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Composers' Collected Works: A Case Study in Remote Work Compatible Catalog Maintenance

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Background

The Fine Arts area in Binghamton University's Bartle Library is the primary location for music scores in our circulating collection. Like most library collections of notated music, it has its quirks, and one of our most odious is an inconsistent approach in our cataloging of sets of a composer's collected works (CCW). This poster illustrates the nature of the problem, the workflows developed to meet it, and the importance of flexibility for remote work in executing the project.

Since the late 1700s, music publishers have occasionally produced scholarly editions of the scores to every known authentic work by a famous composer. Today, these editions are mostly acquired by academic music libraries through standing orders. Cataloging practices vary because these sets often contain dozens of volumes and can take publishers decades to complete. Further, the requirements for representing large multipart sets in MARC have varied by the constraints of the technology, particularly the handling of holdings and item records. As a SUNY institution, our consortial use of Alma and Primo alleviates some of these issues, but cataloging decisions based on past systems may persist.

In general, there are two main types of cataloging practice used for CCWs. One approach is to assign a bibliographical (bib) record to each single- or multi-volume monograph in the CCW, establishing linkages through the series statement in MARC 490/830 and call number in MARC Holdings 852. In Resource Description and Access (RDA), this is called analytical cataloging (RDA 1.5). At Binghamton University Libraries, we refer to sets cataloged in this style as "Fully Transcribed" (FTC). The other approach is to assign a single bib record that describes the entire published contents of the CCW, and the items are linked by being placed all on the same holdings record. In RDA, this is called comprehensive cataloging. FTC and Comprehensive will be as shorthand in discussing these two cataloging styles.

If an item record is attached to an FTC bib record, the call number in the holdings record will include the item's enumeration information (volume number, etc.). If the item is on a comprehensive record, the enumeration information is located in the item record, and the holdings record will only include the portion of the call number that applies to the whole set.

FTC: M3 .B103 se.1 v.24
Comprehensive: M3 .B103

Identifying Problems and Solutions

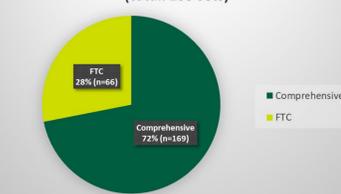
Our CCW collection's primary issue is that we have been doing both FTC and comprehensive cataloging on an inconsistent basis. To resolve this, consistency is needed in the cataloging of CCW sets. The CCWs with FTC records will be converted to Comprehensive ones wherever possible, because comprehensive cataloging better represents CCWs as a collected set, as opposed to separate monographs from the same series. This also better distinguishes our CCWs, which do not circulate, from our circulating scores. This distinction reduces title overlap between circulating and noncirculating scores in search results, making them easier for users to parse. To better understand the extent and complexity of the problem, the collection was analyzed, and a workflow was developed to collaboratively approach this as a cataloging department.

Collection Analysis

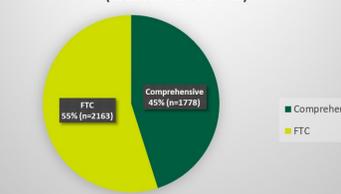
Using Alma Analytics, I generated a shelflist of every physical item in the call number range M3 (where all of our CCWs are classed) held in the Fine Arts area of Bartle Library. This shelflist provides the Title, OCLC Number, MMS ID, Holdings Call Number, Item Barcode, Summary Holdings, Library Code, and Location Code for each physical item.

Using Python and Regular Expressions, the call numbers from the shelflist were processed to remove all enumeration information. By comparing the length of the truncated call number to the original, each call number was coded as either FTC or Comprehensive. This revealed two critical data points that revealed the extent of corrections needed. As a proportion of CCW sets, of which there are 235, only 66 (28%) are cataloged as FTCs. However, of the 3,941 volumes comprising those sets, 55% (n=2,163) are cataloged as FTCs. Essentially, a minority of CCWs are cataloged as FTCs, but they make up a majority of the physical items in the M3 range.

Cataloging of Composer's Collected Works Sets in Fine Arts by Set (total: 235 sets)



Cataloging of Composer's Collected Works Sets in Fine Arts by Count of Physical Volumes (total: 3941 volumes)



Parallel Workflows

Workflow #1: Data Collection, Analysis, and Documentation (Project Manager)

This workflow models the ongoing development of the documentation used to track progress in converting CCWs from FTC to comprehensive records. Each CCW, regardless of FTC or comprehensive cataloging, is being reviewed for accuracy and consistency by the project manager. The work does not need to be complete for conversions to begin, so the process runs in parallel over time with workflow #2.

