

# Cataloguing and Classification Skills and Information Dissemination in Libraries

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**Abstract.** Information resources in the library will not be useful if there is no access to them. This important function is within the concept of cataloguing and classification. Cataloguing and classification plays a vital role in information dissemination. This paper focuses on cataloguing and classification skills as it enhances information dissemination. Cataloguing and classification skill is a major tool in information dissemination because it is an access and retrieval tool which allows people to find information needed for their research work and personal development. The process of cataloguing produces catalogue which helps users identify materials in the library. Therefore, there is a strong need for skilled cataloguers to organize library collections appropriately for easy dissemination of information to library users. Some of the highlights of the study are cataloguing and classification of library items, traditional method, automated method, challenges of cataloguing and classification. Some recommendations were made among others, that there should be a constant training and retraining of cataloguers in order to improve their skills and quality, thereby disseminating information appropriately to users.

**Keywords:** Cataloguing, Classification, Information Dissemination, Libraries.

## Introduction

Libraries are the constituents of every university. It is therefore necessary for them to think of ways to improve their services to users. There have been a paradigm shift from the traditional cataloguing to technological cataloguing which involves the use of computers. The rapid introduction of this new technologies imply that cataloguers have to be flexible in adapting and adopting new skills and strategies in handling them. It is very important for cataloguers to acquire these skills so as to disseminate information to meet and satisfy the information needs of the society.

According to Anglo State University (2017), cataloguing unit provides effective bibliographic control of the library collections through the cataloguing and processing of materials. Cataloguing and classification is a vital aspect of library particularly on accessing and retrieval of

information resources. Also, Edem and Ntui (2012) state that cataloguing is the description of a book or any other information resources such that the important bibliographic features are highlighted. This elements of cataloguing is very important because it helps in differentiating one material from another, thereby disseminating information with ease. Competencies of cataloguers are of great value in organizing and storing of information for use in the library.

Cataloguing and classification is the central nervous system of librarianship. The current trends in cataloguing has re-engineered the basic structure of the library organisation. In the past, cataloguing and classification were done manually which made the work very difficult, boring and time consuming. Recently, most university libraries in Nigeria have joined their counterparts in

advanced countries in the use of computers for processing library collections. Cataloguing and classification involves three major steps which are allocating access points, subject headings and classification numbers. All these has made library materials to be easily accessed and retrieved by users. According to Adedibu *et al.* (2012), the purpose of organizing library materials is to easily identify locations of library materials, save time and space. Also, Cabanero and Dolendo (2013) noted that cataloguing is an essential process in any library and information centre in order to provide access to all learning resources to library patrons. Every aspect of librarianship includes work in cataloguing which is always understood to be a major part of library function. Also, Luther (2010) posits that cataloguing and classification always held a position in the curriculum of library schools. Cataloguing and classification of information resources is the most efficient and highest quality services to library users. This helps them to identify the most appropriate materials to meet their information needs. It is a continuous and evolving practice that gives room to efficient and effective information dissemination to users. Information available in the rightful manner and timely to users in whatever format is one of the core in librarianship.

Hence cataloguers are the brain behind the placement of such information resources on the shelves of the library. Information therefore, is no longer just a piece of data but rather the life blood of scholarly world. Khan (2015) asserted that information is a critical economic resources that when utilized, it is capable of increasing the knowledge state of an individual in decision making. This makes it necessary for information resources to be well organized in order to disseminate information properly to the library users.

Nwosu (2012) made a submission that cataloguing involves all processes required to prepare information resources for the shelves, files or databases or make entries for the catalogue, either card, online or web catalogue. Indeed, cataloguing is very important in keeping all the materials in the library organized. It is core of the profession and a force that binds the library into a unified whole.

The basic function of the library is to identify, select, acquire, organize and provide information resources in the right formats for prompt dissemination at all times to various users. Cataloguing and classification makes the library very attractive to its users. The collection in a modern library are the records of intellectual thoughts and experience of mankind in the form of books, periodicals, manuscript, music pictures etc.

Thus, these basic functions of identifying, acquiring, processing and making these important resources available to users distinguish the library from a publisher's ware houses of books. These connotes that the competence of cataloguers are of great importance in information dissemination to library users.

### **Cataloguing and Classification of Information Items in the Library**

The processing of library materials is an aspect of technical services in the library. Imo and Igbo (2009) states that cataloguing is aimed at creation and organizing information to promote access to information, but argued that information explosion has presented a scenario that will necessitate the cataloguers to adapt to new technology in order to disseminate information appropriately.

The skills of cataloguing and classification must be used to improve the end users experience of locating and retrieving information resources in the library.

Bello and Mansor (2011) strongly believed that a cataloguer must be skilled enough to perform bibliographic description in all kinds of resources with the use of appropriate bibliographic tools such that users could easily and efficiently access the resources in the library irrespective of the method used whether manually or technologically.

### **Steps in Cataloguing Library Items**

Descriptive cataloguing identifies important bibliographic and physical features of a material, books, serials and audio-visuals such as author, title, edition, publisher, date of publication, place of publication volume and size. All careers in librarianship includes work in cataloguing which is always understood to be a major part of library function (Marcum, 2006)

The description of each document using physical features listed is called bibliographic record or bibliographic entry of the document. This is done, following rules made by the international standard bibliographic description monograph. All rules and modifications identified since inception are contained in the Anglo-American cataloguing rules edition (AACR2) published in 1978.

