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Resource Sharing in Cataloging Work Among School Libraries: Some Possible Actions and Strategies

Fuziah Mohd. Nadzar

Abstract:
Covers the aspect of resource sharing in school libraries or school resource centres, pertaining to the technical services activities of descriptive cataloging, classification and assignment of subject headings. Provides an overview of the current state of these tasks and describes some possible actions and strategies that can be implemented to ensure the success of the concept of resource sharing in cataloging and classification work. Only then will the changing role of the teacher librarians of the 21st century to that of an "information manager" effectively take shape.

Keywords:
Cataloging and Classification; Shared Cataloging; Cooperative Cataloging; Resource Sharing; School Librarians; Teacher Librarians; School Libraries; School Resource Centers.

Introduction
Let me begin this paper on the basic premise of the changing role of the teacher librarian of the 21st century. In today's wired-world, it is unavoidable that the role of the teacher librarian in the school resource centers (SRCs) has to evolve into that of an "information manager". Prof. Ross Todd of the School of Library and Information Science, Rutgers University, chooses to think of school libraries as "knowledge spaces, not information places." He further advocates that the emphasis of school libraries should be as "connections, not collections." The value of the school library is not that it offers access to information, as students and teachers do not seek information for the sake of information per se. They seek information to
generate - useful knowledge. The value of a library's collections is that it is able to connect students and teachers to the information they are seeking. The library is the only place in the whole school where there is a confluence of all the various disciplines that have been segregated in the curriculum. A teacher librarian makes significant interdisciplinary connections between learners and the knowledge they are seeking for.

Teacher librarians are inundated with the myriads of information found on the Internet. The challenges of "cataloging" Internet resources and other digital resources are insurmountable. The amount of time put aside for original descriptive cataloging and classification work take the teacher librarian away from their core business of planning and implementing students' information literacy programs, advocating resource-based learning, identifying and locating resources for teachers and students, teaching teachers and students on the effective use of the OPAC, locating and bookmarking specifically useful Internet sites for students and teachers, as well as many other teaching and learning activities.

The situation today is that the majority of school libraries have one teacher librarian and a library committee whose members have very limited knowledge or experience in managing and administering the libraries. The question then is, how can a teacher librarian be able to fulfill his/her responsibility of managing the library, whilst at the same time proceed with the core tasks, that of the teaching and learning-related tasks? One of the many ways that teacher librarians can maximize their effectiveness is in the technical services area where part of the activities involve descriptive cataloging, classification and subject cataloging. This is certainly one aspect of the library management that the teacher librarian can delegate or outsource the work of organizing the collection. This duplication of effort and the cost involved as each school library does almost the same work can be reduced. For this to happen, these activities must be conducted in a cooperative manner, that is by applying the concept of resource sharing or more specifically known as cooperative cataloging or shared cataloging.

**Setting the Background for Resource Sharing: MALMARC and PERPUNET Projects**

Resource sharing in cataloging work is not new in Malaysia. As far back as in the mid-70s, this aspect of resource sharing had already begun as an
experiment to study the feasibility of shared cataloging using the MARC ("Machine -Readable Catalog) format amongst the then five university libraries and the national library. The MALMARC Consortium was established in 1979 and members of the consortium paid a subscription fee of RM22,000.00 per annum. This project which was funded by UNESCO went through a two-phase implementation period.

The items possessed by each institution were matched against the LCM ARC tapes and UKMARC tapes that were acquired for the purpose of searching for the catalog records. For every matched item, a diagnostic printout was produced for editing, and if there was no match, the institution owning the item will proceed with original cataloging work. The experiment achieved a number of the objectives laid out, amongst these are: (1) to reduce the cost of cataloging an item; (2) to enable cataloging of more titles of items at half the time taken to do in the original way; (3) to identify the percentage of the current titles which were already cataloged in the LCMARC and UKMARC tapes; (4) to reduce duplication of efforts in cataloging work; (5) to compile a union catalog; (6) to determine the feasibility of implementing cooperative acquisitions; and (7) to study the feasibility of the provision of an inter-library loan and document delivery service. At the end of the second phase, it was proven that it was feasible for shared cataloging to continue amongst the participating libraries.

A central bibliographic database comprising 450,000 records inclusive of Malaysiana resources was created, and later this became the initial database of the respective institutions when the project discontinued due to the acquisition of individual systems by the consortia libraries.

The project under PERPUNET initiated in 1977 produced a union list of serials in Malaysia. This became an important tool for the implementation of a cooperative acquisitions program for serials. There are about 10,000 titles available from nine major libraries in Malaysia.

