

# CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION PRACTICES IN GHANAIA LIBRARIES

BY

ANABA A. ALEMNA

## ABSTRACT

This is a survey of the cataloguing practices of ten major libraries in Ghana. It concentrates among others, on the cataloguing and classification schemes used in the libraries, local adaptations, description of catalogue entries, the maintenance of card catalogues, and staffing. Various problems encountered in the Technical Services Departments are examined, and suggestions are made towards the improvement of cataloguing practices in the country's library system.

## INTRODUCTION

In order to provide access to the holdings of a library, an index or a list of materials must be maintained. The principal index or list of available books and other materials in a library is the catalogue. The catalogue has been defined by a Terminology Group at the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles (ICCP) held in Paris in 1961 as a comprehensive list of a collection, or collection of books, documents or similar materials.<sup>1</sup>

Cutter<sup>2</sup> gave the functions of a library catalogue as follows:

1. To enable a person to find a book which either (a) the author is known, (b) the title is known, (c) the subject is known.

2. To show what the library has (d) by a given subject (f) in a given kind of literature.

3. To assist in the choice of a book (g) as to its edition (bibliographical) and (h) as to its character.

Classification has been defined by A.J. Hawkes as "an arrangement of books by which the topics, subjects, and sciences of which they treat are associated together on the shelves in a more or less logical sequence of diminishing intimacy of purport or purpose, or in the absence of subject significance, by the form in which they are cast: the purpose of such arrangement being, primarily; to facilitate the discovery of knowledge in literature, and secondly, to group together the books most advantageously consulted together."<sup>3</sup>

Catalogues are very essential to libraries. Although a number of libraries are lucky to be provided with already duplicated Library of

Congress cards in some of their new books, the work of the cataloguer is still required in the library, since not all the new books have these cards in them. Even those that have the L.C. cards may need some local adaptations.

It is therefore the view of this paper that catalogues will continue to form an indispensable part in the work of libraries. The vast output of literature, especially scientific and technical literature, emphasises the importance of bibliographic control, and the catalogue is a vital part of this control.<sup>4</sup>

#### METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were sent to ten major libraries in the country. These are the Balme Library, Medical School Library, School of Administration Library all at the University of Ghana; The University of Science and Technology Library, the University of Cape Coast Library, the Central Reference Library of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Ghana Library Board, Research Library on African Affairs, and the Library of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA).

These libraries were selected not only because they form the major libraries in the country, but also because they are a combination of Academic, Special and Public

Libraries. (The Ghana Library Board is responsible for public and school libraries in the country). The questionnaire contained questions on areas such as scheme of classification, catalogue code, library catalogue and staffing of the technical services departments of the libraries.

#### INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES

It is interesting to note the variety of classification schemes used in the country. For obvious reasons, the three universities and GIMPA library use the Library of Congress Scheme. The Ghana Library Board and the Research Library on African Affairs use the Dewey Scheme. Four special libraries – Medical Library, Law Faculty Library, School of Administration Library and the CSIR Library use the Barnard, Bodleian, Bliss and UDC Schemes respectively.

#### LOCAL ADAPTATIONS

Almost all the libraries surveyed have made some local adaptations to their Classification Schemes (See Table). With those that have made local adaptations, all of them reported modifications to the DT African History section. This is not surprising, as the treatment of African subjects in the two popular schemes is grossly inade-

quate. No doubt, libraries in Africa have taken certain decisions in reaction to this inadequacy. The evidence in the field shows that these schemes cannot be adopted without modification. "The University of Lagos, at a loss as to how to manoeuvre the tight DT African History provisions, decided to reject the numbers and adopt the base notation DT plus country cutter number."<sup>5</sup> This shows the extent of the problem.

### CATALOGUE CODES

The second edition of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (1978) generally called AACR II, is used by all the libraries. Most of the libraries use the International Standard for Bibliographic Description — ISBD(M). However, unlike the classification Schemes which have local variations made to them in almost all the libraries in the country, local adaptations in catalogue entries maybe seen in a few libraries such as the Law Faculty and School of Administration Libraries.

### LIBRARY CATALOGUE

A survey of the 10 libraries under study shows that the card catalogue is the most popular form of catalogue used in the libraries. Apart from the School of Administration (which uses only a sheaf catalogue),

all other libraries use the card catalogue, as well as other catalogues. Half of the number of libraries use typewritten cards, while in the other half the information is typed on stencil, and duplicated to get the desired number of copies. In the University Libraries and the CSIR, a combination of both methods are used. None of the libraries reported the use of printed card service from the Library of Congress or Blackwells. This may be explained by the fact that the cards are expensive to purchase. Most of the libraries claim to contribute cards to the National Union Catalogue. This is a healthy development that should be encouraged.

### GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

The organisation of government publications is another activity that has given ample room for variations in local practice among libraries. Inquiries, however, confirm unanimity of organisation on the basis of provenance rather than subject. The LC has no worthwhile provisions for government publications other than those of the United States. Any library outside the United States using the LC Scheme will be obliged to make its own provisions for organising these materials. The DDC provisions are too generalised to be of any use to any African Library. Both Schemes

adopt subject classification as opposed to classification by provenance, the grouping of subjects according to source, which is favoured by most libraries in Ghana.

## STAFFING

All the libraries reported that they have training programmes for the non-professional staff. The training schemes should be intensified, since the non-professional staff in any library usually constitute an important back-up support for the professional staff. The prospects of further training will therefore motivate the non-professional staff to put up their best in the Libraries.

