ORGANIZING THE PAMPHLET COLLECTION FOR EFFECTIVE RETRIEVAL

by
Teh Kang Hai*

Semua perpustakaan tentu ada menerima bahan-bahan berbentuk risalah dari semasa ke semasa. Tidak ada definisi yang tepat apakah dia sebuah risalah itu. Tetapi pada amnya, risalah ialah bahan berbentuk buku kecil, tidak bermuka-surat banyak, kandungannya mengenai perkara sempit dan ini akan jadi kegunaannya terhad atau singkat hayatnya. Walaubagaimana pun, adalah penting bagi tiap-tiap perpustakaan mempunyai dasar yang tertentu untuk menguruskan bahan-bahan risalah mereka. Ini kerana tidak ada manfaat jika perpustakaan menganggap risalah dengan cara yang sama seperti buku-buku dan mengkatalognya secara penuh. Usaha seumpama ini bukan sahaja akan terlibat usaha pengkatalog yang agak lebih banyak, tetapi adalah juga lebih sukar bagi mereka mengkatalog perkara-perkara yang terkandung dalam risalah-risalah. Jika kita rasa perlunya risalah diuruskan berasingan daripada buku, kita harus menimbangkan cara-cara untuk menyimpan dan mengorganisasikannya. Terdapat beberapa cara yang ada bagi maksud tersebut. Satu cara mengorganisasikan risalah di Perpustakaan Perubatan Universiti Malaya dihuraikan. Cara ini terlibat penyusunan sebuah indeks berbentuk KWOC bagi risalah, dengan mengambil perkataan penting bagi indeks tersebut dari tajuk-tajuk risalah sendiri. Cara ini mudah dijalankan, tidak akan memakan banyak masa sambil berkesan untuk maksud mengesan bahan dari koleksi risalah jika perlu.

Every librarian, particularly the cataloguers, are all too familiar with the little flimsy booklets that the library receives or purchases from time to time. In the absence of any well-defined terminology we group all of these items as pamphlets. Some have even gone so far as to categorize them as non-book materials. Among the few criteria often quoted to define a pamphlet are the number of pages it possesses, the form of binding, the nature of the subject matter, and so on. One definition has them as "non-periodical publications of, not fewer than five, nor more than forty-eight pages exclusive of covers"[1]. Another definition describes them "as materials printed, mimeographed, or otherwise reproduced, not in hard covers, and containing information usually of temporary interest." If we stipulate the number of pages that a pamphlet should or should not have, as in the former definition, we unnecessarily restrict ourselves to many other items that may be more lengthy, but which we would however categorize as pamphlets all the same. Most librarians, particularly the cataloguers, have their own definition on what they consider to be pamphlet materials, irrespective of their number of pages. As it goes, they know one when they see one.

The dilemma faced by librarians with regards to pamphlet materials is that, in the absence of any well-defined policy, they often do not know how best to handle them. They may become the scourge of the cataloguers. Not only do the latter think, that because of their physical format they need to be treated separately from the monographs, but also, often they are not as easy to catalogue as the monographs. Thus, most cataloguers feel that pamphlets do not merit any extensive investment of time and effort. If we care to look closely at the cataloguers' shelves and secret corners, we would find that often the majority of these items are given very low priority, and usually put aside to be done on another day. It is necessary therefore, for every library to have a well-defined policy on the handling of pamphlet materials.

Most libraries which do not maintain a special pamphlet collection, often opt for the easy way out, by treating the pamphlets like monographs, with respect to cataloguing and classification. Is there any justification to continue to catalogue, classify and subject analyse an item which may sometimes amount to less than ten or not more than a few tens of pages? Or should we spare the cataloguers' time and effort, by seeking a more desirable alternative? As we are aware, pamphlets come in various types serving as many functions for which they were produced. Some are very subject-specific, produced to comment on a certain interesting 'topic of the day', but interest which will

*Perpustakaan Perubatan, Universiti Malaya.

