IMPORTANCE OF CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION IN LIBRARIES

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Abstract
The main aim of this paper is to examine the place and importance of cataloguing and classification in libraries. This were was discussed and it was discovered that cataloguing is a process that produces library catalogues as products which enable users to easily identify materials in the library. Classification on the other hand facilitates easy location and access to information materials. The paper concludes that cataloguing and classification represent a continuum in the process of organizing library materials which enhance accessibility and retrieval.

Key words: Cataloguing, Classification, Importance, Libraries.

Introduction
Every library has four important roles to play in the information industry. These roles are acquisition of information resources (prints and non-prints) all over the world as long as they are relevant to the needs of the users, organizing these resources to facilitate accessibility, (if not they will not be useful to the users), disseminating these resources and preserving them.

Of all these major roles which the library plays, organizing role is very important. This is because if the library continues to acquire resources without organizing them, users will not be able to find them no matter how relevant they may be and of course without proper organization, dissemination of these resources will be difficult, just as preservation will be equally difficult. It is therefore imperative that resources in the library must be organized. The primary tools for organizing the physical items in a library are the catalogues and their shelving according to a classification scheme (Kochen, 1974).

Cataloguing and classification are fundamental principles of librarianship which enable users to identify and locate materials in the
library. According to Ogbonyomi (2009), cataloguing and classification are the twin processes adopted in library administration to assist readers in locating the desired information resources quickly and conveniently. Cataloguing and classification were once extolled as two powerful techniques in librarianship capable of democratizing knowledge. On the other hand, they have been described as a necessary evil, an inevitable way of organizing library collection. Librarianship can be regarded as a single process of organizing books and other library resources and their use in libraries (Popoola, Udoh & Aderibigbe, 2001).

What is Cataloguing?

The process of cataloguing, in its narrowest sense, is the compilation of headings and bibliographic descriptions for use in the catalogue. In a broad sense, the process encompasses descriptive cataloguing which may include, in addition to bibliographic descriptions, the choice and form of author headings and subject cataloguing which results in the assigning of class numbers and subject headings. According to Sales (2005), cataloguing is the process of creating bibliographic records of works according to accepted rules or standards. This helps users efficiently survey a library's holdings and determine where items are located. Sonaike (2009) sees cataloguing as primarily concerned with the correct and accurate physical description of a document (print and non-print).

Cataloguing simply defined therefore, is an act of listing the various reading materials that exist in a given library or in an information centre. Hunter & Bakewell (1991) also define it as an art of describing and listing library materials in such a way that it will make it possible to discover the nature and extent of what is available and if possible, where they may be located or obtained. In the words of Adeyemi (2005), cataloguing is concerned with the correct and accurate description of the physical properties of a library document (print, non-print, audio, visual or both).

Cataloguing is one of the most intellectual activities or functions carried out by professional librarians. It is the foundation on which all other services or activities of a library are built. Cataloguing and classification form the basis of organizing knowledge and information in the library. Every item in a collection needs to be provided a
bibliographic description. It is the description that provides complete information of the item (Aina, 2004). This description will enable a user to retrieve and locate the information source desired from the library collection. The description is important because the entry of a document in a catalogue serves as a surrogate of that document. A user who already has an idea of the information source will easily identify the item in the catalogue.

The main purpose of describing a document is to characterize that document in such a way that from the bibliographic description, the document can easily be retrieved from millions of different documents in a collection. Thus, through descriptive cataloguing, a particular information source can be identified from a collection. According to Aina (2004), in providing a bibliographic description for a document there are two important points – one is from the users' point of view, that is, what elements in the document is the user interested in? The other point is from the cataloguers' point of view, that is how can the information the user is interested in be determined from the item being catalogued? Cataloguing is one of the oldest information organization activities. To crown it all, the essence of cataloguing is to enable library users discover different types of materials that are available in a given library holding and where they could be retrieved.

The library catalogue

Catalogues are the products of cataloguing. A catalogue and its use are common to every organization dealing with so many resources. A library catalogue is a list of resources available in the library. It shows the user what the library contains and how to locate them on the shelves. While Ogbonyomi (2009) sees the library catalogue as a systematic list of books and other information resources in the holdings of a library or a group of libraries (in the case of a union catalogue), Amune (2006) sees the catalogue as a tool that helps to update records and also help in the location of a document and enable the user to decide whether the material will be relevant to his needs or not.

