Copac Collection Management Tool Project
Leeds case study 2
Detailed investigation of decisions around conservation and/or digitisation

Background

Leeds University Library maintains a Book Repair Unit to which any books, except those from Special Collections, are sent which are damaged in any way (such items are often identified in the course of routine shelving operations). If, on assessment, an item is in too poor condition to permit repair and return to the open shelves (e.g. where the paper is so brittle that the whole text block is falling apart), it will normally be referred to the relevant Faculty Team Librarian (FTL). The decision on whether to replace, conserve, digitise or withdraw from stock is taken on an individual item basis by the FTL, based on factors such as local usage, national holdings and availability of replacement copies for purchase, possibly after discussion with other specialist members of staff. This case study looks at the decision-making process associated with just 3 items which were in poor condition and how this was supported by the Copac Tools.

Integration with the local Library Management System

In preparation for the study, a mechanism was implemented which allowed a staff member to view a title in the local LMS (Millennium from Innovative Interfaces Inc.) and then click through to a display of the same title in the Copac Tools interface, so that decisions could be based on the combined evidence of local data (e.g. usage) and the broader context of national holdings. However, limitations in the Millennium interface meant that the search against Copac could only be based on ISBN and not on local record number. Because the titles used in the case study were older and pre-dated ISBNs, this facility could not therefore be used to streamline processes in these specific cases. However the Book Repair Unit also undertakes repairs on many more modern items for which, on occasion, similar decisions need to be made, so the integration of the Copac Tools into the LMS does have potential value for Leeds in an operational context. Most significantly, it allows the staff member to move from scanning the barcode in an item to a view of both local information and national holdings without the need to type in any search terms, something which is extremely convenient at the Book Repair Unit workbench.

Appendix 1 reproduces the succession of screens which represent this workflow.

Example 1: a decision to withdraw

The item:
Author: Trevelyan, George Otto, Sir, 1838-1928
Title: Cawnpore
Imprint: London: Macmillan and Co., 1866

The process:
1. The FTL checked our Catalogue and found:
   a. We’ve also got an 1894 edition.
   b. Both copies have been borrowed occasionally (one twice, one 7 times) since 1997 (when our online catalogue records begin).
2. The FTL used the Copac Tool:
   a. As this item had no ISBN, the FTL took the bibliographic number from our catalogue record and input that as a Local record number in the Standard number search screen of the Copac Tool. It found one record showing the item to be held in 3 libraries (including Leeds). This initially suggested that our copy is rare nationally.
   b. To double check this information, the FTL searched the public web interface of Copac.
      i. A simple search just for the title 'Cawnpore' gave 367 results, which was overwhelming and would take too long to look through.
      ii. A narrower search for Trevelyan, Cawnpore, and limited to 1866 produced 4 records (including the one with our bib number), which showed that there are actually 6 copies nationally of this edition, held in 6 libraries including Leeds. Our book is now not common, but not very rare either.
      iii. Just to get an overall picture, the FTL did a broader search for Trevelyan and Cawnpore, but without the date. This showed that there are in fact 6 editions in addition to the 1866 edition, and that there are 31 copies of those other editions around the country. The actual content of the book is now not rare at all.
3. The FTL considered any other pertinent factors:
   a. There are no special features in our copy (e.g. signature, dedication).
   b. One copy is enough for our level of use.
4. The FTL made the decision to withdraw the item from stock.

Example 2: a decision to preserve

The item:
Editor: Jeaffreson, John Cordy, 1831-1901
Title: Middlesex County records (vol. 3)
Imprint: [London] : Middlesex County Record Society, [1886-92]

The process:
1. The FTL checked our Catalogue and found:
   a. This is vol. 3 of a 4-volume set.
   b. All volumes have been borrowed infrequently (approx. twice) since 1997.
2. The FTL used the Copac Tool:
   a. As this item had no ISBN, the FTL took the bibliographic number from our catalogue record and input that as a Local record number in the Standard number search screen of the Copac Tool. This found 1 record, showing the item (i.e. the whole 4-vol set) to be in 11 libraries including Leeds. So it is not rare.
   b. To get a fuller picture, the FTL searched the public web Copac interface.
      i. Firstly, a search by title 'Middlesex County records' produced 178 results, which is too many to wade through.
      ii. A narrower search for Jeaffreson, Middlesex County records, and 1886 (the date of vol. 3) produced 6 records showing the item in 6 libraries. However, one of the records was actually for vol. 4, and the search did not find the records for the whole set.
      iii. Changing the date to 1886, the start date of the series, produced 8 records. The search found the record with our bib number that had 11 libraries attached, plus another record from one library holding the whole set which had been missed in the bib number search. It also found 5 records for vol. 1 only (the right date), and it found a record for a 1972 reprint and a 1974 microfilm reprint, both of which had the original date in their record.
iv. For comparison purposes, the FTL searched again for the whole date range 1886-1892, and finds 34 records. This comprises 14 records for the whole set, several records for individual volumes, and several 1970s reprint editions, but is very confusing to work through. Another search for author and title, but omitting the date brings virtually the same result: 38 records.

3. FTL considered any other pertinent factors:
   a. There is evidence that this vol. has been sent out to satisfy a document supply request in 2006.
   b. There is evidence that it came from the Royal Institution Library.
   c. It is part of a set, so a decision to withdraw would need to be applied to all 4 volumes
   d. The textblock is in good condition, only the binding in badly damaged.

