Effective Workflow for Cataloguing Problem Materials in Cataloguing Departments

Dr. M. O. Okoye
Nnamdi Azikwie Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
E-mail: mookoye2005@yahoo.com.

Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to identify the factors that promote the possibility of having problem materials in the traditional and automated cataloging departments. In addition, the work examines core situations which are imperative for addressing problem materials in libraries.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Exploratory approach was adopted .for the study. A framework was developed to identify the nexus between workflow and seamless processing of materials devoid of problem materials..

Findings: The paper found out that libraries that would be able to address problem materials require adequacy of cataloguing scheme in use, in-depth knowledge of cataloguing expertise by the cataloguers, involvement in cooperative cataloguing, subscription to online data sources and use of software that is either MARC 21 or Z39.50 compliant.

Practical Implication: Problem materials arise in libraries where workflow is not given proper attention by the Head of Cataloguing Department. Cataloguers normally select those resources which class numbers can be easily downloaded from online cataloguing and the C.I.P., while stock-piling the resources that need original cataloguing. This scenario gives vent to creation of problem materials. It also affects the quality of resources being sent out to Circulation Department and other units.

Originality/Value: The value of this paper lies in its identification of the important factors that are vital to the maintenance of a good workflow, devoid of problem materials, which ensure seamless delivery of library resources.

Keywords: Cataloguing, Cataloguing Department, Librarians, Libraries, Problem materials, Workflow.

Paper Type: Conceptual,

Introduction

The basic function of any Cataloguing department of any library is the organization of library resources in order to engender maximum use of both the collection and the information by the user within the shortest possible time. This injunction conforms with Ranganathan's fourth Law of Library Science which says. "Save the time of the reader. In Obeisance to this law, any cataloguing department has a full complement of staff ranging from library attendants, the letterers, the data entry clerks, library assistants, library officers (para-professionals) and the librarians. Each group has its specific function and a synergy of their functions makes the library the vertex of academic activity in the university, while cataloguing department is the power-house that makes the library, a veritable academic nerve centre. The synergy in this case, is the resultant smooth workflow. Workflow could be defined as the process by which the activities in a department, which start from the least functional group (the non professionals), move to the para-professionals and onto the professionals in a harmonious attempt to achieve a goal. In the case of the library, to provide information delivery in such a manner that the time of the clientele (the reader/user) is saved as well as the time of the staff.

In the traditional milieu, the critical functions of this department consist of cataloguing, classification and catalogue maintenance. The first two words have become so hackneyed, that with the advent of ICTs their meanings have become diverse and cumbersome. Cataloguing is the process of preparing a catalogue which denotes the various processes involved in the preparation of entries and maintenance of a catalogue (Kumar and Kumar 1981). It is also defined as "the art of assembling metadata information about a resource. The goal is to help library users find the most useful resources"(Wikipedia,2008) The word classification is omnibus and has various contextual meanings.

Ordinarily, it is defined as the process of dividing things and ideas into groups according to type (Procter 1996). Narrowing the term to library classification, it is defined by Mann as quoted by Kumar (1979) as "the arranging of things according to, but in addition, classification of books is a knowledge classification with adjustments made necessary by the physical form of books" (Kumar, 1979:4). A more current definition is given by Wikipedia (2008) as follows, "A library classification is a system of coding and organizing library materials (books, audiovisual materials, computer files, manuscripts and regalia) according to their subject and allocating call number to that information resource".

In the traditional library system, schematic workflow starts with the non-professionals (the library assistants), as shown:-

Library assistants → Paraprofessionals → Professionals(Librarians/Cataloguers) → Chief cataloguer → Data entry clerks → Letterers and then → Dispatch shelves.

Library Assistants receive the resources and their slips from the Acquisition Section, do bibliographic searching to ensure whether the library already has a copy of the material/s in order to match bibliographic record of the title/s, make bibliographic entries (preliminary cataloguing) of new materials and add holdings information to the bibliographic record. They then submit their work to the para-professionals.

The Para-professionals

This group supervises the work submitted to them by the library assistants and does copy cataloguing.

a. **Copy Cataloguing and Classification:** In this connection, some working tools are searched for the bibliographic details of the document and if they are available, the para-professionals' job is accomplished. The tools used are:

- National Bibliography of Nigeria. (N.B.N.)

- American Book Publishing Record (ABPR) America.

- Africa Book Publishing Record (ABPR) Africa.

- British National Bibliography (BNB)

- National Union Catalogue (NUC).

b. **Original Cataloguing and Classification:** For this purpose most libraries use International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD). While most public libraries use Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), most academic libraries use Library of Congress Classification. Scheme. (L.C.). For libraries that use L.C. for classification, their working tools include:

- L.C. Subject Heading List

- Sears List of Subject Headings

- L.C. Schedules for various subjects

- L.C. Additions and changes

- Three-figure Cutter Table.