A library catalogue is the key to all library collections and without it, users will not know what a collection contains, not to speak of having access to them. Just as the book index guides the reader to the contents of the book, a library catalogue is the index or key to the
stock of that particular library (Edoka, 2000). Edoka adds that it is a communication device rendered in some definite order to enable the library user determine what a library has. Thus, a catalogue record aims to provide all the information of a given bibliographic item that is deemed necessary to get access to the item concerned.

The relevance of a library catalogue is contained in what Charles Ammi Cutter stated in 1876 as the object of a library catalogue. The catalogue should be an efficient instrument for ascertaining 1. Whether the library contains a particular book specified by a. its author and title, or b. if the author is not named in the book, its title alone, or c. if author and title are inappropriate or insufficient for identification, a suitable substitute for the title; and 2a. which works by a particular author and b. which editions of a particular work are in the library (AACR2, 2005). Chowdhury, Burton, McMeremy & Poulter (2008) put it as, it enables a person to find a book by author, title or subject; it shows what the library has by a given author, on a given subject or in a given literature; and it assists in the choice of a book as to its edition and as to its character. Cutter's principles were modified and adopted as the Paris principles in 1961, and specified three functions of a library catalogue: identification, collocation and evaluation (Sveronius, 2000; Taylor, 2004). In 1997, the objectives of a catalogue were reformulated by an IFLA study group to suit the automated cataloguing environment, and to suit a variety of information not necessarily limited to books. Four major functions of a library catalogue were identified by the IFLA study group (Sveronius, 2000): to find entities that correspond to the user's stated search criteria; to identify an entity; to select an entity that is appropriate to the user's needs and to obtain access to (or in other words retrieve) the entity described. Denton (2007) discusses the object of a library catalogue and the meaning as follows:

To enable a person to find a book of which either
   a. the author
   b. the title is known
   c. the subject
   
To show what a library has
(d) by a given author
(e) on a given subject
(f) in a given kind of literature
To assist in the choice of a book
(g) as to its edition (bibliographically)
(h) as to its character (literary or topical)

The above are the basic objectives of a library catalogue and these basic objectives constitute the major functions which a library catalogue performs. According to Taylor (2006) to conform to modern practice, the first objective needs to be rephrased as follows: To enable a person to find any intellectual creation whether in a print, non-print, or electronic format. Taylor states that Cutter’s first object is inadequate even for printed materials in as much as “book” does not unambiguously encompass “periodical”, “serial”, or “pamphlet”. Cutter’s object E also does not go far enough for our current understanding. He rephrased, it as “on a given and related subjects”.

From the forgoing discussion, it is obvious that catalogue records serve as a retrieval aid for a library’s collection. In other words, catalogues enable users to access resources through various search keys. Once a catalogue record which is a representative of the materials on the shelf is found, the descriptive part of the record enables the user to gather more information about the information resource, which helps establish whether or not the material is useful. The catalogue presents an arrangement of records, each displaying all that needs to be known about each material and the best catalogue supplements as well as the physical order of arrangement of materials which is most effective in order to give the user the least problem in identifying individual documents (Popoola, Udoh and Aderibigbe 2001).

Cataloguing tools
The bibliographic description of a document is done according to standard codes and instructions as they are determined by special tools and standards (Gerolimos, Papadourakis, Nikitakis & Sitas, 2007). For cataloguing of library materials in the library, tools such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules II (AACR2), Machine Readable Catalogues (MARC)
Headings (LCSH), Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LCC), Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC), etc., are used. Catalogue codes have been devised to provide guidelines for preparing library catalogues to meet the objectives of cataloguing. Many new catalogue codes appeared in the early part of the 20th century: the Anglo-American Code (AA) appeared in 1908, followed by the Classified Catalogue Code (CCC) of Ranganathan in 1934, the ALA Code in 1949, the first edition of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR1) in 1967, and the second edition of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) in 1978. The latest revision of AACR2 was made in 2002 and an update was made in 2005 (AACR2, 2005, 2006). Catalogue codes help librarians identify which data elements are required to devote a document and how to represent them consistently (their sequence, punctuation, indentation, capitalization, etc). The most widely used of these codes is the AACR2, which allows for up to eight areas in each catalogue entry, each containing a specific set of information about a document concerned.

