COMPUTERISED ACQUISITION ROUTINES OF SERIALS

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Gives an account of the experiment on the computerization of acquisition routines of periodical publication in a library. Describes the generation of necessary files and their manipulation. The experiment has been successful within the limitations. Indicates the area of further work.

INTRODUCTION

Stated very succinctly, the periodicals department of any University or special library is primarily concerned with ensuring that the journals selected for acquisition are ordered/renewed, and paid for in time; that they are received regularly and on time; that they are routed/displayed or brought to the notice of the library’s clientele on time; and finally that they are bound or stored properly so that they are available at call when needed. The underlying fact behind all these jobs is that they are time barred. The time interval between the same operation being done twice varies with the nature of the operation, nevertheless timely action is of the essence in the periodicals section of the library. The decision as to the procedure to be adopted, the routines to be followed and the equipment to be used in order that timely action is taken is what Periodicals Control is concerned with.

APPROACHES TO COMPUTERIZATION

The possible approaches to the use of computers in periodicals control are: 1) the design of a computerised system to cover the totality of operations, tasks and jobs in the periodicals department i.e. from the order/payment-checking including in acquisition list-providing routing information-sending overdue reminders-printing of list-budgeting and costing-updating of holdings list to the last detail of giving very specific instructions to the binder. In this approach human intervention is very marginal; 2) alternatively a system may be designed where some of the operations are delegated to the computer and the rest left to humans. The first approach is possible when the library has an on-line terminal coupled to a computer system in the university. With such an configuration it is possible to have on tap all the information required for day-to-day work in the section. The latter approach is possible when the library has access off-line to a computer system in the University. In such a case data is prepared off-line and fed to the system at regular intervals for processing.

The decision as to the choice depends also on other factors; an important one being whether it is possible or desireable to provide all the alternatives a priori to the computer for it to take the right decisions. Some of the jobs in the periodicals department are dependent heavily on the publication schedules and other pressures that operate on hundreds of publishers. The vagaries of such publication are only too well known to librarians.

THE EXPERIMENT

The experiment has included only 85 periodicals selected on the basis of subject, frequency, and country of origin. Three vendors have been assumed: One for American and Canadian periodicals; one for British and Continental journals, and one for Indian journals. Dailies have been excluded from the scope of this experiment.

The experiment also assumes that the checking-in or registration of the receipt of a periodical will remain a manual process. For the purpose of this experiment a year is divided into 24 fortnights, starting from fortnight No. 01 for the first fortnight of January to fortnight No. 24 for the last fortnight in December. The frequency Code of a periodical is a function of the frequency code for a fortnightly, which is 01. Thus the code for a monthly is 02 (month = 2 fortnights), a bi-
monthly is 04, etc. The fortnight No. is one of the inputs to the update-reminder routine discussed below. Each title is given a unique serial number.

In this study the following operations have been computerised:

1. Production of Renewal Lists;
2. Sending of overdue Claims;
3. Production of fortnightly lists of periodicals received in the library;
4. Provision has been made for special runs to isolate:
   (a) difficult cases - for instance, when a periodical has not been received at all or when there are too many gaps in the receipt of a periodical;
   (b) journals which have been received in full and are ready for binding.

The experiment is discussed in detail below:

**File Generation**

The first job to be done was the generation of a Master file of currently received periodicals. For this purpose, the following details have been included in the basic record of a periodical:

1. Serial No.: This is a 4 digit number given at the time of generating the file on cards.
2. Subject Code: The U.D.C. has been used for this purpose.
3. Publisher Code: A purely enumerative code has been used.
4. Frequency Code: A two digit code discussed above.
7. Type of Acquisition: Different codes have been provided for subscription, gift, exchange, membership.
8. No. of issues expected in a year: Two digit number (actual).
10. Title in full.

The above categories of information for each periodical were first coded on sheets and then punched on to cards for input to the computer.

The basic record on cards were then read and stored on the disk. At the time of the generation of the disk file certain areas on each record were demarcated as areas to be updated as and when periodicals were received in the library.

