The Auriga constellation, Clarissimi Viri Ignii Poeticon Astronomicon Opus Utilissimmu Soeliciter Incipit, Maddison Collection

All too often we cataloguers can get caught up in the details of cataloguing, cataloguing in certain ways because of the standard we use, and forget the real point behind why we catalogue in the first place – for our users benefit, to make our material discoverable. We at the University of Kent decided it was time to take a step back and look at our catalogue as if we were users, consider what we would need from our catalogue and our metadata, and how could we as cataloguers achieve this? We identified our key users. Our most obvious group is our students. Undergraduates want to be able to find something useful for their assignments quickly and easily, where postgraduates usually want more detailed information about the item as their research areas are more niche. Staff need enough info to be able to answer queries – at the moment with the variations in historical cataloguing this can be difficult. Outside academics and researchers will want as much information as you can give them to save a wasted and potentially expensive trip if the item is not what they wanted – particularly foreign researchers. We have had researchers visit us from the universities of Niagara, South Florida and Texas Christian, which has been possible partly because of our metadata. Our partner institutions want a good quality of record to display on our resource discovery system. One benefit we bring to our partnership with Rochester Cathedral is that we provide high quality metadata to increase their discoverability and their presence globally.

The University of Kent moved to cataloguing in RDA from AACR2 in 2013. This was a macro process where the RDA carrier fields and the 264 field were inserted into all our records, and some abbreviations were expanded. On site work then continued in RDA. There are some very clear immediate benefits to cataloguing in RDA to enhance discoverability. The 264 allows for clearer labelling of the book production process. The various 7XX fields are now limitless – previously an author of a book section, or former owner of an item may not have been included in the metadata, now they can be. Removal of Latin terms and expansions of abbreviations are extremely valuable to our students, most of whom will not know what they refer to. Terms such as 'polyglot' are specialist, which undergraduates, and to some extent postgraduates, are not. This is our specialism, and we should be using our knowledge to make metadata clearer for them.

Special Collections items have a particular set of discoverability issues that is not just based around changing standards. Historically, Special Collections cataloguing has been hugely varied and inconsistent, partially because we have had no previous rare book cataloguing specialism. Many of our records have been transferred between more than one library management system, which has caused information to be lost or moved around fields, making them messy to look at and remarkably unhelpful. It can be highly frustrating to know that something exists in your collections, but cannot be found on the catalogue, or a record you once found, but have no idea how you managed it, is now nowhere to be seen. Our staff have found it nigh impossible to run any kind of report on Special Collections books, as there is no consistent field from which we can pull information. Not only have things been done differently historically, sometimes it has been done inaccurately as well.

We wanted to create a policy for Special Collections to ensure that future and retrospective cataloguing could focus on the same information and become consistent, but we held off, as RDA has yet to develop a rare books standard.

The Holy Bible, 1717, 'Vinegar Bible', Rochester Cathedral Library

Our hand was forced in making a decision when we were approached to assist in a cataloguing project on behalf of Rochester Cathedral, largely as a result of our partnership work with Canterbury Cathedral. In early 2013, the Heritage Lottery fund awarded Rochester Cathedral a grant of £3.55 million to make its 'hidden collections' more accessible to the public. Part of this included the addition of disabled access throughout the cathedral, the refurbishment of the crypt and library, and the cataloguing of their books. The library is made up of around 7000 items, including roughly 2500 dating from before 1901, and has never been catalogued to currently recognised standards. As part of the project required us to catalogue the pre-1901 items using MARC21 and RDA, we felt the urgency of deciding how precisely we would achieve these aims, and knew we would need to develop a policy.

Our initial concerns surrounding this included the amount of research we would need to do in order to create a policy that encompassed all we wanted to achieve, and that would be transferable to our own collections as well. We needed to work in RDA, but wanted to use elements of DCRM(b) to maximise the information our users could see, after all, we do not know what they are looking for. We decided a group approach was the best way forward, with the senior library assistants of Special Collections and Metadata, and myself and Josie Caplehorne, who catalogue Special Collections items here at Kent. We also consulted Karen Brayshaw, the librarian of Canterbury Cathedral, to tap into the unique well of knowledge we had available to us. The three cataloguers decided to create the ultimate bibliographic template, encompassing every field we could ever need, with guidance and examples of how to use them appropriately. Whilst useful for working out how much detail we needed to go into for Rochester, it also meant we would have an excellent resource for future staff training. We divided the fields roughly into thirds, each taking a section to investigate thoroughly. Results were three separate sets of guidelines that were then amalgamated into one super guide.

We initially tested our work during the cataloguing of our own David Lloyd George collection, which had previously been partially, but poorly catalogued. The results were fantastic – the number of requests to view Lloyd George items in our Reading Room increased dramatically the more we catalogued the items.

Whilst pleased with our work, we didn't want to rest on our laurels, and invited members of the cataloguing team at Lambeth Palace down to Kent to talk to us about this style of cataloguing. In the knowledge we were shortly to catalogue a significant ecclesiastical collection, it was hugely beneficial to have experienced cataloguers in this area talking to us about what they do. We showed them examples of old catalogue records and Lloyd George records for comparison, to show them the changes we had made, and to get their opinions on anything else we could do to improve our work. Their visit resulted in a few tweaks to our policy, and when we were convinced it was a good as it could get, it was applied to the Rochester project. As we had taken the time to test the policy on Lloyd George, we had no significant issues with it when cataloguing the Rochester collection.

