LIBRARY CATALOGUING TEACHING:
FROM DRILL TO DISCUSSION
(A Report from the West)

The world of library cataloguing has rapidly changed in recent years: from extensive original cataloguing we have ushered in an era of centralized cataloguing and printed cards. Therefore, the emphasis in teaching cataloguing has shifted from drill to an effort to pave the way to a deeper understanding of the subject (not only what and how but also why). As cataloguing is not an isolated activity in the library and is rather closely related to various other areas of library work like book selection, acquisition, reference service, etc., an increasing number of library schools are reflecting these trends in their curriculums by gearing their cataloguing teaching programmes to meet these new demands. Finally, a cataloguing teacher, for that matter any teacher, requires a thorough grounding in the theory of learning and its application in a classroom situation.

Introduction

It seems that the golden age of cataloguing ended, as predicted by Charles Ammi Cutter [1], with the advent of the Library of Congress printed cards in 1901. But it is, thanks to its justifiable entrenched place in libraries, not yet a lost art. A librarian working in however small a library should be well versed in it because he has still to procure printed cards, decide about the added entries and file them systematically to make the catalogue effective at least as a finding list. However, the necessity of remembering detailed rulings of a code in order to catalogue a book is not required. In other words, a general working knowledge of the technique, instead of a mastery of it in terms of memorizing a code by heart, is called for nowadays. This phenomenon has brought about a complete shift of emphasis in teaching cataloguing. The focus of attention has shifted, to some extent, from practical to theoretical aspects of the subject. However, this is not to suggest that the former is not important or ignored. But apparently greater attention is being devoted to examining foundations of library cataloguing and its first principles. An effort was and is being made to find out the essentials on which a systematic superstructure might be built.

Laboratory Work in Teaching Cataloguing

Cataloguing has often been defined as a laboratory art [2]. Training in cataloguing of titles, - books, nonbook materials, etc., is part and parcel of cataloguing instruction. A teacher provides to the class a number of titles for day-to-day cataloguing: these are discussed and an effort is made to resolve problems which arise with reference to principles, rules, code, etc. It is interesting to note that interpretations as regards applicability of a given rule in a particular case may vary from cataloguer to cataloguer. The key to correct cataloguing lies in establishing the right relationship between the book in hand and the most suitable principle or rule. Another method of bringing books to cataloguer-trainees is assembling a collection of books and other reading materials adequately representing their numerous variety. These materials are judiciously selected by the teacher and should illustrate points of descriptive and subject cataloguing and application of various rules. Nearly thirty years ago Keyes D. Metcalf [3] pointed out that this can provide an opportunity to students for manipulation of materials under the direct observation and supervision of the instructor and thus, teaching is at a concrete rather than an abstract level. Such a sample collection representing various cataloguing problems is an improvement over the practice of distribution of titles for cataloguing, for the latter may not provide a complete picture of the nature, type or scope of the material to be catalogued. But a small collection has its own limitations and is in no way a substitute for an actual library collection not only in quantity but also in quality and variety. Paul Drakeford believes, "Making catalogue entries for an established catalogue in a real library situation

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is very different from making them for exercise in the isolation of a library school... A better learning situation... would be to have the students involved in real live cataloguing in the library of the parent institution where they could benefit from a master-apprenticeship situation" [4]. There is no doubt that it would be an ideal situation provided it could be worked out. This proviso is significant in the light of unfortunate relationships which are often prevalent between library schools and university libraries. Furthermore, it may not be feasible on account of too much pressure of other courses on the student during the academic year. However, the students can be provided opportunities for adequate in-service training in libraries after completion of their studies at library schools.

**Changing Pattern in Teaching Cataloguing**

A high watermark in centralized cataloguing in recent years has rendered extensive original cataloguing at individual institutions expensive, unnecessary and avoidable duplication of work. It, therefore, is no longer necessary to give the same importance to laboratory work or drill which was accorded earlier in teaching cataloguing. This trend was pointed out nearly two decades ago by E.J. Humeston [5], Jerrold Orne [6] and Thelma Eaton [7]. The practical work is pushed much more rapidly. An attempt is made to build up a general framework without too much attention to details. It has been felt that the cataloguer with this type of background will be able to take a suitable decision on various issues and problems as and when they arise. The codes and rules should be accepted merely as guides and subject to logical analysis and interpretation. The rule of thumb has no place in the world of modern cataloguing. Seymour Lubetzky and Jesse H. Shera [9] reiterated that an effort should be made to understand the why in cataloguing rather than the how. And the former's logical study appearing as Cataloging Rules and Principles: A Critique of ALA Rules for Entry and a Proposed Design of Their Revision (1953) paved the way for a broader agreement at the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles (Paris, 1961) and eventually influenced a great deal the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR) 1967.

