THE USE OF THE INTERNET FOR CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION

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Abstract

The increasing demand for access to library holdings in many libraries via the catalogue (traditional card catalogue or the Online Public Access catalogue (OPAC) has added to catalogers’ workload in regards to information dissemination. The internet is democratizing information, empowering the masses and allowing the users access to a vast array of resources. It is significantly altering the work of catalogers. This paper discusses approaches to utilize various online library catalogues to facilitate cataloguing processes for bibliographic benefits. References will be made to the University of Lagos Library where success has been recorded as a result of use of various online catalogues to complement the tools used in classifying library materials.

Introduction

Concepts such as online catalogs, cataloguing of internet resources, web browsing, global trend in Information Communication Technology; Machine Readable Records etc. are the languages of the information age. The need for information professionals in developing countries to move with the times have been discussed at various fora. The magnitude of materials being passed on the web each day presents an unprecedented challenge to the profession in terms of traditional responsibility to organize, provide access to, and preserve information. As information professionals it is very dangerous to stay local. We must continue to keep pace with the changes in our profession, to fulfill the needs of our users, and to fulfill our role as the principal providers of information services. The current issue is no longer whether information technology applications are relevant to library operations; the critical decision is on how best to apply information technology systems to library and information services.

Cataloging and classification of library materials embodies the very fabric of knowledge structures that shape the traditional and contemporary practice to find, identify, select and obtain information. Original cataloguing and classification of library materials is a pain-staking and time consuming exercise. It is possible, using this method, to have library materials that should be processed fast to spend months in cataloguing section. The application of the internet as supportive tool would no doubt turn most cataloguing section of most libraries into a livelier environment.
The use of library collections depends on many conditions. As catalogers, you want to know if materials are properly cataloged and classified. Are the materials available on the shelves as at when needed? According to Omekwu (2007), the journey of the book and other information resources do not just jump to the shelves, it follows a delineated process that is both technical and intellectual. A traditional model follows this pattern: a book is published, a librarian receives notice and decides to add it to the collection, submits an order; the item arrives, is processed, catalogued and classified, then it appears on the shelf ready to be found, identified, selected, obtained and used for (or borrowed) by user. These processes are long, tortuous and repetitive. The obvious results are: books spend weeks, months or years gathering dust on the shelves without being processed. The intervention of the internet in this process is designed to eliminate or reduce the tortuous and repetitive cycle of the service and create platforms for effective retrieval of information resources.

**The Changing Environment**

For Catalogers that have embraced the new technology, it is no longer acceptable for newly acquired information resources to be held up in the cataloguing section for an undue length of time. These undue delays are obviously counterproductive to the goals of the library. The application of the internet is essentially to fast-track that process and ensures that books and other resources spend the least period of time in the cataloguing section. Catalogers that have internet access have now recognized the potential of online catalog for improving subject access to information. Many library online catalogs are now accessible for searching class numbers and other cataloguing information. Lon (1997). The ability to have more than one open window on the desktop now enables cataloguers to copy and paste cataloguing information from multiple sources which has created more accurate access points. From your desktop, it is now possible to link easily and cost effectively into bibliographic information which were previously time consuming. As enormous amount of information become available online, catalogers at the University of Lagos for example have tackled the ever growing task of how to frequently push out books from the department to the shelves. Several backlogs of uncatalogued materials have been processed through the aid of the internet. At the University of Lagos, the number of books increased from 45,496 processed in 2006/2007 to 180,680 processed in 2007/2008.
APPLICATION OF THE INTERNET TO CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION

Catalogers with web facilities have recognized the potential of using online catalogue of other libraries for improving subject access to information in their domain. Catalogers can now enjoy facilities provided by web-driven technical facilities like the OCLC’s World-Cat (for academic and special libraries), the Library of Congress Online catalogue (for academic and special libraries), Dewey Online catalog (for public and school libraries), National Library of Medicine (for medical libraries), National Agricultural library catalog (for colleges of agriculture) etc.

WorldCat

The WorldCat is a union catalogue that is produced and maintained by Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and its member libraries. The ‘WorldCat’ is accessed via the internet by cataloguers for bibliographic data. Every item in the union catalogue has classification numbers of the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and Library of Congress (LC) which are the most used schemes in the library world today. This technical web facility, though not accessible free of charge, is of immense benefits to the library especially in cataloguing and classification. Catalogers that enjoy this facility merely copy the bibliographic details in their library database. It is available online at http://connexion.oclc.org.