wane very quickly. These, and many others like them, often outlive their usefulness relatively fast, and can safely be discarded without affecting the integrity of the library collection as a whole. Thus, there is little justification in spending too much time and effort cataloguing and classifying them in the same way as the monographs. Myers et al [2] pointed out that "Descriptive cataloguing of pamphlets is often more time-consuming and thus more expensive than cataloguing monographs because (a) it is less likely there will be a cataloging copy already in the National Union Catalog or other catalogs or bibliographies which provide cataloging information (b) publications themselves do not have title pages and the information contained on the cover may be less complete than on standard title page (c) more added entry and subject headings may be required than in standard cataloging." In most instances, therefore, cataloguers will have to spend more time on them doing original cataloguing. For us in the University of Malaya Library, besides the cataloguing time and effort to be expended on these items, we will also now have to be more sensitive to the aspect of cost involved as well. With our participation in the MALMARC shared cataloguing project, we need to consider whether it is worth the extra cost to get a printed diagnostics for a pamphlet material, even though it bears an ISBN or the Library of Congress card number. Thus, it needs not be further emphasised that maintaining a pamphlet collection separated from the monograph collection, merits serious consideration by every library to save on the time and effort needed to process the pamphlets.

Housing
With a pamphlet collection, one needs to look into the aspects of housing the pamphlets, organizing them for effective retrieval, and weeding them periodically. In housing them, pamphlets, because of their physical format, often present special problems in shelving. Most of them are too flimsily cased to be able to stand up well on the shelves without falling over, or they tend to get sandwiched between books, or even between the pages of books and become 'lost'. There are a few ways of housing the pamphlets. One way is to keep them in vertical files. In this method, the pamphlets are kept between file folders and placed in an upright position on the shelves. Another method is to put each pamphlet in a pamphlet binder, usually made of hard cardboard, to enable them to stand on the shelves. The disadvantage of using pamphlet binders is that the cost for the binders may become too prohibitive if the pamphlet collection is too big. Pamphlet boxes can also be used to store the pamphlets. They can be either of the open-ended or closed types. Pamphlet boxes are the most versatile, and the only disadvantage against them is that they take up quite a bit of shelf-space. One method which is not used in many libraries, is to bind several pamphlets together. This presents some difficulties because of the different sizes that pamphlets are issued, and moreover, in the long run, the extent of use of the pamphlets themselves, may not justify the cost incurred in binding. With this method too, weeding becomes virtually impossible.

Organizing
We recognize that pamphlets are a special category of materials which may have some potential usefulness to the library's clientele. As such, we need to organize them like any other library item, so that the information they contain can be made accessible to the potential uses. We have already appreciated the fact that there is little justification to treat them in the same way as the monographs. There are a few ways of organizing pamphlets, one of which is to group them together by broad subject headings. They are labelled and kept in the same folder or box. Retrieval will not be convenient or easy using this method, if there are many pamphlets put together under one subject heading. Another way is to subject-analyse each pamphlet and assign to it appropriate subject headings from a thesaurus or other subject headings lists, like Sears list of subject headings, NLM Medical Subject Headings, the Library of Congress Subject Headings and so on. However, as pointed out earlier, some of these pamphlets are so subject-specific, that often it is not easy to find the appropriate subject headings for them from the thesaurus used. Thus, even without the descriptive cataloguing, we will find that trying to assign appropriate subject headings alone can turn out to be very time-consuming. An appropriate alternative to the two methods already mentioned, would be to find a system which would make it both easy and fast to index the pamphlets, and at the same time provide an effective method of retrieval. I will discuss one such method being used in the Medical Library since I embarked on the reorganization of our pamphlet collection.

The pamphlet collection of the Medical Library
The Medical has had a pamphlet collection for several years. As the collection was rather small in the past, the pamphlets were kept in pamphlet boxes labelled with broad subject headings. There was neither a subject nor an author index to the pamphlets. This did not provide an effective way of retrieving any particular item in the