When the para-professionals finish their work they submit to the cataloguers for verification

The Cataloguers:

They engage themselves with original cataloguing and they submit their work to the Chief Cataloguer for verification.

The Chief Cataloguer:

He engages himself with original cataloguing, verification of the work done by other cataloguers, supervision of bibliographic data entries made on the resources, (book, CD-ROM, cards, materials' borrowing slips and catalogue cards, supervision of the lettered books, ensuring that the fully processed materials are shelved on the dispatch shelf as well as ensuring that the materials are dispatched to their respective locations as and when due

The Data Entry Clerk:

He collects the fully processed materials from the Chief Cataloguer's apartment and transfers the bibliographic data of each material to its respective book cards, catalogue cards and borrowing slips

The Letterer:

He writes the call numbers on the materials and shelves them on the dispatch shelf.

Problem Materials and their Causes

The L.C. is a well established classification scheme but it has inadequate provision for classification of materials on or from Africa. Areas of inadequacy include humanities and the social sciences. This flaw was identified by

Unamba-Opara (1983). Currently, they have not been exhaustively addressed. Hence the library resources of some of these disciplines end up as problem materials. The L.C also tries to make up for this and other short-comings by providing revisions and periodic publication's of additions and changes but these publications have not out-matched the impact of information explosion and publication overload in various fields of learning. Other causes of problem materials are a lack of in-depth knowledge of cataloguing expertise and non participation of some libraries in cooperative cataloguing.

With all the working tools afore-mentioned at the disposal of the cataloguer and his staff, some resources may still be difficult to process. Such resources are normally designated **problem materials**. Can any solution be found to these problem materials?

Solutions to Problem Materials in Traditional Environment

1. **Brainstorming:** The Chief Cataloguer could, after pondering over the problem, develop a lot of ideas which will solve the issue as he peruses through his working tools later. Alternatively, he could invite his faculty cataloguers (where the cataloguing department is compartmentalized) to brainstorm. In most cases, the stumbling block could be de-mystified.

2. **Serendipity:** This is a situation whereby the Chief Cataloguer stumbles into the solution to resolve the knotty issue by happenstance.

3. **Co-operative Cataloguing:** Co-operative cataloguing is a way in which librarians work together to create bibliographic and authority records that can be used by others. The libraries in this cooperative venture agree to follow established cataloguing practices and work with systems that facilitate the use of records by others. The systems can be automated or other utilities that facilitate the creation of bibliographic records and authority records in a form that can be shared with other libraries, can be employed (Ajulo, 2007).

Libraries in a cooperative venture are free to send their records including the problem materials to the cooperative central cataloguing data base for bibliographic records/details. There are already five known cooperative cataloguing ventures. They include:

Library of Congress (L.C)

Online computer Library Centre (formerly known as Ohio College Library Centre), This centre offers both online and off line (Catalogue card) services

ILLINET Online for members of the Illinois Library Computer System Organisation (ILCSO) and

CALICO (Cape Library Consortium) (Ajulo, 2007), Traditional Libraries should consider OCLC because it offers offline (Catalogue card) services.

4. In-depth knowledge of cataloguing and classification expertise

5. Outsourcing of problem materials; This could be done by

Contracting out the problem materials

For materials written in foreign languages, the library could approach the Head of Department of Foreign Languages or in the case of materials written in Nigerian Languages, the library could liaise with the Head of that department and plead with him/her to allow his department to interpret the content of the material.

ICT and Original Cataloguing

There have been many literature works on the impact of ICTs in cataloguing. However, the unvarnished fact remains that although ICTs have inevitably facilitated the cataloguers' work, they have not changed the basic principles upon which the cataloguer does his work. The cataloguer must use his intellectual and professional expertise to assign subject analysis, decide entry word and fix the call numbers, among other details, whether in the conventional/traditional or in an automated library environment. In a cooperative venture, when there is no bibliographic information in the cooperative cataloguing database with regard to a resource (material e.g. a book etc) original cataloguing is done and the bibliographic details are uploaded into the Internet through their OPACS. The bibliographic details are also encoded onto the MARC. It is instructive to note that, in Oxford University Library (Oxford Library Information Services, OLIS) which is fully automated, original cataloguing holds sway for reasons I have already explained (http://www.lib.ox.uk/olis/documentation/search

ing forolderprinte/material.pdf). Original cataloguing will remain an epic of the cataloguers' job for a considerable foreseeable future as opined by Boeke (2007). A pertinent question then is, do automated cataloguing departments have problem materials? If so, how are they solved?

The answer to the first part of the question is yes, they do have problem materials. To enable us appreciate the second question, it becomes imperative to highlight a few functions of the cataloguer in an automated environment. His role is enormous and under this dispensation, he makes use of ICTs such as computers, OPACs, CD-ROMs, Networks and Internet facilities. His critical functions include online cataloguing, uploading of catalogue records onto the Internet, cooperative cataloguing, and retrospective catalogue conversion.