Current Infrastructure of SRCs and ERCs

On March 18 1996, the Minister of Education officiated the Munsyi ERC Network, which involved 14 schools throughout the country. However, not much has been documented with regards the implementation, its effectiveness and the success of this pilot project.
In 1999, the Smart School concept was introduced as part of the 7 flagship applications of the 'Multimedia Super Corridor. All smart schools will offer self-directed based learning that is very much dependent on each individual learner's capability. This is not only an intelligent way, but a very smart way of learning to ensure that each student will be able to achieve their highest potential through their own learning styles and learning strategies. (Abd. Razak, et al., 1998) All these schools will be wired through Local Area Network and Wide Area Network environments for information exchange and retrieval. About 90 schools in the country are part of this pilot project. By year 2010, it is estimated that all 7,074 primary and 1,522 secondary schools will be upgraded to the smart school status in terms of infrastructure, technologically equipped in classroom practices and school management, and all the SRCs will eventually evolve to become full-fledged ERCs.

In a study of the planning and implementation of ERCs in 53 secondary schools in the state of Perak (Md. Salehuddin Hj. Maasum, 2001), it was concluded that only 15.1% of the 53 schools are not ready for their SRCs to develop into ERCs. More than 50% of the schools are currently active in the planning stages of the ERCs, whilst about 20% will soon realize the establishment of their ERCs.

School Resource Centers: Cataloging & Classification Process

For most school libraries, the international standard for cataloging and classification work is the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme (or the abridged version), the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) or the 'Senarai Tajuk Perkara untuk Sekolah-Sekolah'. Descriptive cataloging is defined by rules as outlined in the Anglo-American Rules, 2nd ed. (AACR2R). Display of the bibliographic elements follow the accepted International Standard for Bibliographic Description (ISBD) formats for the various types of library materials.

The process of standardized cataloging and classification results in the creation of a library catalog. In a school library, the catalog is a tool that should enable users to:

- retrieve information efficiently
increase an understanding of the information retrieval systems by students and staff

plan, order and check resources efficiently which will aid in the development of information retrieval skills that are transferable from one school library to other school libraries, public libraries, academic libraries and special libraries.

Presently, schools in the country are provided with the Sistem Pengautomasian Pusat Sumber (SPSS), a home-grown system that was developed for a standard way to manage the recording and cataloging of library materials in the SRCs. Most ERCs use the 'pengurusan Sekolah Bestari' provided by the Division of Educational Technology, Ministry of Education, or the "Pustakawan" software to automate and manage the ERC systems. However, like the SPSS, the format for cataloging ERC materials does not conform to the internationally accepted standard like MARC or MALMARC (the Malaysian version of MARC).

With the cataloging; membership; circulation and utilities modules built into it, the SPSS allows for the electronic registration of books and members/users of the SRCs; the charging/discharging of library materials; a system of control for the restriction on loans; the recording of lost items on loan; the recording of fines; the automatic printout of lists of items and users; enquiry regarding items, details of members and other related information; the production of all forms of statistics; and the automatic production of the catalog cards.

The cataloging module is accessible via the following:-

- item's accession number
- Cataloging is then carried out by recording relevant data which is required by the fields that have been assigned :-
  - title;
  - call number;
  - subject (a maximum of 4 subject headings per book);
  - author (up to 3 authors);
  - series;
  - imprint (place of publication, publisher, and date of publication);
  - physical description (number of pages, size, illustrative materials);
  - source of purchase (government, "SUWA", gifts);
  - price;
  - date of receipt;
  - notes (ISBN, glossary information);
- index (information about the back-of-the-book index); and
- number of copies.

As far as the similarity of titles in most of the SRCs is concerned, a rough estimate of 80% of the core collections are common in all schools (through an informal data gathering process). This is attributable due to the distribution of books by the central purchase orders as well as the selection of books through the government-contracted book vendors. Despite the high percentage of similar titles of books acquired and distributed throughout the schools, each school library catalogs and classifies their own individual collections. Even though the SRC personnel undergo a centralized training program in cataloging and classification work using the SPSS, that is conducted by the State Education Departments, the extent of standardization in the cataloging and classification work is still very much in question. To a certain extent, it can be said that the cataloging and classification of the same titles/same subject matters is not standardized. This could be a result of the limited knowledge and experiences of the personnel carrying out the work. Another pertinent point raised is that there is a very high level of original cataloging being carried out by the SRC personnel. This situation shows that the duplication in cataloging and classification effort in terms of man-hours and resources can be rather massive.

Every item in the collection must be described using a standard format. Standardization of procedures enhances the local, national, and international exchange of bibliographic data and is essential in computerized systems. If schools intend to exchange bibliographic data on a local or provincial basis, they should conform to the standards.