## PROBLEMS WITHIN THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS

Among the problems reported by the Technical Services Units in our libraries include:

(a) Lack of skilled cataloguers — This problem was reported in seven out of ten libraries. It appears that many professional librarians shy away from Technical Services because they lack the skill. This may be the result of the lack of interest in cataloguing and classification in the Library Schools because the activities involved are monotonous, dull, uninteresting, difficult and involve too many details. According to Greaves,<sup>6</sup>

this problem is of general concern to library schools all over the world.

(b) Lack of tools — These tools include classification schemes, cataloguing and filing rules, subject headings lists etc. The survey showed that these are grossly inadequate in our libraries. Even where they are available, they are often biased to Western thought and culture. The sections about Africa and African topics are often incomplete and inaccurate. Most of the tools therefore need to be updated. Textbooks and manuals also fall into this category. This explains why most of the libraries in the country make their own local variations and adaptations to the various classification schemes and catalogue codes.

(c) Protection of card catalogue Trays — The life of catalogue cards depend very much upon their handling. It has been observed that the more popular a book, the shorter the life of the catalogue card. Similarly, open or closed access systems in a library will also determine the longevity of the cards because in a closed access system, a catalogue is consulted more than in open access systems. Apart from the use of metal rods in the catalogue trays, only one library has taken some special

measures to protect the catalogue cards. This is a problem that should be seriously considered by the other libraries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this survey. These are:

1. Our libraries should take measures to protect the catalogue cards against mishandling, dust and excessive heat. This can be done by the use of plastic jackets to cover the cards. Emphasis should also be placed on careful use of the card catalogue during library orientation programmes.

2. The problem arising from the lack of skilled cataloguers in our libraries can partly be solved by a restructuring of the courses in Technical Services at the Department of Library and Archival Studies. At present, Cataloguing and Classification is combined with Collection Building as Technical Services for the Graduate Students, and Preparation and Use of Materials for the Certificate Students. In order to provide more time and adequate training for students, Cataloguing and Classification should be completely separated from Technical Services as is done in other library schools in the sub-region such as Universities of Ibadan<sup>7</sup> and Maiduguri<sup>8</sup>, both in Nigeria.

3. Lecturers for these courses must have a more sympathetic attitude towards the students since teaching deficiency can make students to dislike the course, just as good teaching can motivate the students to like the course. It is suggested that lecturers should prepare manuals to supplement existing teaching materials. Such manuals will simplify aspects of the course, and students can have them in their possession when they leave the library school.<sup>9</sup> In this way, the manuals can be referred to, when problems arise at work.

4. Our colleagues in the libraries also have a role to play here, since cataloguing and classification involve both practicals and theory. It is hoped that when the students are sent to the libraries for Field Experience, librarians will organise more work on cataloguing and classification for them, as well as providing them with the necessary guidance and supervision.

5. Frequent seminars and workshops should be organised by the Department where practising librarians are invited to actively participate. This will not only enable librarians to keep up with latest developments in the field, but will also provide more interaction between libraries and the Department.

6. There is urgent need for the formation of a cataloguing and classification section of the Ghana

Library Association to examine various adaptations already in use in order to produce a blueprint for standard use in Ghanaian libraries. The work of this section will include the harmonisation of the various amendments to the cataloguing codes; reclassification of some of the classes such as African History, Language and Literature; and the provision of a shelf arrangement for official Publications.

## CONCLUSION

Although modern methods of information retrieval are used throughout the world these days, all the libraries surveyed still depend on the conventional methods of systematisation and dissemination of information. With the present economic situation in the country, it may be too presumptuous to suggest the use of automated methods in our technical services departments. We are therefore likely to continue in this way for sometime to come. Local variations in cataloguing practice should thus be restricted to a minimum, and once started, should be consistently followed.

African history probably receives the worst treatment of all Africana

from the two schemes. The regionalisation of the continent is chaotic, coordination and subordination with the regional groupings and under most countries are simply misleading. Specifications and facet structure (if any) under each subject are not uniformed, or, at least, do not reflect actual historical experience.<sup>10</sup>

Most of these shortcomings derive from the fact that the schedules were drawn up when most of Africa was still colonised. The D History class of LC for example, was first published in 1916, the second edition was published in 1959 and reprinted in 1966. Like other African names, there are no set guidelines for the cataloguing of Ghanaian names in the Anglo-American cataloguing Rules. This makes rendering of Ghanaian names inconsistent, thus creating difficulties both for indexers and users.<sup>11</sup> It may therefore be necessary for all the libraries to jointly discuss their cataloguing problems, and the variations agreed upon, noted in a Cataloguing Manual. In this way, it is hoped that consistency and efficiency in cataloguing practice will be achieved in all the libraries.

**CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION PRACTICES**

L I B R A R Y	SUBJECT HEADING	CLASSI- FICATION SCHEME	LOCAL ADAPTA- TIONS?	CATA- LOGUE CODE	CATA- LOGUE ENTRY	LOCAL VARIA- TIONS
1. BALME (UNIV. OF GHANA	L.C.	L.C.	YES	AACR II ISBD	PRE ISBD ISBD	NO
2. MEDICAL SCHOOL	MESH	BARNARD	YES	"	HRE ISBD	"
3. LAW FACULTY	BODIEIAN	BODIEIAN	"	"	"	YES
4. SCH. OF ADMIN.	SEARS	BLISS	"	"	ISBD	"
5. UNIV. OF SCI. AND TECHNOLOGY	L.C.	L.C.	"	"	"	N
6. UNIV. OF CAPE COAST	L.C.	"	"	"	"	YES
7. C.S.I.R.	SEARS	U.D.C.	NO	"	"	NO
8. GHANA LIBRARY BOARD	L.C.	DEWEY	YES	"	"	"
9. RES. LIB. ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS	L.C.	"	"	"	"	"
10. G.I.M.P.A.	SEARS/ L.C.	L.C.	"	"	"	YES

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