It can be hard as cataloguers to establish how your work is benefitting your users. Here at Kent, members of the metadata team have had the opportunity to work with materials at outreach events, such as exhibitions and seminars, to talk to people about the material – after all, who will know a collection better than the person who has catalogued it in great detail? As part of the publicity work for Rochester, several exhibitions have been held at the Canterbury and Medway campuses of the university.
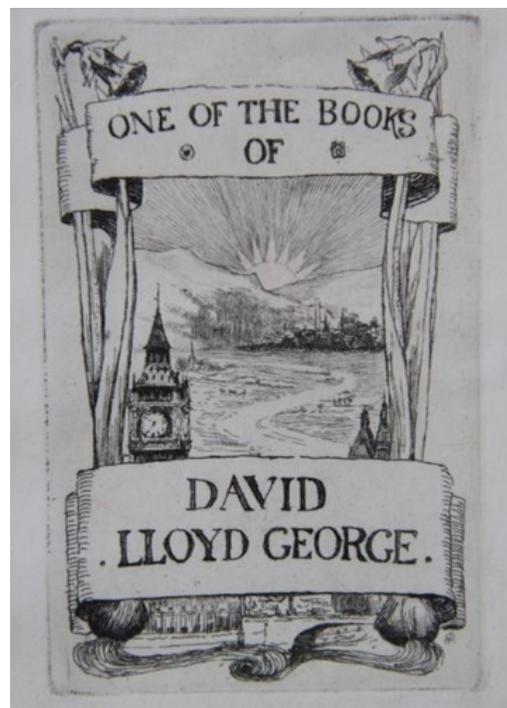
David Lloyd George's bookplate, Lloyd George Collection

Here we had the best opportunity of talking to the people who mattered – our users. This enabled us to ask and answer questions about the collection, meaning we could establish precisely what it is our users need from our metadata. One of the most interesting outreach opportunities took place in the middle of June. As part of the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Summer Festival, Josie, the most experienced cataloguer on the project, ran a sort of workshop, talking to people about the role of a cataloguer, explaining precisely what

A cataloguer speaking at an MA Curation seminar in June 2016

information we look for and why we include it. People are surprisingly interested in this work. If we can explain to our users how we work, it will give them a better understanding of how they can use our catalogue, and what will give them the most useful search results. A visitor from the Czech Republic, Dr Lenka Panuškova, was particularly happy to learn we were cataloguing provenance to the greatest detail we could manage, and this is a common area of interest. Previously, the quality of Special Collections records meant we often received enquiries asking if our copy of a work had any annotations on it, but now the users will be able to get this directly from the catalogue records.

Seminars run for our students using Special Collections material is another fantastic time for our users to discover what we have. Historically this has sometimes lead to frustration, as items they saw in our sessions were next to impossible to discover on our catalogue. This has, slowly but surely, been improving as we work to improve our metadata.

The most positive outcome of any kind of outreach is when you get your users interested and enthusiastic to help you. One of our MEMS students, (see below), has written a detailed work on the St Augustine manuscript from the Rochester collection, which will be published in the future. Professor James Carley, an expert in early bibliography, has studied the Rochester collection in great detail, gave a talk at Kent on the history of the library, and has published a paper on the subject. Dr Panuškova and another Kent MA student have become interested in working Kent's mysterious astrological tract, an undated manuscript in Latin with astrological charts which none of us know much about. MEMS students have also been instrumental in transcribing manuscripts from our local history collection. This is hugely beneficial from a metadata perspective. As cataloguers, we specialise in what we do, but sometimes our users don't understand that our area of expertise is our collections, and not the subject area or time period. The more we can work with experts the more detail, and most importantly the more accurate detail, we can add to our metadata. For unique works like those in the Rochester collection, this is incredibly significant, as we will not necessarily even know if we are missing important information. It can also potentially save our particularly rare, valuable or delicate items from being over handled, if a researcher can get all they need from our records without looking at the item.

MA students studying the St. Augustine manuscript, Rochester Cathedral Libary

Kent has found great benefit in the use of RDA, and the creation of our own hybrid of RDA and DCRM(b), in increasing the discoverability of our collections. Records are easier to find and contain more information than they ever have before. They are also much more understandable for those who are not book specialist, which is most of our user group. Our work with Rochester Cathedral has illustrated the important of detailed cataloguing, ensuring that our users can truly understand the significance of our material. Giving our users an understanding of how we work and what we look to include in our metadata can improve their searching skills. Finally, and it cannot be stressed enough how important we at Kent have found this, talking to and involving your users, utilising *their* knowledge and expertise, can be a *huge* benefit to your work. We can't know everything. Everyone has their own area of expertise, and making use of those who have specialist understanding means we can include the most accurate and appropriate detail in our records, which in turn makes our material more globally discoverable.