These rules are very detailed and properly illustrates most of the information sought during descriptive cataloguing and can be found from the title page, verso page, cover page, back of the book and the main body of the book.

More so, subject cataloguing points out the main subject or disciplines covered by the materials being catalogued. The subject so indicated may be broad or more specific depending on the intended user. An item could also be given multiple subject headings if it has substantially treated more than one subject. This also depends on the cataloguing policy of the particular library based on the characteristics of the present and potential users. If there is need for multiple subject's headings, the cataloguer should choose which of them will come first. Kipp (2013) further gave details about initial steps in cataloguing and indexing that involves examining the important parts of the item as identified in reading.

Lastly, classification is the assigning of class numbers of the information resources. The cataloguer must ensure that library materials are made available to its users through an adequate and effective catalogue. The library catalogue serves as the gate to the library's collections and further interpret the library to the users. The library catalogue could be print or electronic as the catalogue of any modern library is done by preparing 3 x 5 inches catalogue cards. The online version is the online public access catalogue (OPAC). According to Fatoki (2011), the internet has expanded the concept of catalogue with the advent of the OPAC as it has increased search capabilities and accessibility of information resources.

## **Cataloguing and Classification Methods**

### **Traditional Method**

This is done manually by first of all tracing the book before doing the main cataloguing. There is normally no computer involved in this method. The cataloguer makes use of the library of congress subject headings, classification schemes and schedule to catalogue. It is then typed on stencil using typewriter, and duplicated into multiple cards. These cards are later filled manually in wooden card catalogue drawers. This process is a bit tedious for cataloguers because it takes a longer time to catalogue one book. The whole operation is quite monotonous and hectic both for the library staff and users.

### **Automated Method of Cataloguing**

This is a technologically based method which platform presents a new opportunity for electronic data interchange and selection in information dissemination (Liu and Briggs, 2015). An automated library environment is quite different from that of a library whose operations and services are still done manually. The automated cataloguing makes use of the machine readable catalogue (MARC). It is a structured format which enables standard bibliographic records of books and other catalogue formats, to be manipulated by computer in a standard way to facilitate exchange. According to Uze (2012), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has impacted on the work of cataloguers whereby computers are used to process, create, store, transmit and display, share or exchange information by electronic means. This method eliminates the printing and filling of cards, instead it makes use of the online public access catalogue which conserves space as compared to the large space occupied by card catalogue in the library. The online catalogues provides additional searching possibilities, as such systems helps in communicating with one another, about which books are held in the

libraries. Cataloguers have to embrace the new technology. It is no longer ideal for newly acquired information resources to be held up in cataloguing section more than necessary. The machine readable catalogue is now accessible for searching when cataloguing.

## **Cataloguing and Classification Skills enhance Information Dissemination in Libraries**

Efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination in libraries, and access by users will help developing countries to eradicate illiteracy (Delponte *et al.*, 2015). This will help to raise informed and educated citizens. Information dissemination is a proactive information service designed to educate and inform focused groups of users on society, economies and educational issues of education and learning programmes.

Therefore library and information resources should be organized in a way that it can be accessed and retrieved in a timely manner. Information dissemination requires systematic collection, organization and storage of information relevant to the needs of the user community.

Thus, cataloguers must ensure that library services are generated using indexed resources through data based library catalogue, repositories, digital libraries, web resources etc. There should also be consistency and uniformity in description of these materials for easy information dissemination.

## **Challenges Associated With Cataloguing and Classification in Libraries**

Some of the challenges in cataloguing is difficulty in determining the subject content of the text. Especially for some books that has multiple subject heading, most times the subject of the work is readily available, but in other cases, Miller (2007) expounds that the subject is not so easy to discern. Also the type of materials, vocabulary skills and time constraints also affect cataloguing and classification.

The use of outdated cataloguing and classification tools is a problem. Inadequate knowledge of cataloguing and classification rules breeds poor interpretation and application of these rules. There is also shortage of professional staff. Original cataloguing is time consuming for the cataloguer and data processor (Orbin and Aina, 2014).

Due to lack of ICT skills by librarians, Ntsiko (2013) believes that continuous skills development, especially in technology and a supportive environment is critical to meet the demands of technology oriented users they serve. Therefore, inadequate knowledge of ICT by cataloguers in application of various library services in terms of automated libraries will serve as a hindrance to

information dissemination.

Irregular power supply in the technological environment can hinder library services also.

## Conclusion

Information dissemination to users constitute the focal point of any library. It is therefore mandatory that users have access to library collections with ease. In order to make information dissemination effective, cataloguers in every library requires continual updated knowledge and skills for effective performance.

The efficiency of any library and information centre depends on the calibre of its staff (Adomi and Nwalo, 2003). Cataloguers must be trained on the basic skills to be familiar with academic subject matters, bibliographic skills analysis and organizing the library collections into meaningful assessable forms which will enhance information dissemination.

## Recommendations

1. Cataloguers must strive to develop and adopt practices that will effectively disseminate information appropriately.
2. Libraries should replace outdated cataloguing tools and materials with new ones.
3. There should be training and retraining of cataloguers which will help improve their skills and quality cataloguing.
4. There should be a collaboration with information technology units on automated application and digitization projects for libraries that has not been automated.
5. The cataloguer in addition to his/her professional competence must add computer literacy to meet up with the current trends in cataloguing.
6. The cataloguers who are the subject librarians should be involved in the activities of the various faculty board meetings so as to know the information needs of the users in other to organize the right material needed.

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