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## Cataloging the heart of a librarian

Lenora Oftedahl

*StreamNet Library, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*

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# Cataloging the Heart of a Librarian

by *Lenora Oftedahl*  
*Librarian*  
*StreamNet Library, Columbia River*  
*Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*

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- 043 n-us-or #a n-us-wa  
090 Z638.4 .C38 #b O37 1966  
100 Jans, Karla J. #q (Karla Jean), #d 1940-  
245 Lenora Anne Oftedahl #h [realia] / #c by  
Karla J. Jans & William T. Jans  
246 Lenora Anne Jans.  
250 1st edition  
260 Memphis, Tenn. : K.J. & W.T. Jans,  
1966.  
300 1 human body ; 175 cm.  
440 Bill Jans Family siblings ; #v no. 2  
500 Favorite high: Hitting the final action when  
entering a new record on OCLC and making  
them pay.  
500 Other interests include crafts, sewing,  
gardening, playing, collecting Sylvester and  
other cats, rescuing animals and being gener-  
ally happy.



So, this is what AACR2R looks like!

545 An intensely curious person who enjoys starting and learning new things. Finishing things is a separate issue. Has a husband and two children who suffer because of and from her addiction to books and reading.

561 Born in Memphis, Tenn., lived in Washington, Guam, California, Virginia, Arizona, South Dakota and returned to Washington. Spent time as Technical Services Coordinator at Northern State University, Substitute Librarian at Ft. Vancouver Regional Library, Assistant Librarian and now Librarian at the StreamNet Library, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

600 Oftedahl, Lenora A. #q (Lenora Anne), #d 1966-

650 Catalogers #z Washington.

650 Working mothers #z Oregon.

650 Encyclopedists.

700 Jans, William T. #q (William Thomas), #d 1941-

**O**k, so I didn't exactly start out my life wanting to be a librarian. The career found me. After numerous doors were slammed shut in my face, I finally found one that opened to graduate school in library science at the University of Arizona. Here, I was granted fantastic opportunities to work in not just one of the many libraries, but two: music and law. I cataloged and organized all kinds of material and through this, I realized I wanted to bring order to the chaos. Cataloging, classifying, putting things where I believed they should go... this is the puzzle I wanted to solve.

A couple of years later, I graduated and leapt into my first professional position, my eyes on the heavens and my feet on the ground. During my first year, I identified at least ten years' worth of cataloging projects I wanted to complete. My aim was to make materials easier for students to find. I bent rules about cataloging videos so they would sit next to the books they were based on rather than in the movie section of the library. I made no judgments about how well the details and plot of the movie matched those written by the author (that's harder than some think). Through all the long hours coupled with little pay, it was the endorphins firing in my brain from the joy I felt doing this work (like when I created a good catalog record on OCLC) that really kept me going.

About six years later my family and I moved to the Pacific Northwest where I got a job as a Substitute Librarian working in reference. While being a reference librarian can be great fun, (ah, the questions you get

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## Looking Forward

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To be fair to the undergraduates, they are often concerned about grades, tests, or assignments. One of the benefits of an older adult class is that they are unencumbered by these burdens. Many sessions are run in more of a workshop fashion. This arrangement makes it easier for the instructor, and also creates a more relaxed learning environment for the student.

As with most learning experiences, the teacher usually learns something in a class. For me, that effect is magnified in a class of older students. The lifetime of experiences they've had and share with the class can be fascinating. Their research topics also reflect their life experiences and diversity. The stereotypical geriatric topics—Medicare, social security, and health problems do not dominate their interests. I've learned about artists, other countries, historical events (from people who participated in the events), and wines by helping them with their research interests. In addition, as I am unlikely to know the latest hip-hop star, I appreciate that older students understand my references to older topics and events.

Finally, at a deeper level, I think I enjoy this group of students because I find them reassuring. It is exciting to see what the "third age" has in store for me. I have living proof that the mass media stereotype is not the norm.

These instructional experiences touch many of the reasons I became a librarian. I am able to share my knowledge, work with people, delve into interesting topics and information needs, and create independent researchers all while working with a receptive and grateful audience.

I hope that every librarian has a talisman that invigorates and reinforces their reason for being a librarian as much as mine does. ☞

*In addition to working with older adults, Katy is involved in UO's Get Ready Program and is the education and linguistics specialist. Katy can be reached at [klenn@oregon.uoregon.edu](mailto:klenn@oregon.uoregon.edu).*

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## Oftedahl

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(at a public library information desk) it just doesn't flip my switch the way a really good cataloging challenge can. When I got hired to catalog at the StreamNet Library, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, it was just what I was after: a challenge. How does one catalog on OCLC for a library with a very small budget allowance for OCLC? The cataloger has to do a lot of original work. I try. In fact, OCLC owed us money for a couple of months. I hope other libraries find my work acceptable.

And how does all this show in my daily life? Check the introduction. I cataloged myself for fun! My work is a challenge. I thrive on challenges. It's an exercise to look up the rules, find the correct MARC tag for a Provenance note, and look up the class number for a person. I could have chosen other classifications to be sure, but my life revolves around organization and accurate, detailed description of the world around me. To look at my house, one would never guess just how passionately I feel about my chosen profession and cataloging. I vibrate with emotion; my soul sings out with glee that I have found a field where I get to feel this joy every day of my life. I WANT to go to work everyday, and not just because they pay me. I would volunteer to do this work, but my husband has this thing about paying the bills.

My husband says I'm a workaholic. I'm not really because I don't view what I do as work. I'm playing a grand and wonderful game. This is FUN. Reading is FUN. Being around so much information is FUN. Being able to find out what the outhouse down the street is worth to a collection is FUN. Classifying the hundredth book in SH167 is FUN. Finding out which MARC tag the Hydrologic Unit Code belongs in is FUN. Creating the perfect catalog record is the ultimate bliss. I have yet to reach Nirvana, but I strive for it everyday.

Cataloging is not the be all and end all of librarianship for me. I enjoy playing sleuth and tracking down that elusive unpublished manuscript for the scientist working on white sturgeon. I get a kick out of helping the fifth-grade student find a recipe from Medieval times. There are times I even find myself enjoying the administrative that comes with running the whole show. But if you want to know what makes me soar, it's bringing order to chaos: creating structure out of the ambiguous, disembodied information landscape that occupies my desk and fills my work week. Give me my AACR2R, LCSH and all the other cataloging tools, lock me in a room and I'll catalog the carpet if you leave me there long enough, loving every minute. ☞

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