Laura C. Colvin [10] sounds an optimistic note about this constant search for logical bases behind the plethora of rules. This might bring a revolution in cataloguing courses and suggests that Paul S. Dunkin's concept of "creative skepticism" [11] should be supplemented by an equal amount of "creative innovation" for speedy results. All this thinking, action and greater involvement on the whole are bringing about an improvement in the state of the cataloguing art. For example, the cataloguing tools now available are far superior to those which were available earlier and provide a better foundation for cataloguing teaching. Jerrold Orne noted this trend some twenty years ago, "Currently the texts... are organized and phrased in ways which require the teaching of principles rather than method. Thus, willy-nilly, the teacher will find himself confronted with principles that demand explanation..." [12]. Thus, the teaching of cataloguing has been facilitated by the availability of better tools and numerous aids to cataloguing and it is the endeavour of the profession to construct more of them on sound lines.

A study of teaching in library science is hindered by the absence of sufficient literature on the subject. William C. Robinson [13] reported in 1968 that literature on teaching methods in library science was disappointing in quality and quantity. He also noted that the literature of librarianship ignored improving teaching methods. There was a substantial interest and literature on curriculum but the literature on teaching was skimpy indeed. The reason seems, to my mind, to be a lack of sufficient background in education and training in the art of teaching on the part of library science faculty. Most of the library school teachers decide, in the first place, to take up careers as librarians. Later on, they take up faculty positions for a number of reasons, e.g., better status, aptitude for teaching, etc. Therefore, literature on the process of learning, classroom encounter between the teacher and the taught, etc., is still scarce in librarianship but it should not lead one to presume that there is no real interest in library schools. There are indications that library school teachers do experiment with various methods and techniques and try to be abreast, though in a limited way, of teaching techniques developed in other fields.

**Lecture Method**

Among various methods of teaching employed in library science giving lectures is
the oldest and most entrenched. It seems that library science in this respect is not an exception to other social sciences. Although excessive dependence on it came under relative eclipse with the development of other teaching techniques, yet it still remains the most used (and abused) way of disseminating knowledge.

Teaching is a difficult art and lecturing demands numerous qualities, which are difficult to attain, on the part of teachers. Its main weakness lies in the excessive emphasis on one-way communication and it fails to evoke sufficient response or discourages feedback from the class. However, it is a very effective technique in the hands of a scholar or a master teacher. He is not only able to present systematically the field which he wants to cover but also able to sustain interest and above all inspire the students to develop a passion for learning which may last lifelong. The subtle art of lecturing demands not only a command over the subject but also building up a relationship between the teacher and the taught based on common interest, understanding and sympathy. Wilbert J. McKeachie, in a lighter vein, suggests a plan for organizing a lecture's materials. "Tell them what you are going to tell them. Tell them. Then tell them what you've told them" [14]. It seems to be an over-simplification of the problem. Teaching does not involve merely passing on information or facts but it seeks to lay bare deeper relationships among various fields and provide a general framework in which individual phenomena can be fitted and explained. This is only possible if the students are involved and develop a spontaneous desire or willingness to participate in a teaching-learning situation. The lecture method alone is inadequate to meet these demands and should be supplemented by the other teaching techniques.

A cataloguing student should be well acquainted with various tools of the trade which will aid his day-to-day work. A descriptive account of these by the teacher is by no means a substitute for their handling and understanding varied modes of arrangement of information personally by the prospective cataloguer. This aim can be attained by assigning problems or questions whose answers are or should be given in various aids to cataloguing. The student searches and locates the information (sometimes with the assistance of the teacher) which means that this sort of training will stand in good stead when he works as a cataloguer, i.e., in a real-life situation.

