

Chapter XV

Using Consistent Naming Conventions for Library Electronic Resources

Diana Kichuk

University of Saskatchewan, Canada

ABSTRACT

There are no accepted standards governing naming electronic resources in A to Z lists or electronic resource management (ERM) systems. Current practice superficially resembles cataloging standards and guidelines, but is substantially ad hoc, and reliant on local adaptation and innovation. A little more predictability is needed to make finding and using electronic resources easier. This chapter describes issues related to naming electronic resources and concludes with a draft set of principles and conventions for designating names or titles in the context of A to Z lists and ERM systems. It will also examine the unique issue of electronic resource volatility and its impact on maintenance. The focus will be on integrated or continuously updated electronic resources, such as bibliographic and full text databases, and reference works.

INTRODUCTION

“What is the title?” “What is it called?” Variations of these questions are asked countless times a day in library physical and electronic spaces. The success of online information retrieval is not dependent on correct search strategies and query syntax alone. In addition to formulating a topic and keywords, a researcher must also know which electronic information resources to use

from prior experience or advice, or know how to go about finding them. As Mary E. Brown puts it, “to find the right information, the *right* name is needed” (1995, p. 347). Identification and recall depend in part on effective naming practices of publishers and vendors, but ease of access and use of electronic collections also depend on how effective a library’s finding aids and systems are. Successful library naming practices play an important role in determining that effectiveness.

If the name used in a library finding tool, such as the catalog or database A to Z list, does not correspond with the name or title cited, recalled, or viewable on the resource itself or some other name perception, then the researcher's quest becomes more difficult, if not doomed to fail.

Although naming electronic resources is a surprisingly complex task, the problems associated with it are not widely discussed in the literature. In an intense search using expected keywords, the author failed to locate articles that focused specifically on naming problems in the context of electronic resource management. This gap is difficult to explain given the centrality of electronic resources in library collections today. The relatively small electronic resources librarian (ERL) community has not taken the time to articulate the problems from their perspective; their reluctance is due perhaps to a potential conflict with their standard-bound cataloging colleagues. Or, a fear that by drawing attention to the problem in their practice, formal guidelines or rules will be implemented that interfere with their management of the dynamic world of electronic resources? The literature includes sources on naming related to information retrieval, including how humans name things or concepts, and how names are recalled. Guides for cataloging electronic resources, especially serials, are a good source for deriving the language and description of good naming practice.

There are no accepted standards governing naming electronic resources in A to Z lists or electronic resource management (ERM) systems. Current practice superficially resembles cataloging standards and guidelines, but is substantially ad hoc, and reliant on local adaptation and innovation. Each library adopts a practice that changes over time often resulting in a hodgepodge of naming applications in its systems, even in a single A to Z list. Assuming it is desirable to compile a draft set of general principles and conventions, what should be included? While the hard and fast rules of the kind found in cataloging standards

are not applicable, there is a need for universal guidelines or harmonization, or at the very least, internal consistency within a library's A to Z lists and ERM systems. In the same way that bibliographic citations follow sanctioned styles and are convertible, electronic resource naming practices should follow a consistent, rational style within an institution, and be convertible across institutions. Less ad hoc treatment and a little more predictability is needed to make finding and using electronic resources easier for the researcher and for interoperability within and across institutions, for example for peer collection comparison and analyses, or consortia acquisition. How can a consortium recognize common resources if each member names a resource differently?

This chapter describes issues related to naming electronic resources, proposes a set of principles and conventions for designating names or titles in the context of A to Z lists and ERM systems, and briefly considers future trends. It will also examine the unique issue of electronic resource volatility and its impact on maintenance. The words *name* and *title* are used interchangeably to refer to the word or set of words by which an electronic resource is known. In addition to a primary title, or "title proper" in the language of catalogers, a resource may be known by alternate or variant titles. That complex of primary and alternate titles forms what the Digital Library Initiative (DLI) calls a "title group" (Parker, Anderson, Chandler, Farb, Jewell, Riggio, & Robertson, 2004, p. 15). For the purposes of this chapter, an electronic resource is defined very broadly, as any work published in electronic form, either on CD-ROM, DVD, or online. The focus will be on integrated or continuously updated electronic resources, such as bibliographic and full text databases, and reference works.

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/using-consistent-naming-conventions-library/10039

Related Content

Libraries and Innovative Thinking in the Digital Age

Abiola Bukola Elaturoti (2020). *Managing and Adapting Library Information Services for Future Users* (pp. 165-188).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/libraries-and-innovative-thinking-in-the-digital-age/245113

Library Services and Preventive Measures in University Libraries During the COVID-19 Pandemic

B. P. Singh (2021). *Handbook of Research on Knowledge and Organization Systems in Library and Information Science* (pp. 478-500).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/library-services-and-preventive-measures-in-university-libraries-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/285510

Role of IFLA in Marketing Initiatives in Library and Information Services

Dinesh K. Gupta (2014). *Collaboration in International and Comparative Librarianship* (pp. 85-93).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/role-of-ifla-in-marketing-initiatives-in-library-and-information-services/103074

Impact of the Internet on Malaysian Libraries

Diljit Singh (2000). *World Libraries on the Information Superhighway: Preparing for the Challenges of the New Millennium* (pp. 95-106).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/impact-internet-malaysian-libraries/31492

Collection Development for Theological Education

Geoffrey Little (2013). *Library Collection Development for Professional Programs: Trends and Best Practices* (pp. 112-127).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/collection-development-theological-education/67936