In-house devised methods of library organization needs to be discouraged from continuing to be used. While it may seem to be good reasons for devising a local system, it is to be remembered that all students move on from schools to other libraries. The knowledge, skills and understanding in the specific use of the collection that they had obtained is not transferable to other libraries, for example, when they use the public libraries or when they continue their studies in the universities. Over time, these non-standard solutions will become inconsistent especially when there are changes in personnel. The effect on cataloging can be even more
damaging, as cataloging will become difficult and useless when an attempt is made to convert it to a standard machine-readable format.

Possible Strategies and Actions

Following are some of the possible strategies that can be considered for the resource sharing of cataloging work for school libraries.

Cooperation with PERDANA (Perpustakaan Digital Negara)

The PERDANA Committee is proposing the MALINET (Malaysian Libraries Network) as an incorporated consortium independent of all types of libraries/information centers with common interests. The objective of its establishment is to develop and implement resource sharing among members. This would be an opportune moment for school libraries to consider membership. The benefits gained by the upgrading of information and library services, will far outweigh the subscription made by members of the network.

Copy Cataloging

Derived or copy cataloging refers to the process of cataloging items by using existing bibliographic records obtained from various sources and altering those records to conform to particular individual requirements. This can be derived from the Cataloging-In-Publication (CIP) data, book catalogs, non-book catalogs such as CD-ROMs and microfiche, electronic catalogs like the Internet and other digital resources as well as catalog gateways with the Z39.50 - network protocol. Catalog records can be downloaded into the school's database to form its own catalog.

The problem of copy cataloging is that while it saves time and cost in cataloging and classification work, there is still the time which is required to edit the records to conform to established practices.

Commercial Cataloging

This refers to cataloging services now being offered by a number of firms. May book jobbers or wholesalers offer cataloging for a nominal fee. Libraries can consider ordering MARC catalog records along with their
card sets. The important decision is the selection of reputable book vendors or jobbers that offer a high quality catalog data and reliable service. The retrospective conversion of a card catalog to an electronic format enables the school to outsource the responsibility by a commercial vendor. Time spent on duplicating the cataloging for the same titles can be reduced. Examples of such commercial cataloging services are Book Data, an independent UK company, that offers Book Find CD-ROM or J. Whitaker & Sons which offers this service through BookBank CD-ROM, as well as many others. On the downside however, the "nominal fee" that is charged can be of a value that is viewed as rather subjective from a different perspective or priority.

Union Catalogs

The exchange of bibliographic data or information can occur in a number of ways, one of which is participation in a union catalog. Standards must be used by libraries and library systems to participate in union catalogs. Union catalogs achieve uniformity throughout the system, avoid duplication of effort and promote resource sharing. No one library can ever afford to have every important and required library material in their collections. Union catalogs compile all the print and audio-visual materials of that network of school libraries. Union catalogs form one of the main building blocks of resource sharing or shared services such as inter-library loan, cooperative cataloging, cooperative preservation, and cooperative development activities. The prerequisite for participation is the installation of Z39.50 client and Z39.50 server software in the respective system.

Subscription to Bibliographic Utilities or Library Cooperatives

Another option that libraries can consider is to subscribe to the cataloging services of any established bibliographic utilities or library cooperatives, like the OCLC (Ohio College Library Center that was developed by academic libraries in Ohio with the aim to share resources and cut costs), RLIN (Research Libraries Network that was developed by research libraries in California with the aim to share resources amongst research libraries), BLCMP (joint venture between the public and university libraries in Birmingham), etc. These long-standing bibliographic utilities or library cooperatives are reputable and have very large databases that extend into millions of catalog records. There certainly will not be a difficulty to
identify a catalog record for any item in the collections of the school libraries. Again, there will be some necessary modifications of the catalog records to meet with established practices. However, the cost of subscription and paying for per record converted retrospectively or on a current basis, can be too great for school libraries to consider it as a priority option. Alternatively, school libraries can be part of a subscribing consortia, like the MALINET, to negotiate a sharing of the costs between them.

**Catalog Information Services Model**

For more than a decade, educational organizations had been discussing the benefits and possible administrative structures of a national cataloging service for all Australian schools. This venture was established to provide a service with the aim of reducing the cost and duplication of effort required by teacher-librarians in cataloging resources in schools. The main component is for a resource to be cataloged once, and the cataloging record can then be used by thousands of schools in Australia.

