CATALOGING AT SOURCE AND STANDARDIZATION OF CATALOGUING

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Indicates the directions in which uniformity in cataloguing has been attempted. Enumerates the general purposes of prenatal cataloguing, and the essentials for standard cataloguing practice. Advantages of application of prenatal cataloguing in several library routines and processes, resulting in familiarization and standardization of cataloguing practices, are briefly discussed. Limitations of prenatal cataloguing, arising out of the lack of a common international cataloguing code, are indicated.

1 ATTEMPTS AT UNIFORM CATALOGUING POLICY

Attempts at achieving a uniform cataloguing practice at various levels - local, regional, national and international - have been made in various directions. Some of the attempts are specifically aimed at the above objective, while in other cases standardization of cataloguing has been the result, or part, of efforts at different or broader objectives. These attempts include:

a) formulation of the factors to be covered by an international catalogue code;

b) setting up of separate national or regional catalogue codes, or variations to international code, to make provision for specific national, regional or local practices;

c) cooperative cataloguing and publishing of union catalogues for a region or area. These are designed mainly to locate publications in the cooperating libraries, facilitate inter-library cooperation, etc. The cooperating libraries and the union catalogue more often than not adopt a common code and mode of cataloguing so that the cooperative work is facilitated. Further, the union catalogues often function as regional bibliographic centres and aid in furnishing information on, and identification of, publications as well as cataloguing details;

d) preparation of national bibliographies and obtaining of catalogue cards from a central source (e.g. British national bibliography, Library of Congress, H. W. Wilson cards). These services are limited, to a large extent, to the publications deposited or available at the national centre or source of card supply. The service is extended where other libraries cooperate by sending in catalogue cards for their collections. Libraries obtaining the unit cards or following the national bibliography, form of entry may modify the entries to suit local practices and needs;

e) Centralized cataloguing for departmental libraries or groups of libraries in an area. Such centralization of purchase, processing, distribution and control of publications is primarily for economizing time, effort and money, and avoiding duplication of routines at

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different places. Indirectly, however, uniformity in cataloguing is achieved between the central and affiliated units.

That new avenues of approach are being explored, indicates that generally agreed standards and complete uniformity of cataloguing are yet to be evolved, and that there are several hurdles in the way.

2 GENERAL PURPOSES OF PRENATAL CATALOGUING

As far as libraries are concerned, cataloguing at source or prenatal cataloguing can help in achieving the following general purposes:

a) Faster availability of publications to readers through quicker processing and cataloguing.

b) Cutting down of cost on cataloguing processes.

c) Facilitation of standardization and easier identification of publications wherever they are quoted.

This paper is concerned mainly with the third aspect.

3 ESSENTIALS FOR STANDARDIZATION OF CATALOGUING PRACTICE

Among the essentials for standardization of cataloguing practices are:

a) an international cataloguing code. Dr S R Ranganathan has reviewed areas of possible agreement, difficulties in the universal acceptance of a single code, and provision for variations to suit national, regional and local practices and traditions. Communication of information is an international affair. On the one hand, therefore, a simple universal cataloguing code may be highly desirable, but on the other, local, regional and national practices and traditions often make such a code unsuitable or unacceptable for all purposes. This leads to a second, perhaps less conspicuous aspect of the essentials of standardization, viz.,

b) familiarization and widest use of common and uniform cataloguing practice. Prenatal cataloguing is discussed here from this point of view.

4 FAMILIARIZATION OF A PRACTICE

Adoption of, and familiarity with a practice results from use of the practice, or its results, in as many different processes, routines and places as possible. For this, the particular method should have advantages over other practices. Knowledge about a publication generally comes from:

a) the publisher, his catalogue or other announcements;

b) secondary book lists, bibliographies, catalogues - these being derived from (a) or the publications, and

c) book reviews and review lists - these again being derived from (a) or the publications.

For most purposes, therefore, the publisher is the 'source' at which level if standardization is effected, subsequently the book lists, bibliographies and libraries, and through these the readers, will be channelled to cite and recognise publications according to the information provided right from the source.

5 STANDARDIZATION AT SOURCE

Standardization at the source can be:

a) Prescribing to publishers as to what cataloguing information about the book should be provided in the book, and where and how it should be provided. Although observance of such prescriptions is not quite within the purview of the publishers' job, it would facilitate many subsequent preparations for knowledge communication processes, which is a main aim of the publishing trade. A number of standards and helpful details, particularly in respect of the physical make up of publications have already been drawn out and adopted by publishers with advantage. In respect of authorship details (single, multiple, corporate, pseudonymous, how these should be, etc.), wording of the title, and so on, publishers, left to themselves are in no good position...
either to adopt uniform practices or prescribe them to authors. At this point, a cooperative effort between the library or libraries and the publishers would be a great advantage, and this leads us to a second way of standardization at source.

b) Provision of cataloguing information by publisher with the help of a central cataloguing source. This usually consists in the publishers sending proof copy of each book to a central organisation (in their country?) which would provide the cataloguing entry information for each book. These entry details would be printed in the books when they emanate from the press. A variation of this practice would be for the publisher to supply unit cards also, as may be indicated by the cataloguing organisation, for all new publications when they are purchased, in addition to the cataloguing information in each book.

Taking for granted that a publication would be catalogued, referred to and identified according to the entry details in it when it comes out of the press, cataloguing at source can provide great stimulus for familiarization and standardization of the adopted code. To mention briefly, it would help use of the entry form in a variety of library processes and routines, and thereby extend its familiarization which, in turn, helps attempts at uniform cataloguing methods. For instance, if the same form of entry is adopted in the publishers' catalogues, book lists, reviews and bibliographies, it would facilitate book selection and identification, ordering, accessioning and related processes. Cataloguing of the publication, whether done in the library or cards are purchased, from the source, could be speeded up economizing time, labour and money. Manual processes in the preparation of bibliographical lists would be less tedious. Literature citation forms would be more uniform and references easier to identify. Cooperative cataloguing and other related services mentioned at 1(c) to (e) would be facilitated and interlibrary cooperation would be easier and better standardized. In general, there will be greater use and, therefore, greater familiarization of one form of entry for each book. This helps towards adoption of standard cataloguing practice. Earlier, it was noted that there was need for provision for local, regional and national variations in cataloguing practice to suit local needs and traditions. Prenatal cataloguing can help in familiarization of such variations. Let us take it that an Indian publication is catalogued at source according to a particular cataloguing code, and we assume that according to our practices and traditions this form of entry is the correct form. Our publication goes to different countries and is cited in different places according to this form. This facilitates international understanding and familiarization with regional variations in practice.

6 LIMITATIONS

In the above discussion it was assumed that one country agrees to adopt even the different form of entry prescribed according to the traditions of another country. But this does not always happen. We may not use an entry form for a publication if it is fundamentally at variance to our code. For instance, some codes do not recognise corporate authorship whereas other codes do. This creates difficulty in both the regions in using the form of entry given in books emanating from either of them. There are several possibilities of such variations in cataloguing practice from region to region. If prenatal cataloguing is to be of universal help, a good deal of international agreement on a cataloguing code seems to be prerequisite. In its catalogue, a library may modify the catalogue form provided in the book, according to local practice or adopted code. But we have noted that prenatal cataloguing should facilitate a number of library processes, literature citations, reference work, interlibrary relations, etc., if its adoption is to be beneficial and its use extensive. If the standard provided at source is varied from library to library, from place to place, and from region to region, the value of prenatal cataloguing will be very much less than it could be when there is a common international cataloguing practice. Such an agreement should be forthcoming, considering the advantages that would result there-of.

REFERENCES