The value of common sense and good judgment, while teaching the rules of the game in cataloguing, has often been stressed. Although the rules, more often than not, best represent the results of our experience yet these should constantly be under our surveillance. This alert attitude reflects the readiness and acceptance of a new solution as necessitated by changes in our conception of fundamental principles and goals. Seymour Lubetzky [15] often warns cataloguers against the practice of cataloguing being circumscribed by rules which will negate the very foundations of the whole art. In fact, the rules should be regarded as merely a means to a higher end, viz., as an aid to systematic indexing of our collection to facilitate greater bibliographic accessibility. The act of giving preference to rules as against principles is like bringing a cart before the horse. The inductive method of examining and analyzing different materials for cataloguing and deciding about the best form of their entry in a given situation from the standpoint of the principles is gaining more and more respect.

Discussion Method

The emphasis on two-way communication or on getting feedback from the students in a teaching-learning situation has brought the discussion method much in vogue. The discussion plays a useful role in laying bare the true characteristics of reading material, e.g., the subject treated in the book, nature of the authorship, completeness or otherwise of bibliographic information provided by the book, etc. It is necessary to ensure that the discussion proceeds along profitable lines. In other words, it should be channeled towards reaching conclusions or answers to problems. The teacher's command of the subject and a reasonable approach by the students are deciding factors in the swift disposal of issues. This technique is profitable only if the maximum number of students in the class participate and are involved in the process of problem solving. The use of informal discussions to break up initial resistance has proved its worth. The practice of asking questions also helps in clarifying various issues and muddled ideas and the teacher is in a position to assess effectiveness of his teaching, i.e., whether the students are really gaining anything or to what extent they are learning. He can also learn about progress in students' reading assignments but the
main advantage of this method is in training students and faculty through thinking that occurs on the spot or at a moment’s notice.

Panel Discussion

Another technique of intensive teaching in a selected area of the field which has found more and more acceptance in advanced courses is panel discussions. These discussions are preceded by selection of a problem as a theme with intensive search for literature on it, noting of points, writing of a paper and presentation of main findings at the time of the panel discussions. It is likely that other members of the panel might consider, think over, criticize and even bring forward additional ideas which can lead to a well rounded coverage of the topic. The panel might also be able to formulate, after these deliberations, its considered opinion on an issue. However, this need not necessarily be unanimous which suggests that the aim of these panel discussions is not as much to reach a consensus as it is to pave the way for a deeper understanding of the subject/problem. This training might prove to be a stepping-stone, in the long run, to conducting similar studies for professional seminars or conferences and by the same token, active participation in them.

Programmed Instruction

Nowadays programmed instruction has become increasingly popular in teaching library cataloguing. This method lends itself to the presentation of basic principles through a series of graded steps [16]. The teacher gradually proceeds, as a rule, from simple to complicated problems or from basic principles to their minute ramifications. The programmed instruction is also a handy guide to self-study. Its advantages lie in the fact that the attention is focussed on a specific problem, it requires a response from the student (feedback), and the solution can be verified as to its correctness or otherwise. These three steps, in sequence, constitute the learning cycle. But this method’s chief merit is that it permits each student to respond at his own pace thereby providing for a degree of individualization of instruction [17]. The students in the same class or subject often have different levels of intellectual development.

Their rate of understanding and pace of work vary from each other. The lecture method became more and more mechanical in the course of time on account of the unbalanced ratio between the teacher and those taught. The educationists were distressed and students perturbed. But since programmed instruction and other techniques came into vogue, these made teaching-learning a more individualized experience and were able to stem the tide. However, these supplement rather than supplant the lecture method in a classroom situation.

Supply of Lecture Notes

The practice of distributing frequently mimeographed materials or handouts in the class or before any lecture or discussion session has turned out to be very popular. A teacher or speaker is able to present succinctly his main points or outline of the theme or information in a nutshell sometimes from widely scattered sources through mimeographed material. It enables the class or audience to get quickly briefed, follow the theme intelligently and participate actively by perusing such material. This is not to say that it is a substitute for originally required or recommended readings, if any. A cataloguing teacher is also required to prepare day-to-day a number of entries for books/titles which he brings in the class. He explains various types of entries, styles of their writing and demonstrates their mode of construction on the blackboard. It is a chore which has been nicely taken over by slides and projectors. In addition to its aesthetic appearance, it has also resulted in saving the time of the instructor which was formerly spent in the preparation of entries on the blackboard in class. As soon as images from the slides of cards are flashed on the screen the teacher is ready to explain and discuss them.