"The **Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS)** is a national retrieval and cataloguing service for Australian and New Zealand schools. The SCIS service is owned by the nation's education authorities. It is a cooperative venture of all State Government education systems, National Catholic Education Commission, National Council of Independent Schools and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training. The venture was established to provide a service with the aim of reducing the cost and duplication of effort required by teacher librarians in cataloguing resources in schools. The SCIS database contains about 780,000 catalogue records of educational material including books, audio-visual materials, computer programs and websites. Approximately 3,500 records are added each month, at total of 42,000 per year. The products and services of SCIS are based on agreed national standards in classification, descriptive cataloguing and subject headings. The establishment of these standards has been instrumental in improving the quality and consistency of cataloguing materials for schools. SCIS Cataloguing agencies catalogue recently published book and non-book materials for inclusion in the database. Each catalogue record includes Dewey classification numbers and SCIS subject headings, title, authors/editors, ISBN, publisher, publication place and date, a brief physical description and SCIS number. All SCIS data is delivered in USMARC format."
The diagram below summarizes the provision of cataloguing records for school libraries. The SCIS system consists of:

- cataloguing agencies in most states and territories (5, in the above diagram)...
- that collect resources (1 above) from publishers (2 above), booksellers (3 above) and schools (4)...
- and catalogue them onto the national SCIS database (the Voyager library automation system -6 above)...
- from where schools gain access to the records via SCISWeb and SCISCD products (7 above) as they purchase the resources for their libraries." (SCIS, 2002)

Essentially, subscribers (i.e. the school libraries) of SCIS can download their records from a CD-ROM or they may have a choice of the SCISWeb, CD-ROM or both. The database on CD-ROMs appear to be more straightforward for cataloging, with the web being more current and up-to-date. On the CD-ROM, the search is by ISBN and the selected records are saved to a disk as USMARC records. School libraries can then upload a batch of 70 -100 records at a time onto their databases and edit them as desired before processing the resources. There are also Curriculum
Corporation Standards for Cataloguing and Data Entry which are based on AACR but some aspects are modified for schools. The web-based option is a two-part process where the unique SCIS number given to each resource is recorded after searching on the database for the correct record. An order is then compiled using these SCIS numbers and they are saved onto a disk and then uploaded. Much time is saved in the actual cataloging work. Transfer of data is made easy, consistency is maintained, standards are adhered to and most importantly, there is uniformity in the catalog records produced at the end of the day.

It is an exemplary model of cooperative cataloging for school libraries that can be emulated in this country. As the environment is already in place, the State Education Departments (SEDs) together with the Division of Educational Technology (DET) can work jointly with the Faculty of Information Studies, UiTM to pursue this service for school libraries. The FIS has a corps of experienced and specialist cataloging lecturers. These lecturers can be appointed as consultant catalogers to oversee and closely supervise the centralized cataloging work. Teacher-librarians who are qualified and have had substantial cataloging skills can be selected from various schools to be the corps of catalogers to catalog the library materials that are purchased for schools. Every catalog record created will be stored in a database that is maintained by the DET. When the titles are distributed to the schools, these titles have already been cataloged and the schools just need to browse the database for the specific catalog records. Then these catalog records are downloaded into their own databases.

Such a catalog service can be under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, specifically the Division of Educational Technology, and a corporation be set up to manage the service. This service can also be extended to the private schools and colleges for a fee.

**Staff: Professionally Qualified Librarians**

The problem of non-conformance to universally accepted standards in cataloging and classification work in school libraries stem from the basic issue of those personnel who are not professionally qualified who had been appointed or selected to manage the SRCs. The availability of qualified human resources is not a major problem that cannot be overcome. The FIS has in the past produced a group of graduates specifically trained in the
academic resource center management. Under this program, the education component and management of SRCs are important elements in the program. The Ministry of Education should allow these graduates to be employed in schools as librarians, if we believe that the heart of all schools is a professionally managed SRC. These graduates have been prepared with the knowledge and skills in cataloging and classification work, as well as knowledge in the aspect of education.

Conclusion

The libraries of the future need the increased access to knowledge and information that will result from the library’s ability to function more effectively. The disservice to the profession of librarianship is the belief that any cataloging is as good as any other. Rather, accurate cataloging and classification is of prime importance in libraries and to users. Teacher-librarians who have little or no cataloging training know that these are specialists functions, which are necessary to the running of the library, and is beyond their capacity. Therefore, it is important that a centralized, consistent, professional cataloging provision to all schools be introduced.

In order to embark upon such an undertaking, the various authorities involved need to be able to invest a relatively large capital outlay. Beside the management and administrative details, cost implications on the need for an information storage and retrieval system, the human capital plus the resources, and the funding involved must be specifically considered.

The other important ingredient to the success of such a venture is the will to move from a practice of non-adherence to standard, to that of conformance to universally accepted standard in cataloging and classification work. Unless there is a political will, a commitment and a desire to witness the long-term benefits of such a move, then this idea of the teacher-librarian moving on to become an information manager in the 21st century, will forever remain an elusive dream.

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