

RBMS BSC Rare Materials Catalogers Directory Report

Prepared for March 30, 2023 RBMS BSC meeting

URL

<https://rbms.info/catalogersdirectory/>

Membership and Statistics

The membership of the subcommittee substantially rolled over since last report. Current membership is: Emily Baldoni, Patrick Crowley (Co-chair), Stephanie Geller (Co-chair), Rafael Linares, and Martha Tanner.

Directory entries (1/13/2022): 81

Directory entries (6/22/2021): 102

Directory updates: 3

Overview

In the 2021-2 cycle, the committee resolved a couple of major problems with the URL of the Directory and proposed a number of possible technical improvements for the future. Then-committee member Jonathan Tuttle wrote a template for advertising the directory to professional listservs and the committee strategized a number of possible routes for publicity. Much of this work was left unfinished due, especially, to the Chair's (Patrick Crowley) inability to schedule meetings due to chaotic schedule.

In the 2022-3 cycle Patrick Crowley and newly-appointed Stephanie Geller co-chaired the committee. Following up on unfinished business from the previous cycle, they revisited the committee's priorities, bearing in mind the goals and work underway from the 2021-2 cycle. The committee decided to approach the 2022-3 cycle with the following priorities:

1. Promotional efforts
2. Directory Metadata/Ontology Review
3. (A very low 3rd) Technological improvements

A huge thank you to the entire membership of the committee for their assiduous and expert help!

Promotional Plans

Our publicity efforts have focused on finishing things begun in the 2021-2 cycle. In discussing how we wanted to approach these we prioritized a few ideas that we could make the most impact with. Since we already had a draft of an advertisement for listservs, we made a few final revisions, compiled and divided a spreadsheet of appropriate lists for circulation and sent these out. Martha Tanner in particular added a wide variety of important listservs for our consideration. While we saw a number of submissions to the directory over the past year, the fairly large growth spike in entries corresponds to our primary phase of mailing lists in March 2023.

We also felt that listservs would only reach one particular group of potential participants in the directory. We felt that there was a role for direct outreach to individuals whom we knew might be valuable additions to the resource. Stephanie Geller drafted a text for this. Meanwhile, we wished to follow up on the committee's idea from last year to create a template advertising slide that could possibly be deployed in the setting of RBMS or in public programming. This slide has been created and will be brought forward at the March 31st meeting.

Publicity goals and next steps:

- Review the content of our 1-slide advertisement with BSC more widely for content; individually contact the 2023 and 2024 conference planning committees to discuss opportunities for deploying slide; likewise contact the Program Planning Committee to discuss possible appropriate venues for it in their programming.
- Finish pushing out template out to listservs.
- Begin highlighting people to contact individually in our network.
- Reconnect with the RBMS web and social media team to pursue a social media push. We are currently thinking of a series where we highlight a specific person or a specific interaction where the Directory. We imagine this might take the form of an interesting testimonial through the lens of a fun bibliographic problem. Needless to say, in both cases we would need to recruit volunteers to highlight. This is a longer-term goal.

Revisiting Directory Ontology

The committee discussed some limitations and problems with the current structure and content of the data collected for the directory. It was felt that some of the topical specialties overlapped with geographic specialties, for example, in ways that were not helpful. Rafael Linares has begun exploring this question both from the technical and the theoretical side of the question. On the technological side, the question to be answered was to what extent we could any changes we might make would disrupt the current structure and what specific modes for entering data are available through the WordPress platform. The short answer to this question is that there are somethings that can be done simply and easily that would not invalidate the current data structure, but would add more information. On the theoretical side, the question remains what kind of data will be most useful and how should we pair these data with the specific kinds of entry mechanisms so as to allow for as much flexibility as possible and so as to not create data redundancy or exclusivity. Rafael has been looking into both of these questions and has gained extremely useful insights into the technical side already.

Technical Issues

Since the primary technical problems of the site were solved last cycle (i.e. expunging a phantom second suite from public internet visibility, changing the url of the directory to remove “expert” from the title), we have not been directly pursuing technical questions outside of those involved with the ontology side-project.

List of technological plans from Jan. 2022 report with updates:

- (completed 2021-2 cycle) URL currently preserves the word expert, a concept the former editor very rightly began moving away from. This is one of the last vestiges. We are investigating changing the stub to something more in line with current terminology.
- (not discussed yet; added 2022-3 cycle) Is there a way we can let people update their own entries? So far any revisions have been made through resubmitting the form and then replacing the post. This works well, so it might not be worth finding a technical solution.
- (still interested, but low priority) Are there useful APIs we could engage with to organize and present the list? And what would the labor cost to this be vs. any benefit? Could we do a tagged Google map?

- (not discussed this cycle, but should be returned to) The link to the standalone directory feels a little bit hard to find on the main webpage and is not being indexed by major search engines. Search engines are directing people to the main BSC page, where the link is under Cataloging resources. We want to increase visibility (see below)

Questions for BSC

- We would like to ask for your feedback on our template slide, both from the content point of view and from the point of view of whether it seems an appropriate mode of advertising the resource.