

Chapter 15

The Effectiveness of Information Organization and Authority Control: Library Professionals' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Information organization is a process of describing information sources and access points making the easy access to materials. Practicing authority control when organizing information is vital to guide proper information searching which is needed in the modern web era. The development of information organization is discussed from the period of Panizi, Cutter, Lubetzky and development of AACR up to RDA, FRBR model. Evolution of authority control education was also presented. The main purpose of this chapter is to share best practices followed at OUSL library and to emphasize its effectiveness among LIS professionals and LIS educators who are in the field. The chapter emphasizes the effectiveness of practicing subject analysis and authority control and how it is done by the library professionals, maintaining three authority files. Finally, the author emphasizes the necessity of curriculum changes at Master's level and changes needed for recruitment procedure of academic librarians. Compilation of national subject heading list (NSAC) is also emphasized and recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Information organization describes information sources, access points and making the resources findable from the collections. It has been the prominent role of library and information science (LIS) professionals in the pre-and post-web eras. So, it is part of the larger LIS landscape. More specifically, it includes activities such as cataloging, classification, indexing, archival description, information mapping, and all other forms of metadata creation.

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The Effectiveness of Information Organization and Authority Control

The information organization has been guided by principles. One of the most influential is Charles Emmy Cutter's objectives of the catalog which was first published in 1876. It discussed the three main functions of the catalog such as finding, gathering, and selection of information. However, the cataloging principles introduced by the IFLA in 2009 insist on five functions. They are that users should be able to find bibliographic resources, identify bibliographic resources, select resources, acquire or obtain access to resources and navigate within a catalog and beyond.

The effectiveness of the functions of the catalog is benefited to provide easy retrieval, collocation, sharing, and understanding. Therefore, it is important to carefully plan how information is organized using international standards. It will allow the user to make retrieval more predictable, bring together relevant resources on the shelves, share information with other institutions, understand the nature of our resources, collections, etc.

The efficiency of all these functions of the library catalog is dependent on the way of creation of metadata. The catalog is the key to a collection; it may be printed or digital. The purpose of the catalog is to ensure the effective retrieval of information. Therefore, cataloging metadata should be done in a systematic way using international standards with Authority Control (AC). AC can be viewed as the ultimate technical services process. Based on the complexity of the AC, it operates mostly behind the scene. It includes the cross-references, heading changes, or a distinction between two identically title series. AC creates an effective searching environment in the catalog.

Professionals create various forms of authorized access points when organizing information. It will help users to find information easily. Availability of subject-specified keywords, proper name, and title authority files, and the consistency of the terms through AC is more important to keep the catalog records consistent and assist in effective searching and retrieval of information.

Many of the country's libraries are automated and have Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) for public access. In such situations, the effectiveness of the searching is most essential and beneficial. If users search for resources by a particular, known author, the system will retrieve all records relating to the author's work and not just some of them. When viewing OPAC search results 'users (or staff) do not have any idea what information she/he did not get is an issue. So, when searching for some information, one should review all relevant information but if there is no authority control in the system all relevant information will not appear. Therefore, if cataloguers are to provide an effective service, they must ensure an authority-controlled catalog or digital collection.

According to American Library Association

AC is one of the librarian's most important bibliographical tools - is also one of the most overlooked and under-worked devices in library land. Automation is, however, bringing it to the forefront as one of the most important cataloging and searching tool that is required to establish and maintain order in our processing and user worlds. The advent of online terminals and other developments have brought the realization that we cannot hide incorrect entries in modern easily accessible public catalogs. AC is a must if chaos is to be kept out of our modern bibliographical and searching systems (American Library Association, 1979, p. 45)

Therefore, practicing authority control when organizing information is vital, and it guides the proper information searching which is highly needed in the modern web era.

This chapter's primary purpose is to share best practices followed at the OUSL library when creating metadata through authority control and emphasize its effectiveness for retrieving information in the

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