differs by the type of library and number of library users. Under the circumstances of new technologies and new applications, users can avoid the communication with librarians. With this in mind, bibliographic records should be better than those in current library catalogues. In their study, Švab and Žumer (2016) found out that almost half of the users who chose the book based on current catalogue COBISS changed their mind after they saw the actual publication. Other two types of enriched bibliographic records (mind map and FRBR) performed better, especially if included images of the cover and sample page (Švab, and Žumer 2016). Also for this reason, cataloguers should include attributes appropriate for library users.

However, we assumed that the data elements that were common to the cataloguers and the users are the core elements needed for the quality bibliographic records. Of course, these elements may vary for different users, contexts of use, and libraries. Based on the results of both studies, taking into account fiction for leisure reading and reading assignment, we propose attributes for a bibliographic record, considered as important from cataloguers' as well as users' standpoint.

For required reading for school:

author, title, publication date, series title, number of pages, illustrations, genre, target audience, style of writing, foreword, original or abridged version or an adaptation, and summary.

For leisure reading:

author, title, publication date, language, publisher, translator, foreword, genre, number of pages, illustrations, print size, binding, cover image, condition of the item, summary, number of volumes, series title, and keywords.

The aim of this paper is not to provide the perfect bibliographic record. No record serves just one user, just one search strategy, or just one purpose. Yee (2006) argues that users do not need bibliographic records at all; rather they are looking for the information contained in them.

This paper is not a comprehensive study of the users and uses of bibliographic data. Rather, it is a starting point from which to generate discussion that may elicit additional information and perspectives. We hope that showing to the library community what kind of data elements users and cataloguers found the most important for fiction will contribute at least to critical reflection on improving future creation of quality bibliographic records with all the elements needed.

In order to maximize their effectiveness, cataloguers should become familiar with the needs and expectations of users. Understanding their users helps the cataloguer to make good judgments in the choice of access points (Boydston, and Leysen 2006, 10). Moreover, continuous research on the actual information needs of different user groups is necessary in order to create more informative bibliographic records. These findings have important implications that should be considered in cataloguing standards, as proposed by Snow (2017, 14) as well as by providers of cataloguing utilities (Novotny 2004, 535).

Certainly, some limitations need to be outlined. The sample of cataloguers was not large enough for statistically significant results, but it was sufficient for obtaining some insight into their perspective. However, further studies are needed for different user groups and for other types of materials.

While the impact of users on cataloguing is very small, the idea of engaging users in improvement and enhancement of bibliographic records should become one of the goals of cataloguing, as suggested in literature (Snow 2017; Aalberg, and Žumer 2013; Spiteri 2009). For example, to enable users to interact with the data by appending their own tags and comments (Calhoun 2006, 40). According to Kanič (2014, 52), COBISS OPAC users tend to have an impact on different data elements to be either included in or excluded from the bibliographic records, but mostly for the institutional or personal purposes.

Finally, the reason for cataloguing is to help library users easily find resources they need, so it is necessary keep this focus in every cataloguing decision.

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