The following steps are basic access and use of the facility:
1. Go to internet explorer
3. Type in the user name or authorization and the password on the authorization page.
4. Pick the search options (Basic or Advanced).
5. Choose the basic search tools: ISBN/ISSN, title phrase, author etc.
Library of Congress Online Catalog is another technical service that catalogers can use free of charge. The Library of Congress information database has over 110 million items available online at www.catalog.loc.org. The Library of Congress Online Catalogue provides the platform for both basic and guided Search. It is important for catalogers to be aware of and understand the differences between each search type available. Each session expires after 5 minutes. It is imperative that catalogers be fast in conducting their search.

The Basic Search which offers the largest variety of direct search option can be accessed through the following steps:

1. Click on your internet explorer
2. Type in the library of congress website (http://catalog.loc.org)
3. Click on basic search
4. Choose one search word in the search textbox
5. Choose your search strategy either by title, author/creator, subject, ISBN/ISSN etc.
6. You have an option to choose your display latitude by clicking number records per page 25, 50, 75 or 100 records per page.
7. Then click on begin search.

National Library of Medicine Online Catalog

The NLM Catalog provides access to NLM bibliographic data for journals, books, audiovisuals, computer software, electronic resources and other materials. Links to the online catalog could be accessed via LocatorPlus. This facility is most relevant to Catalogers from the medical libraries.

The NLM Catalog provides the following search functionality to users:

- Simple searching - enter your term(s) and click GO. Entrez automatically combines (ANDs) significant terms together.
- Boolean operators - enter them in UPPERCASE (AND, OR, NOT)
- Phrase searching - enter your phrase in quotes
• Automatic term explosion when your entry matches a MeSH heading
• Searching of specific fields by use of Limits (e.g., limit retrieval to a particular language, material type, date, etc.)
• Ability to view how your term(s) were searched using Details
• Ability to view and reuse previous searches using History
• Ability to link to the library's holdings in LocatorPlus, NLM's online public access catalog by clicking on the NLM ID or using Links

The simple search which offers the largest variety of direct search option can be access and use following these steps:

(1) Click on your internet explorer
(2) Type http//locatorplus.gov
(3) Click on simple search
(4) Choose one search word in the search textbox
(5) Choose your search strategy either by title, author/creator, subject, ISBN/ISSN etc.
(6) You have 10 records displayed per page.
(7) Then click on search.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY ONLINE CATALOG

This facility is most useful for Catalogers working in Agricultural Research Institutes or Colleges of Agriculture Libraries.

The following are the basic search hints:
1. Go to internet explorer
2. Type in http://nal.org
3. Pick the search options (Basic or Advanced).
4. Choose the basic search tools: ISBN/ISSN, title phrase, author etc
5. Then click search
The University of Adelaide law library online catalogue: This facility is available, free of charge for catalogers in law libraries who have classified their legal materials using Moys Classification Schemes. Using this catalogue, you can browse and view authority headings for subject, title, and author. It is possible to download the format for use in a local library system.

A basic requirement to access and use the library catalogue Basic Search facility is internet connectively. The following steps should be taken.

1. Click on internet explorer and log on this link: www.law.adelaide.edu.au/library/about/moys or search under Google for university of Adelaide library catalog.
2. Click on Basic Search
3. Type in your request in the search text box
4. Choose you search style either by title, author, subject etc.
5. You can choose your display latitude by clicking number records per page i.e.
6. You can use the limit option
7. Click on search

THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON CATALOGUING

Wheeler and Beacom (2000) outlined three major impact of the internet on cataloging:
(i) the impact of internet-enabled communication on cataloguing workflow;
(ii) the impact of internet-enabled content on cataloguing theory and practice; and
(iii) the impact of the internet-enabled functionality on the catalog itself.

THE IMPACT OF INTERNET-ENABLED COMMUNICATIONS ON CATALOGUING WORK

Internet-enabled communications, such as discussion lists, email, Z39.50, XML, World Wide Web and many more have radically altered cataloging workflow because these fast, ubiquitous and independent communications enable better and easier resource sharing. Catalogers can now share information in a wide spectrum of ways which can speed up their work and promote cooperation.

