The environment in which cataloging principles and standards operate has changed dramatically. The development of automated systems for the creation and processing of bibliographic data, the growth of large-scale shared cataloging programs, and emerging technologies have created new opportunities to provide access to national and international academic library collections. However, economic pressures have also prompted libraries to try to simplify the cataloging process, using “minimal level” cataloging records in order to keep pace with the continued growth of publishing.

Cataloging librarians have identified two significant needs: 1) to adapt existing [cataloging] codes and practices to accommodate change resulting from new forms of electronic publishing and the advent of networked access to information resources, and 2) to respond more effectively to an increasingly broad range of user expectations and needs. München (1998) wonders how catalogers will guarantee the quality and relevance of bibliographic access within the exploding world of online materials. If so, what kind of bibliographic records will be required to meet the different uses and user needs? Finally, how should these bibliographic data be organized and structured for intellectual and physical access to the documents?
This chapter will provide an overview of current cataloging principles, issues in handling evolving formats, and challenges for academic catalogs. It will include a brief examination of a model created by a large multi-campus urban university in determining best practice in the creation of records for shared, online academic environments. Finally, the chapter will look at the development of alternative frameworks for describing online resources.

THE EVOLUTION OF CATALOGING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

In 1876, Charles Ammi Cutter originally promulgated his Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue (Cutter, 1904). This code is remarkable since it covered not only the objectives (Objects) but also the methods (Means) of creating catalog entries to provide access library materials. Cutter’s Objects were to 1) enable a person to find a book of which either the author, title, or subject is known; 2) show what the library has by a given author, on a given subject, or in a given kind of literature, and 3) assist in the choice of a book, as to its edition (bibliographically) or to its character (literary or topical). His Means, or method of doing so, provides author-entry with the necessary references; title-entry or title-reference; subject-entry, cross-references, and classed subject-table; form-entry; edition and imprint, with notes when necessary. These principles are still the foundation of best cataloging practice, including the notion of specificity, the consideration of the user as the principal basis for subject-heading decisions, the practice of standardizing terminology, the use of cross-references to show preferred terms and hierarchical relationships, and solving the problem of the order of elements. To bring the terminology of the 19th century into the 21st century, replace book with resources, prefix it with any number of adjectives (e.g., print, digital), and filter it through the lens of the user of today’s academic library system.

Transitioning into Virtual Cataloging

Cataloging and classifying remote-access publications and databases puts these resources into the context of the entire academic library collection. One envisions a faculty member, in his or her office on campus, doing routine research on the online catalog. He or she can identify and then search the databases needed, call up records for cited journals in the databases, and either gain access to recent journal issues online or instantly submit a delivery order, all in one seamless process starting from the library’s catalog.

A virtual library has tremendous impact on the cataloging departments of academic libraries. As Zyroff (1996, p. 50) asserts “…skills that assure consis-
Open Access to Knowledge and Challenges in Digital Libraries
www.igi-global.com/chapter/open-access-to-knowledge-and-challenges-in-digital-libraries/188544?camid=4v1a