Online Cataloguing

This refers to the acquisition of cataloguing information in a MARC (Machine Readable Cataloguing) format from other sources available on the Internet or CD-ROMs (Chinga, 2006). To benefit from online cataloguing, the library's software must be compliant with either MARC 21 or Z.39.50. Online cataloguing is facilitated by library software with online cataloguing options. Such software include Alice for Windows, Bookwhere, Softlink, Liberty 3 and Library of Congress Classification scheme with L.C. data source.

Maintenance of the OPAC

This involves ensuring that the data in the OPAC is protected with antivirus and updating of the data in the server

Uploading of Catalogue records onto the Internet: This is a process whereby the cataloguer organizes the institutions knowledge base for global information network environment to enable his collection become part of global information resources so that others can share in it.

Cooperative Cataloguing

This has been discussed earlier in this paper

Retrospective Catalogue Conversion

Chigbu and Okafor (2005) quoting Beaumont and Joseph (1989) defined Retrospective Cataloguing Conversion (R.C.C) as the conversion of a library's existing bibliographic record from manual to machine readable format,

according to specific policies and standards. Simply put, retrospective catalogue conversion is the conversion of traditional card or book form catalogues into machine readable form.

Causes of Problem Materials in Automated Cataloguing Departments

From the critical functions of the cataloguer, some causative factors to problem materials are given as

1. Where the cataloguing department cannot subscribe to a cooperative cataloguing venture, nor find the required bibliographic information on L.C's free catalogue online in the Internet, the material for which the bibliographic information is being sought becomes a problem material.

2. Non subscription to online catalogue data sources such as the LC Catalogue.

3. Thirdly, where an automated cataloguing department has a software that does not comply with a standard protocol Z.39.50 which must be provided for the initial querying and delivery of data, the cataloguing department cannot therefore retrieve specific records from a large collection across a network such as the Internet and cannot therefore find solution to theirproblem materials.

4. It is assumed that all cataloguing data can be obtained online with the help of online data sources such as e British Books in Print (BBIP) and National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN). However, very local content published books may not be found in these online data sources. If the affected materials cannot be given original cataloguing, they will verily constitute problem materials.

5. Online cataloguing relies on cataloguing information that have been input by National Libraries and publishers among others into a library automation system that is MARC 21 or Z 39.50 complaint. So books published abroad or locally that have not been submitted to depositories such as National Libraries are not included in the data sources (Okore, and Chibuzo, 2006). The fifth causative factor implies that if such

materials published abroad cannot be given original cataloguing easily, they also constitute problem materials.

6. The sixth causative factor is imperfect knowledge of use of ICTs in cataloguing processes.

Can solutions be found to problem materials in automated cataloguing departments? The answer to this question is yes, but certain conditions must be fulfilled in order to actualize this goal.

Solutions to Problem Materials in Automated Cataloguing Departments

1. Automated cataloguing departments must engage in cooperative cataloguing so that the problem materials as well as local content materials can be catalogued at the cooperative central cataloguing database.

2. Libraries should subscribe to online catalogue data bases to enable them access bibliographic data of materials they cannot easily catalogue or classify.

3. The cataloguing department should have library software that is either MARC 21 or Z 39.50 compliant. This will enable them to retrieve specific records and cataloguing information from other data sources available on the Internet.

4. The cataloguer should have a perfect knowledge of application of ICTs to cataloguing processes.

5. Solution can also be sought from http://groups.yahoo.com/group/catnclass -online-forum

6. The problem materials can be outsourced.

Recommendations

a. Libraries should embrace participation in cooperative cataloguing. Besides solving the issue of problem materials, cross-fertilization of ideas is fostered during cooperative cataloguing.

b. Libraries should subscribe to online catalogue data bases

c. Libraries should have library software that is either MARC 21 or Z.39.50 compliant.

d. Classification schemes should beef-up their current entries to accommodate

class numbers for new areas of specialization and divisions for regions.

e. Continuous professional training of the cataloger is a sine-qua-non. This is necessary if cataloguers will remain current and trendy in this age of information explosion.

f. Our library schools should introduce a curriculum that should address the demands of the labour market especially in acquisition of pragmatic knowledge of ICTs and cataloguing processes.

Conclusion

The paper has shown that problem materials could exist in both conventional/traditional and automated cataloguing departments. It has also identified their causes and ways of addressing them. In addressing the problems, three critical areas must be considered seriously. The first is the question of providing a pragmatic knowledge of cataloguing. It does not end with the library schools. Heads of departments, college and University libraries, should ensure that their cataloguers acquire professional vibrancy by sending them to professional training programmes (seminar and workshop) as often as possible.

The second is, equipping the library, not only with computers and Internet facility but with software that is MARC 21 or Z39.50 compliant .The third which has almost become imperative is that libraries should embrace cooperative cataloguing venture or at least form consortia.

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