Advent of Centralised Cataloguing

A catalogue’s raison d’être is in its being a key to the collection of a library. As it is meant for the use of the public, the readers’ approach to the catalogue cannot be over-stressed. And the essence of all library cataloguing teaching lies in driving home this
point. All great cataloguers, including authors
and theoreticians in the field, have pointed out
the central place of it and all the rules and
codes have been formulated bearing it in mind.
The cataloguing teacher encourages students
to project themselves in the shoes of the
readers or users of a library in constructing
their catalogues. However, modern central-
ized cataloguing seems to be the last word on
the subject, for the number of entries, style
of various headings, etc., is decided once for
all and the subscribing libraries have almost
no say in the matter. But we need not be
unduly alarmed, for we are in safe hands.
There is no doubt that the people who organize
and run centralized cataloguing know their
business. The individual libraries lost no
doubt autonomy in cataloguing which may also
mean that very many libraries escaped having
chaotic or poorly constructed catalogues based
on individual whims and fancies. This is not to
suggest that no rules or a code were followed.
This, amazingly, happens in spite of them.
This type of catalogue is the rule rather than
the exception in countries where centralized
cataloguing is yet to take root. Centralized
cataloguing, therefore, proved to be a blessing
in disguise. The price of loss of freedom to
catalogue is nothing when we compare it with
the returns in the form of standard, authori-
tative, uniform and consistent entries. The
cataloguers who work in such organisations
are generally a product of library schools
where they specialize in cataloguing. Here
they not only learn the art of cataloguing but
often study thoroughly the principles behind it
from a historico-analytical point of view.
However, their real training begins, I believe,
when they start work in a master-apprentice-
ship situation. They quickly come to grips
with the real and intricate problems of a
tricky and complicated bibliographic world and
their background study of cataloguing at school
helps them to understand and quickly grasp
problems and develop an expertise in handling
them.

Cataloguing Courses in the American
Universities

It is time now to take a look at catalo-
guing courses as offered by American univers-
ities. The term cataloguing generally
includes classification which is not the case
elsewhere. Nevertheless it is a good practice,
for both are not only closely related fields but
are also complementary to each other. The
two processes of classification and selection of
suitable subject headings for a given title re-
quire the same mental activity, viz., analysis
of the thought contents of the book. A.C.
Foskett [18], along with many others, believes
that the conventional approach to teaching
classification and subject cataloguing sepa-
ately is no longer tenable. In fact, all the infor-
mation retrieval techniques are means to the
same higher end and, therefore, should be
taught systematically in order to present an
overall and balanced picture to the students.
Their mutually complementary role should be
stressed by the teachers which might event-
ually lead to a better coordination of efforts
towards a better bibliographic organization,
control and information dissemination.

We have already alluded to the fact that
this drill of classifying and cataloguing has
been reduced to a bare minimum in the teach-
ing of such programmes on account of remark-
able advances in the art of centralized cata-
loguing at the national level. This development
has brought about a radical shift of orientation
or emphasis in the cataloguing programmes
offered by library schools. In some schools,
cataloguing has been made an elective rather
than a compulsory subject. This means that
one can earn a library degree without studying
the art of cataloguing which was unthinkable a
few decades ago in the USA and still is in most
of the countries of the world where centralized
cataloguing at the national level is yet to make
a debut. Even if the students are encouraged
to enroll in this course, a three credit hours
course is all that is generally considered to be
adequate to provide a working knowledge of
"how" to catalogue. This course is generally
called a basic or practical course. The empha-
sis is on teaching fundamentals of library
cataloguing problems with a reference to AACR
Heartstil H. Young in his survey entitled
Cataloguing Courses in the Prescribed Curri-
culum (1957) reported, "The cataloguing
knowledge of the graduate with one course may
be described as broad in scope.... Because
the period of instruction is brief, the gradu-
ate's knowledge probably has little depth" [19]. The
graduate students are free, if they so choose,
to audit (need not register) these basic courses.
They are normally expected to attend the
classes but can also rely, if preferred, on
self-study. They take the examinations with
the class and after passing these fulfill the re-
quirement for registering in an advanced or
higher level cataloguing course in the next term. These latter courses are relatively more theoretical, analytical and critical, and require the study of the art of cataloguing from a historical point of view. We study about cataloguing rather than how to catalogue. Much of the time is devoted to a critical examination of current practices in the field throughout the world. In other words, it turns out to be a critical study in comparative cataloguing by examining solutions worked out by other codes. For example, the cataloguing courses offered by the Library School of the University of Illinois [20] are typical of this type of approach. There is no doubt that this kind of cataloguing programme, by and large, has become quite common in the American library schools. At some library schools, e.g., Kent State University's, an intermediate cataloguing course is also offered which, as the name suggests, has characteristic features of both elementary and advanced programmes. Its purpose apparently is to further initiate the students in the art before they go for advanced courses.