collection. One of the obvious disadvantages of this system, is that in the case of a pamphlet with multi-topical subject matter, it can still only be put in one location. It was not surprising that our pamphlet collection was hardly used, inspite of the fact that there were some potentially useful items in it. To encourage more use to be made of the pamphlets, it is necessary to reorganize them for a more convenient and effective retrieval. An index to the pamphlet collection, whether maintained in card form or preferably a printed index, would serve to meet that purpose. Our need to reorganize the pamphlets, has also been prompted not only by the increasing number of pamphlets that are now in our collection, but also to save on the cost which would otherwise be incurred unnecessarily for sending for the diagnostics for any of these pamphlets items, under the MALMARC shared cataloguing project. As it is, those items in question may only be of limited significance or their potential useful-ness is short-lived or may be even doubtful. Also, we are now vetting all items, both purchased as well as those received as gifts, more closely before accessioning, so that pamphlet materials can be isolated from the mono-graphs. We are also less rigid in our interpretation regarding our criteria for a pamphlet (see following paragraph), and thus we expect our pamphlet collection to grow at a faster rate than before, thus prompting the need to organize them more systematically.

Criteria for a pamphlet
What are our criteria for designating an item as being a pamphlet? Obviously, as we have seen earlier, there should be no hard and fast rule. Libraries should be free to interpret and define to suit their needs without unnecessarily tying themselves down to follow a few rigid criteria. In our library, our criteria have varied slightly from time to time. However, we still have a few rule-of-thumb. At one time in the past, one of our main criteria for a potential pamphlet was any item of a hundred pages or less. This criterion however, was never strictly applied, because monographs of less than a hundred pages were still given the full treatment with respect to cataloguing and classification, after considering other factors as well, such as their subject matter. However, in our library, most of the items that have been added into our pamphlet collection in the past, very often had one or more of the following features. They included those items received as gifts or exchanges, usually of paper-binding, of less than a hundred pages, issued from orthodox sources, items whose subject matter is not very substantive and likely to be of short-term interest only. Also included were some occasional reprints whose subject coverage was considered substantive enough to be of interest and might have potential uses. Our approach to categorizing pamphlets, would invariably include some items which may not be considered as pamphlets by other libraries.

Indexing the pamphlet collection
Two ways of organizing the pamphlets for use, have already been mentioned earlier. Pamphlets can be put together with the monographs and treated in the same way with respect to cataloguing and classification, but may be given less priority. But as stated earlier, descriptive cataloguing and subject analysis for pamphlets should preferably be dispensed with, as they may prove to be more time-consuming and expensive in the long run, when compared with the monographs. The other way of organizing pamphlets of grouping them together under broad subject headings, is not an effective solution either. The present system that I am using for the Medical Library pamphlet collection is based on a KWOC (Key-word-out-of-context) index. After considering the few options mentioned, I find this system suitable for our purpose. The concept of the KWOC index is not new. Under this system, the key words in the title of a pamphlet are used for construction the index. Each key word is selected and written to the left of each index entry. The other parts of the title of the pamphlet preceding, if any, and following the key word are written on the same line towards its right. This is repeated in the same manner for entries with the other key words. The complete title is repeated each time and there is no truncation of any word or words. Using this system of indexing, we dispense with the need to decide on the subject headings to be assigned to an item, thus enabling us to cut down on the time taken to process an item. Moreover, using the key words, often allows several access points for an item, depending on the number of significant words in the title describing its contents. For example, in the pamphlet entitled 'Evaluation of the safety of modern contracep-tives in developing countries', the item can be accessed in the key-word index by any of the words 'evaluation, safety, modern, contraceptives, developing countries.' In the key-word index, the index entries for some of these key-words would appear as follows:

Evaluation   of the safety of modern contraceptives in developing countries.
Safety   of modern contraceptives in developing countries = Evaluation of the
Contraceptives   in the developing countries = Evaluation of the safety of modern

Where it is thought that certain words in the title are not likely to be used to access the item then no additional entries will be made in the index for those words, to save on indexing time. In the above example, no separate entries will thus be made for the words 'modern' or 'countries'.

In addition to the key-word index, a separate name/series index is compiled to provide additional access points to an item. Against each entry in the key-word index and the name/series index, the number for the appropriate pamphlet referred to is indicated. The pamphlets are kept in open-ended pamphlet boxes and given a consecutive system of numbering. On the outside of each box, the range of the numbers of the pamphlets contained within it, is clearly labelled for quick location of the item.