Subject Cataloguing
The basic purpose of subject cataloguing is to bring all materials in a collection on the same subject together. This will make the search easier for the user. Various tools have been created such as the subject headings and the thesaurus. Among the various tools available for subject description of the information materials are Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), and Mesh (Medical Subject Headings).

According to Gerolimos et. al (2008), the creation and use of the LCSH started in 1897, but their basic 9th edition was published in 1980. The 29th edition is now available. Apart from the printed format, the LCSH has been available in microform from 1976 to 2005 and in CD-ROM from 1988 to 2005 as well. They have been available via the internet since 1995.

The Sears List was first published in 1923, and 18th edition was published in 2004. The 19th edition came out in 2007. The CD-ROM version is updated annually, while the print version is updated every three years (Aina, 2004). The Mesh first printed edition was published in 1954, while access to the online version is already available for free from the Mesh Website.
Classification

Library resources are varied and every resource discusses one aspect of natural phenomenon or the other. Thus, these resources have to be classified in such a way that those that have similar characteristics are grouped together and by analogy to keep unrelated ones apart. The main objective of this activity called classification is to facilitate easy location of, and access to information resources in libraries.

A classical definition of classification has been given by Buchanan (1979) who suggested that:

...Classification displays the relationships between things, and between classes of things... The result of classification is the display of a network or pattern of relationships. We use this pattern for many purposes; in some cases, unconsciously by intuition, in others, consciously. Through classification we cope with the multitude of unorganized impressions we receive by way of our senses; we can use the pattern to impose order on chaos, 'placing' what we see, hear, feel, smell and taste within it.

Classification is the process by which our mind identifies items and at the same time distinguishes it from others (Chowdhury and Chowdhury, 2007). According to Hunter (2002) wherever one looks, examples of the use of classification can be found. Those characteristics of objects that are specifically useful for their identification by library users are used for classification. It is on the basis of classification that materials on related discipline are found together on the shelf. Through the art of library classification, materials are arranged broadly and they are sub-arranged based on sub-disciplines. The main attribute of a bibliographic classification is to enable the classifier sort documents into classes or groups based on the subject content, as well as to be able to indicate relationships between documents in the same class (Aina, 2004).
According to Chowdhury et al (2008) library classification systems aim to achieve the following objectives:
To assign a specific location for every document on the library shelves;
To collocate items: documents on the same subject are placed together on the library’s shelves in order to enable users find items on that subject in one place.
To link items: users look for items in the library catalogue and the corresponding call numbers of these items are used as references to locate the items on the library’s shelves – thus classification is used as a link between the catalogue record of an item and the item itself on the shelf;

To provide browsing facilities: the structure of a bibliographic classification can be used to browse a collection on the library’s shelves or in an electronic collection.
In order for a library classification to achieve its potential, each bibliographic material must be assigned its most specific subject. Classification by context entails subject analysis and it is more of an intellectual exercise (Popoola, Udoh, and Aderibigbe, 2001). Atkinson (1990) remarked that:
The browsing function is an essential part of the strategy for retrieval of material. This is true whether the patron is seeking known items or is seeking library materials by subject. Browsing is the primary retrieval system for a very large portion of our patron’s library searches.

Therefore, the work of classification is as fundamentally important as any task in librarianship. Classification is definitely worthwhile and contributes to patrons’ ability to find what they need or desire (Losee, 1993). To spend enormous amounts of money assemblign book collections and to incompletely make access to them is to throw money away.
Library classification is very important. It derives its importance from the fact that the foundation of the library is the book and the foundation of librarianship is classification. Without classification, there can be no order in the resources acquired in the library.
Conclusion

Every library user desires effective services not only in terms of availability of needed information resources but also as regards easy accessibility and retrieval. Library resources must be catalogued and classified before they can be properly used. Cataloguing and classification create order and it is upon this orderliness that users can find their ways along the path of seeking for knowledge in the library. Cataloguing and classification represent a continuum in the process of organizing library resources but even though the two are separate processes, one can not do without the other. They save the time of the user that could have been wasted in continuous search for documents and they promote effective library services. Thus cataloguing and classification ensure that the library’s materials are systematically organized to enhance accessibility and retrieval.

References