The element of electiveness introduces flexibility in the library training programme and is consistent with trends in other educational and professional training courses. It provides an opportunity for specialization in an area in which the student is interested. However, the task of choosing appropriate courses for a particular field of library activity as a career requires good judgement and constant consultation with the faculty in general and the academic adviser in particular. Since cataloguing is not an isolated activity in a library and is rather closely linked up with reference, book selection, circulation and administration in general, a prospective cataloguer undergoing training should choose his electives wisely in order to wind up as a well rounded trained cataloguer.

This trend towards increasing integration between cataloguing and reference, book selection, acquisition, readers' advisory services, and others is reflected by quite a few library schools. The Graduate Library School (GLS) of the University of Chicago was the pace setter. It introduced a general course called "Interpretation, Evaluation and Use of Library Materials" [21]. It even went one step further and "attempted to point up the interrelation of the [library] processes with the subject materials to which they were applied" [22]. There is no doubt that each subject of the universe of knowledge has its own nuances, characteristics, or so-called peculiarities. The approach through subjects to library materials or techniques looks, at first glance, novel and attractive but is hardly un unknown thing to the world of conventional librarianship. Indeed, the frequent talk about encouraging subject specialization among the staff depending upon their background, qualification, aptitude, etc., and providing them an opportunity to select, catalogue, and do reference service in that selected field was and is nothing but a recognition of the importance of knowing various fields of knowledge as thoroughly as the specialists do in that area. Of course, how much success was achieved in this direction is another question, for if a librarian is a Ph. D. or a specialist in another field, he no longer would prefer to remain a librarian for reasons well known to the profession. It, therefore, is not expected of a librarian to specialize as much in a subject as in the books about that subject. The "book courses" or courses about literature in various areas of knowledge introduce librarian-trainees to the respective reading materials -- their salient features, mode of organisation of information, problems, etc., and try to initiate them in the art of handling them competently, i.e., professionally.

Therefore, the trend seems to be towards more integrated courses where courses on acquisition, selection, cataloguing, and reference are combined or merged into one course and each aspect or area is taught within the framework of its broader relationships. This method envisages presentation of a picture of librarianship in a more articulated way. This idea has even been picked up
in Canada. Laura C. Colvin [23] reports that School of Library and Information Science of the University of Western Ontario offers a unified course consisting of "Reference, Acquisition and Cataloguing" which is taught with reference to various fields of knowledge, i.e., these three aspects of any subject are dealt with more or less simultaneously. Andrew D. Osborn feels, "The most significant decision (which the new library school took) was probably the one which merged reference, acquisition and cataloguing into a single co-ordinated course" [24]. The chief merit of this and Graduate Library School's approach lies in the fact that a student learns to perform about a number of subjects - their salient features, type and sources of information, techniques or methods, etc. The course, at least in this respect, seems academically more sound.