One of the disadvantages of compiling an index of this type, is the amount of time expended to write out the key-words and to repeat the rest of the title each time for an index entry. One can resort to truncation of the title to save some time, but in the process we may lose some significant key-words of the title. There is little benefit in doing this. Moreover, the time taken to repeat the title completely may not be as long as it may seem, because everything is faithfully transcribed as found on the title, and there is hardly any difficult decision to make. Besides not having to worry about the physical descriptions of an item, there is no need to consult a thesaurus or other subject headings lists for appropriate subject headings. Indexing itself becomes quite easy and mechanical after a while. One needs no special training in indexing to do it. Using the index for retrieval of an item is comparable in effectiveness as it would be if the item is subject-analysed by assigning subject headings from a thesaurus or other lists. Titles of pamphlets are often expressive enough and contain sufficient number of significant or key words in them, which can be used in the key-word index and thereby for retrieval. This form of retrieval, using key words from the title itself is likened to what is termed free-text or natural language searching, a common special feature in searching many online bibliographic databases that are available today. Similarly, the KWOC index allows searching by word-proximity which is common to many computerized databases searching as well. There are of course some attendant disadvantages in a KWOC index, which makes use of a non-control vocabulary. Among this is the difficulty faced in trying to collate items in the index, because of the use of synonyms and homographs. But being aware of this helps to minimize the problems to a great extent in retrieval.

The KWOC index can be adapted for use with the computer later on. Those who are familiar with either the KWIC or the KWOC indexes, will know that they are computer-produced indexes, which utilize the computer ability to recognize alphabetic character strings and create subject indexes by mechanized word indexing[3]. The titles are first converted into machine-readable form and scanned by the computer. It chooses the key-words and print them out in designated position preceded by or followed by the other parts of the title. The number of characters in each line of the index is normally limited, often resulting in the title being truncated. While we will initially have our key-word index and name/series index to our pamphlet collection maintained in the card form or even in the printed form, it is hope that eventually, we can have a programme for the computer to take over future housekeeping work of indexing and updating.

Weeding

Among the materials in the pamphlet collection, there will definitely be items of only temporary interest or ephemerals. There are also pamphlets that are issued in series and which may be superseded in due course. Such items can safely be weeded out from time to time. In reorganizing our pamphlet collection, we have weeded out many such items as well as those that we think are already out-of-date. This will continue to be a periodical exercise.

Conclusion

The account given above discussed some of the traditional ways of handling pamphlet materials in libraries and some of the deficiencies in the various methods used. It is pointed out that to organize the pamphlet collection, a library must have a definite policy regarding its maintenance and organization. The nature of the pamphlet materials, often do not warrant their being treated in the same way as the monographs. In the long run, it would save a lot of the cataloguers' time and effort, in not have to do something which they do not consider very meaningful in the first place. Devising a system of indexing for the pamphlet collection which is not time-consuming, yet effective for purpose of retrieval and thus facilitating its use, seems to be the logical solution. One such system as used in the Medical Library is based on the KWOC index system. It is easy to compile, not very time-consuming and yet serves its purpose well. The system can also be adapted to be used with the computer at some future date.

References:

(1) Burkett, J., S. Ritchie and A. Stanley. *Library practice: a manual and textbook.* Huntingdon, E.L.M. Publication, 1977. p. 118–119.

(2) Myers, M.S. and J.S. Edelman. Pamphlets *In Encyclopaedia of library & information science.* New York, M. Dekker, 1977. v. 21, p. 299–309.

(3) Rothman, John. Index, indexer, indexing *In Encyclopaedia of library & information science.* New York, M. Dekker, 1974. v. 11, p. 286–299.

(4) Annan, G.L. and J.W. Felter. *Handbook of medical library practice.* 3rd ed. Chicago, Medical Library Association, 1970.

(5) Bloomquist, H., *et al. Library practice in hospitals: a basic guide.* Cleveland, Press of the Case Western Reserve University, 1972.

(6) Landau, T. *Encyclopaedia of librarianship.* 3rd rev. ed. London, Bowes & Bowes, 1966.