Another file of publishers and their addresses was also generated on disk. This contained the code for each publisher along with the full address of the publisher.

**Production of lists**

Once the basic records of periodicals are available on disk, this could be used to produce a variety of lists. A program has been written that can produce seven different kinds of lists. The options available are:

(a) Alphabetical by title;
(b) Subject;
(c) Country;
(d) Publisher;
(e) Frequency;
(f) Vendor;
(g) Type of Acquisition. The user specifies the option desired, followed by the dictionary of codes used for the specified option to get the desired listing. A sample of the alphabetical, subject and vendor lists have been presented in the annexure.

**Update and Reminder Routine**

The experiment has assumed a fortnightly rhythm for the updating of the Master File and for the sending of reminders for overdue issues. A fortnightly rhythm for the sending of overdue claims was considered sufficient, since most publishers consent to replace issues if intimated within six to eight weeks of their expected date of arrival.

In its operation, the experiment assumes that as and when an issue of a periodical is received, a card is punched giving the serial No., and Vol. No. and the Issue Nos. re-
ceived. All cards for issues received during a fortnight form the input to this routine. This program updates the information concerning the last issue received and the expected fortnight of arrival of the next issue. The fortnight when the next issue is expected is computed by adding the current fortnight to the frequency of the periodical. When a periodical expected during the fortnight has not been received an overdue claim is printed. The claim contains the full address of the publisher, a letter and the particular volume and issue which is now overdue. A record is kept of the reminder sent. The program also updates the total number of issues received, as of the latest run with a view of producing binding lists when volumes get complete.

This routine also takes care of gaps in the receipt of periodicals and prints attention lists. These lists could be used for special manual action by the Librarian. A routine reminder may not always produce results, whereas a letter to the Head of the Subscription Department might result in the claim being specially attended to. It was with this in view that manual intervention for different cases was provided.

**Printing of Fortnightly lists**

As a by-product of the Update and Reminder routine, an alphabetical list of periodicals received during the fortnight is printed. An entry contains the full title, followed by Volume and Issue No. received. Such a list could be circulated after appropriate duplication.

**LIMITATIONS**

1. One of the obvious limitations is that it has covered only 85 periodicals.

2. No checking feature has been provided to ensure accuracy, that is when a periodical is received, it is assumed that the operator correctly records the serial No. etc. for it to be punched.

3. For each run of the update routine the Master file is updated. It would be more desirable to generate a duplicate updated file, so that at least one file is available in the event of wrong or faulty updating.

4. Information regarding price of the journal, the budget-head to be charged has not been provided.

5. The set of programmes have still to be tried in an actual working situation on larger data.

6. No provision has been made for automatic generation, updating and printing of holdings lists.

**CONCLUSION**

1. The limitations mentioned above indicate future work necessary in this area of library operation.

2. The use of computers in periodicals control would almost certainly take away the tears of ensuring that timely action is taken on renewal/reminders. There is no scope for any oversight as is always possible in manual systems.

3. Insdoc, with its existing facilities and its file of currently received periodicals could provide the necessary incentive for further experimentation in a joint project.

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ANNEXURE

[Sample Alphabetical List]

539.1 NUCLEAR PHYSICS
NUCLEAR INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS
NUCLEAR PHYSICS
NUCLEAR SCIENCE ABSTRACTS

539.3 PHYSICS OF SOLIDS
JOURNAL OF PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY OF SOLIDS
PHYSICA STATUS SOLIDI
soviet physics solids

54 CHEMISTRY
BULLETIN DE LA SOCIETE CHIMIQUE DE FRANCE

541.1 PHYSICAL CHEMISTRY
RUSSIAN JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CHEMISTRY

544 ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY
ANALYTICA CHIMICA ACTA

54A INORGANIC CHEMISTRY
INORGANIC AND NUCLEAR CHEMISTRY LETTERS

[Sample Classified List]

[Sample Vendor List]

[Sample Overdue Notice]