The internet has changed how catalogers and other cataloguing department staff communicate with each other, with colleagues in other libraries even with users. It has created a cadre of virtual co-workers within and outside any given library. E-mail is the most visible instrument of this change, but web pages and web-based catalogs are new communication tools used by staff in cataloguing units. This communication tools have dramatically changed how cataloguing staff
share work information with each other. The overall effect of this communication revolution according to Liu (2001) has drawn the profession closer together as a working community.

The Internet has also linked the world’s online catalogs together and the web has provided them with a relatively similar interface. The communication revolution caused by the internet has enabled far greater flexibility. Not only can catalogers more easily share information about their work but so can administrators and vendors. Lon (1997) noted a number of ways catalogers are using the internet to enhance their cataloguing practices. This boils down to two basic findings: (a) catalogers use the internet to search other catalogs and to communicate with other catalogers. Searching other catalogs has enabled better and faster copy cataloging and authority work for many libraries. (b) It can also be cheaper for smaller or underfunded libraries who might not be able to acquire the latest editions of classification schemes to check other trusted libraries’ catalogs.

**IMPACT OF INTERNET CONTENT ON CATALOGUING THEORY AND PRACTICE**

The internet is transforming the publishing industry and this transformation is pushing libraries in new direction. Print publishing has always been of particular importance to libraries and cataloguing operations. Libraries in developing countries too have long been collecting other media including motion pictures, recorded music, video, compact disks and artifacts of various sorts. In other words cataloguers have experience in cataloguing all forms of media. The new media have caused the creation of new responsibilities for cataloguing units in libraries. The library community, especially the cataloguing community in developing countries is responding to these changes by both adopting the rules and procedure and strategically rethinking the theory and practice of the profession. Liu (2001) stated that the changes can be seen in the recent MARC format which has allowed the addition of information relating to the ‘electronic location’ of digital media that are accessible remotely via the internet. The new media are driving the creation of new rules for cataloguing.

**IMPACT OF INTERNET-ENABLED FUNCTIONALITY ON THE CATALOGUE**

The role of the catalogue is changing due to the enhanced functionality enabled by the internet. It is now operating in a context of other catalogue-like entities and so can be seen as a collection development tool. The IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records Final Report identifies four functions to enable users: (1) to find, (2) to identify, (3) to select, and (4) to obtain materials. In the internet environment, even as a list, the catalogue now include more than a library’s collection – crossing the barriers from old notions of local holdings
to point to the holdings of other libraries and other resources not locally held. As librarians who are web-driven now move to home pages and gateways, catalogue have moved to become portals to content, a notion which expands more traditional concepts of library collection. We can see from these developments that the catalog is now conceived more than a listing of a library holdings – it is a critical tool for library access.

**UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS EXPERIENCE**

The use of the various online catalogues at the university of Lagos library has increased the amount of information available to users through the library catalogue. The characteristics of the new environment now include:

- Greater access to a range of subject access points
- Increased speed in getting library materials processed
- Continuous learning for catalogers.

The traditional notion of a library as a mere store house of knowledge has been fundamentally challenged by the advent of information technology. Catalogers who wish to be relevant in the information age should be ready to embrace these challenges. Below are the visible results recorded at the University of Lagos since the utilization of various online catalogues in cataloguing processes.

**Degree of Success**

- Skill enrichment scheme which has led to information technology training for library staff in view of the fact that any staff could be posted to cataloguing department
- An improved focus on service culture
- It has helped service points in other sections of the library
- Significant improvements in the use of the library via the Online Public Access Catalogue
- It has created a cadre of virtual co-workers within the cataloguing department
- It has enhance better functionality in cataloguing practices
- The library catalogue is no longer conceived as mere listing of library holdings but as a critical tool for library access.
CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated the impact of the internet on cataloging practice and the catalog. This is not to say that catalogers should neglect the use of the various classification schemes as tools. No, the point being made here is that the time has come for catalogers to embrace the wind of change. They must adapt and embrace the new electronic environment in order to enhance their productivity. It is important for catalogers to learn how to navigate to facilitate cataloguing processes in their various domains.

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