Workflow #2: Conversion of records from FTC to Comprehensive (All catalogers)

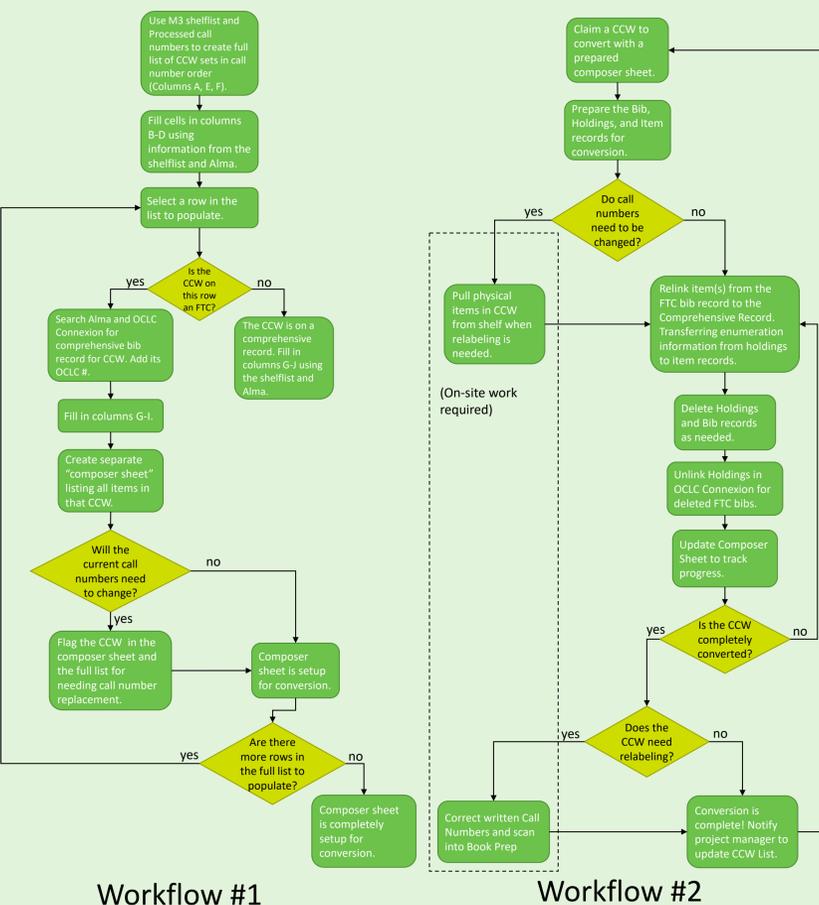
This workflow models the conversion of records cataloged as FTCs to comprehensive records. The actual steps in Alma used to convert the records are detailed in internal documentation. The core process involves copying enumeration information from the 852 Holdings call number to the enumeration fields in the item record.

Relationship Between Workflows

Workflow #1 requires data processing and an advanced familiarity with music cataloging, two areas that are not expected competencies for other catalogers in the unit. Therefore, this work is siloed to allow the project manager to continue making progress while individual catalogers proceed with conversion.

Work from Home Compatibility

With the exception of CCWs that are cataloged with the wrong call number, 100% of the changes affecting these sets are digital. In the case of a wrong call number, the cataloger working with that CCW will be aware of this from flags in the full list of CCWs and the sheet for that particular composer. These two steps are enclosed in a dotted box in the workflow diagram. Our catalogers are normally on-site full time, but as a consequence of changes in scheduling norms related to the COVID-19 pandemic, flexibility has taken new precedence in accommodating the circumstances that make occasional remote work desirable or necessary.



"Full List" Screenshot: Composer's Collected Works Sets in Fine Arts

"Composer Sheet" screenshot: Berg, Alban. Sämtliche Werke.

MARC21 Holdings Record (FTC)

Item Record (Comprehensive)

Conversion Example: Berg, Alban. Sämtliche Werke. Abteilung 1, Band 6, "Orchestergesänge."

Enumeration information for an FTC record is recorded in the **holdings call number** as shown on the left. Before the item record is relinked to the comprehensive bib and its holdings record, this information is copied into the item's **enumeration fields** as shown on the right in Alma's physical item editor. This is done manually because the enumeration in the FTC record's holdings call number is not contained in its own subfield, making automation using Alma's normalization rules an impractical option.

References

"Type of Description." Chapter 1.5 in *Resource Description and Access Original Toolkit*. <http://original.rdatoolkit.org/rdachp1.html>. April 11, 2017.