

# U\*N\*A\*B\*A\*S\*H\*E\*D™

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## Librarian

the "how I run my library good" letter sm



## 'Texas Reads'

License Plates can be ordered for \$30  
for cars and light trucks

see p. 5

Berman's Bag: Why Catalog?

Issues of cataloging adequacy and reform can't be meaningfully addressed in a vacuum. So I propose this credo or "mission" as context:

Cataloging should identify and make accessible a library's resources--in all formats. That identification and access should be swift and painless. The language and structure of catalog entries should be familiar and comprehensible. And catalogers should recognize that they do what they do not to please bosses and not to mindlessly adhere to rules and protocols, but to serve their information desk colleagues and the public. That's whom they're working for.

Given such a mission or function, which incidentally coincides nicely with Ranganathan's famous admonition to "save the time of the reader," how does today's reality stack up?

Libraries tend to trumpet how easily and helpfully their wares can be accessed. Some really seem to think that just because they have "push-de-button" online catalogs with keyword searching, everything is findable and the bib-records are invariably useful. Well, as I've argued and demonstrated in many writings (most recently, "Jackdaws Strut In Peacock's Feathers: the Sham of 'Standard Cataloging,' in the June 1998 Librarians at Liberty), basic, national cataloging records--whether created at the Library of Congress or in the LC manner--provide too few subject and other access points, seldom include searchable and clarifying notes, and continue to employ abbreviations and other bibliographic conventions (like slashes, dashes and brackets) that most people don't understand.

What's more, many topics are still not recognized by LC (try searching for CORPORATE WELFARE, PSEUDOSCIENCE, SECULAR HUMANISM, WORKING POOR PEOPLE, CYBERCULTURE, MANAGEMENT FADS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES, CULTURE WARS, ANTIRACISM, NATIVE AMERICAN HOLOCAUST (1492-1900), or CLASSISM.) Some subjects are rendered in such an arcane, unfamiliar form that almost no one would search for them that way (and too many libraries don't make necessary cross-references); as examples: ABNORMALITIES, HUMAN instead of BIRTH DEFECTS; CESTODA rather than TAPE-WORMS; INTERVERTEBRAL DISK DISPLACEMENT for SLIPPED DISC; and, believe it or not--CANADA. TREATIES, ETC. 1992 OCT. 7 instead of NAFTA or NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT.

Other topics are constructed in an indisputably biased or inaccurate fashion that may misinform or prejudice catalog users against either the materials or the subjects; for instance: MANPOWER, CRO-MAGNON MAN, and SWORDSMEN instead of the more inclusive HUMAN RESOURCES, CRO-MAGNONS, and SWORDFIGHTERS; GYPSIES rather than the self-preferred ethnonym ROMA; UNTOUCHABLES rather than the widely-accepted and nonpejorative DALITS; SIAMESE-TWINS for the medically-sanctioned and much more precise CONJOINED TWINS; and a distinct preference for Christianity in scores of religion-related forms.

A further actuality, perhaps spawned in part by increasingly reduced quality control in LC's Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) program, is mistakes. Sometimes Big Ones. In classification and subject analysis. Like Chris Kreski's Life lessons from Xena, warrior princess: a guide to happiness, success, and body armor (Andrews McNeel, 1998), clearly denoted "a parody" on the cover, which got soberly classed in self-help

psychology and assigned the single, misleading descriptor, SUCCESS--PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS.

Why catalog in-house? Why catalog locally? And why not outsource the whole operation? Because critical, creative catalogers within individual systems are the last and only bulwarks against the often error-laden, access-limiting, and alienating records produced by giant, distant, and essentially unaccountable networks and vendors.

Sanford Berman, Contributing Editor,  
U\*L

#### Free Reference Works on the Web

I expect everyone's heard that Britannica has put their encyclopedia on the Web for free with hopes of making their profits from the advertising that goes along with it. If not, get on over to [britannica.com](http://britannica.com)! It's not just the encyclopedia; it also has full-text articles from more than 70 magazines - including Newsweek, The Economist, and even Library Journal. This issues' column highlights a few of the many other free full-text reference tools on the Web you may not have heard about - some with print counterparts, some never available before the advent of the Internet. As always, this is just a sample of the many useful resources you can find in the Librarians' Index to the Internet at [lii.org](http://lii.org).

**Reference at Bartleby.com** - <http://www.bartleby.com/reference/> Oh the time you'll save on this useful tool! You can search a combined database of more than twenty respected reference works or select by topic area (encyclopedia, dictionary, thesaurus, quotations, and English usage), or specific reference work. In addition to out-of-copyright works

such as Bartlett's 10th, 1919; Bulfinch, 1913; and the Cambridge History of English & American Literature, 1907-21, the collection also includes the Columbia Encyclopedia 6th edition, 2000; the American Heritage Book of English Usage, 1996; Roget's II: the New Thesaurus, 3rd edition, 1995; the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th edition, 2000; and much, much more.

**xrefer** - <http://wl.xrefer.com/>

This meta-search engine searches a combined database of over thirty reference books from Bloomsbury, Macmillan, Oxford University Press, and Penguin. The collection includes dictionaries of art, business, economics, medicine, music, psychology, and sociology; books of quotations; a twentieth century who's who and a biographical dictionary of women; an encyclopedia of places; and a companion to English literature. The search interface is simple (search all, facts, quotes, or words), but the cross-references and adjacent entries to the right of a result are what make it a fascinating resource. Be sure to read the Help page for full use of this database of authoritative full-text reference works.

**Encyclopaedia of the Orient** -

<http://i-cias.com/e.o/>

Subtitled, "The only encyclopaedia for North Africa and the Middle East," this is an excellent resource for anyone looking for background information about people, countries, and political or religious issues on this region of the world that is constantly in the news. Covers Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Searchable.