

## **Conflicts of Semantic Warrants in Cataloging Practices**

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This study presents preliminary themes surfaced from an ongoing ethnographic study. The research question is: how and where do cultures influence the cataloging practices of using U.S. standards to catalog Chinese materials? The author applies warrant as a lens for evaluating knowledge representation system, and extends the application from examining classificatory decisions to cataloging decisions. Semantic warrant is a conceptual tool that helps us assess and improve knowledge representation systems. The ability to recognize and name the rationales behind cataloging decisions grants us explanatory power and the language to "visualize" and reflect on the conflicting priorities in cataloging practices. Through participatory observation, the author recorded the cataloging practices of two Chinese catalogers working on the same cataloging project. One of the catalogers is U.S. trained, and another cataloger is a professor of Library and Information Science from China, who is also a subject expert and a cataloger of Chinese special collections. The study shows how the catalogers describe Chinese special collections using many U.S. cataloging and classification standards in different approaches. The author presents some cases in the fieldwork with an emphasis on the many layers presented by cultures, principles, standards, and practices of different scope, each of which may represent conflicting warrants. It is clear that the conflicts of warrants influence cataloging practice. We may view the conflicting warrants as an interpretation of the tension between semantic warrants and the globalization and localization of cataloging standards.