4. FTL made a decision to preserve the item, which in this case means sending it out to be rebound by an external company.

Example 3: a decision to digitise

The item:
Author: Grasset, Eugene, Artist
Title: La Plante es ses applications ornementales
Imprint: Bruxelles, [1896-1901.]

The process:
1. The Faculty Team Librarian noticed the poor physical condition of this item when inspecting material in store. This is a folder containing loose-leaf sheets.
2. The FTL checked our catalogue and found that the item isn’t on our online catalogue (it may have been on an old slip catalogue, but that is no longer easily searchable).
3. The FTL used the Copac Tool:
   a. With no ISBN, and no local catalogue record, the FTL searched the Copac Tool by author. This produces 38 records for various books by Eugene Grasset. By scanning down the list and ignoring other titles the FTL could see that there are several other editions: 3 from London, 1 from Paris, and 1 from Tokyo (in English) of our title, but there is only one copy of our Brussels edition, at the British Library. This shows that our copy is rare.
   b. For comparison and completeness, the FTL searched the public Copac web interface:
      i. A quick search by author Eugene Grasset found 38 records, the same as using the Tool.
      ii. An attempt to narrow this down by searching for author Eugene Grasset and title word plante found only 3 copies of this title – one of our edition and two others editions. This means it is failing to find 3 of the editions we have already found above.
4. The FTL considered any other pertinent factors:
   a. The item is clearly rare, and may be valuable.
   b. It is in a poor state of repair, and will disintegrate if not preserved and stored carefully in future.
   c. The item would be of great interest to the School of Design and the School of Fine Art if it was in a more usable form.
   d. It is out of copyright.
5. The FTL considered that digitisation might be appropriate, and discussed the possibility with our digitisation section.
6. The decision was made to digitise the item (subject to verification that there isn’t already a digitised version in existence), and then to place the original item in Special Collections in order to prevent any further damage and keep it in better conditions.
Comments on using the Copac Tool

- Searching by local record number is unreliable. It finds the edition you hold and any libraries which have catalogued the item using that record, but it misses other copies of the same edition which are attached to a different bibliographic record. Relying on this result alone could lead to the belief that an item is very rare and should be flagged for permanent retention or conservation / digitisation, when in fact there are other copies. So searching by local number alone has to be supplemented by other searches. It is hoped that the imminent release of the new Copac database will remedy this problem.

- Searching by local record number in the Tool for a multi-volume series worked very well in example 2, and found a high percentage of the relevant items. Doing author/title searches via the standard Copac web interface for multiple volumes and dates produced much less satisfactory and more confusing results. Searching for a specific date within a range gave poor results, searching for the first date in a range was clearer. Searching for the date range found all results, but was hard to decipher.

It became apparent that some libraries had catalogued the 4 volume set on one bibliographic record, others had separate bibliographic records for each volume. This is a possible source of confusion.

- Some 1970s reprint editions were found when searching for items published between 1886-1892. This was presumably because the original date was included in the catalogue record for recent reprints. This is a possible source of confusion.

- In addition to seeing which libraries hold your specific edition, the librarian might also find it useful to see other editions and where they are held. It would be very useful if the Tool could be developed so that this could be accessed from the results screen of their original search result.

- If the item in question has neither an ISBN or a local record number (i.e. it is uncatalogued), then the Tool offers the possibility of searching by author, title or subject under the Keyword search tab. Searching by subject is very problematic:
  - Lots of old records in Copac either don’t have any subject terms, or a wide range of varying subject terms have been used by different libraries. So it is necessary to try a variety of keywords in the hope of finding all records, but this is very hit and miss.
  - The subject search does not work for works of literature, which don’t normally have subject terms.

- Catalogue records of variable qualities in Copac mean that the same author name can appear in a variety of forms, so it is necessary to check for alternatives when searching.

- Being able to see a visualisation of the holdings for a specific title is great – really quick and easy. It is also really useful to be able to select items from a set of results for the visualisation, for example where the search has found several editions.

Wider issues/questions raised by this work

- It is useful to be able to use the Copac Tool to get an initial impression of the rarity of an item, but because of the quality of records in Copac, this usually needs to be supplemented by further searches elsewhere in order to verify/amplify results.
• Decisions on individual items like this will always be time consuming and involve some subject/sector knowledge, for example whether the item is likely to be held in libraries outside Copac, whether it is likely to be held abroad, what its monetary value might be, etc.

• Because this work is time-consuming it will remain difficult to incorporate it into normal workflows for large-scale stock operations.

• The proposed inclusion of retention intentions and notes on physical condition in the 583 field would be invaluable for the decision-making involved in this level of work.

• Embedding the link to the Copac Tool in the LMS can provide an easy click-through route where ISBNs are present; but the intellectual judgements still have to be made.

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Appendix 1: Screen shots of click-through from Millennium to the Copac Tools

1. A barcode search has been used to call up the record for this item in Millennium. Click on the icon for click-through options.
2. A series of click-through options associated with this record are listed.
   Click on the “Copac Tools” link.

3. This has performed a search for the record ISBN in the Copac Tool with de-duplication of results.
   Click on the icon for visualisation.
4. A map showing holdings is accessed as part of the Copac Tools visualisation.

Note for comparison how the same ISBN search in standard Copac retrieves 3 separate records.