This brief survey would be incomplete without the mention of development of computer-assisted instruction techniques which are lately coming in vogue. A computer-based laboratory utilizing the LC/MARC I data base was established under Library Education Experimental Project (LEEP) at the Library School of Syracuse University in 1968. Pauline Atherton [25] reports that assignments in several courses like reference, cataloguing, bibliography, and information systems involved the use of these data. She found that the students were able to search and retrieve catalogue records for current literature, to process their own cataloguing assignment and to examine the characteristics of the Library of Congress cataloguing. However, some amount of difficulty initially was encountered in instructing students interalia in key punching, computer language and search strategy or, in short, in the basics necessary to using the programme. But it was heartening to note that the students did very well and, in fact, enjoyed working on various problems after they participated in a "skills session" and realised the importance of accuracy in dealing with large amount of stored data.

Learning Theory and Cataloguing Instruction

Finally, a word about learning theory and cataloguing instruction. The aim of all instruction is to teach new concepts. The students learn to classify ideas and experiences on the basis of their similarity or otherwise in order to fit them logically in the scheme of things. The processes of concept formation and abstraction are lifelong and are facilitated and speeded up by relying on the experiences of others from the present and past. The process of learning which takes place by observation, say of a ceremony or a ritual, is in the immediate context of a socio-cultural configuration but the same cannot be said about a classroom experience where learning by abstraction or out of context [26] themes opens the doors to a vast and infinitely complicated world. This paves the way for a greater intellectual mastery of the subject.

Learning and memory are closely tied to motivation. The interest or lack of it, on the part of a learner, in a given problem determines progress in learning and its retention. The main problem in a classroom situation is motivating students towards course goals. The task of not only kindling the interest and imagination but sustaining it throughout the course is a very difficult but rewarding experience. Learning per se is no longer a motivating factor in this utilitarian and materialistic world. The compelling necessity to succeed and secondarily, an urge to win approval of peers and family circle act as a spur in the process of learning. The instinct of curiosity is also a powerful stimulant to learning, particularly in childhood. But teachers and parents can help to keep it alive if it is not unnecessarily trampled in the beginning. McKeech [27] suggests tactful and occasional use of an element of doubt in the teaching in order to provoke thinking in class. Perhaps the importance of raising right questions, as the story goes, cannot be overstressed. The practice of spoonfeeding came under severe attack with the conviction that the more you teach the less they learn. Teaching practice has started encouraging more feedback (two-way communication) which helps quick learning. Finally, the teacher—in what he stands for—acts as a source of stimulation of motivation to learn. The teacher, by his thoughts and action, in and out of the class, comes to represent a way of life in the pursuit of truth, which might inspire lifelong love for learning among some of his students.

It is very important for the teacher to know from time to time whether or not the class as a whole or even individual students are learning what is being taught. Robert Glaser suggests, "... concept learning involves gene-
ralising within classes and discriminating between classes. Knowledge of whether concept learning has taken place is obtained when the learner makes these appropriate category responses and is able to apply the "classification rule" to a new set of instances involving the concept attributes" [26]. However, the nature and complexity of the concept under study itself determines the ease or otherwise in its learning. The teacher should always be on guard to differentiate between the mere memorizing of an answer or solution as against its understanding on the part of students. The feedback from students helps in determining it. The teacher should also resort to frequent summarization or recapitulation after the end of a lecture, discussion, etc. This practice brings the main points once again into sharp focus and aids in understanding and retaining the train of ideas in its logical sequence.

In these days of interdisciplinary research a subject cannot be studied in isolation. Its broader relation with other subjects should be identified and the subject should always be studied in that perspective. In other words, a subject should be approached through its structure" [29], which enables us to relate other phenomena to it meaningfully. For example, the symbiotic relationship between cataloguing and classification and the general place of technical services in the smooth running of a library is stressed in teaching these subjects. Another useful concept in learning which the cataloguing teacher should always bear in mind is the human faculty's capacity to "transfer", a prior learned idea or experience to solve new problems. We also find in class students at various levels of intellectual development and the cataloguing teacher should make an effort, as far as possible, to individualize his teaching to suit individual needs. Effective teaching demands matching cognitive styles vis-a-vis student level of mental growth and pace of work. These considerations will go a long way to create a climate of learning whose impact might be far-reaching, for our professional schools should aim at to produce not only practitioners of the art of cataloguing but also thinkers and critics.

REFERENCES


[22] ASHEIM, L: The humanities and the library. 1957. P X.


[27] See 14, Pp 185-87.
