

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

2022

Justification of Manual Classification of Information Resource in ICT Age in Nigeria

Marcus Oladotun Aragabye

University of Ibadan, Nigeria, aramardotmarcus@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Scholarly Communication Commons](#)

Aragabye, Marcus Oladotun, "Justification of Manual Classification of Information Resource in ICT Age in Nigeria" (2022). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 6876.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6876>

Justification of Manual Classification of Information Resource in ICT Age in Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the reasons why manual classification of information materials should not be abandoned in current ICT era, particularly in Nigeria. Libraries are no exception to ICT applications, and we can observe how they have already altered library services and activities. Also, Information Technology (IT) has made its presence in almost every sphere of human activity including the library practice but to have fully automated classification scheme is yet to be implemented. Library operation, such as cataloging, reference service, and the rest has a feel of this. For example, ICT has incorporated copy cataloguing into cataloguing operations, which libraries now employ instead of manual cataloging and also the arrival of online public access cataloguing (OPAC) was influenced by ICT, but this has not been fully infused into classification operations, which has kept the manual system of classification alive even in the face of ICT. Manual classification, on the other hand, cannot be abandoned because it is fundamental to the profession of librarianship. The classification of information resources is a foundation upon which librarianship is built, making classification a system as old as the library itself, as well as a practice that is unaffected by technological innovation. In addition, there are a variety of reasons in Nigeria that support the continued use of manual classification of information resources in the face of ICT. As a result, in this study we attempted to see the necessity of manual classification as well as the limitations of ICT in classification and the availing of manual classification in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Classification, Manual classification, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Librarianship, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Classification is an organization strategy that brings the universe of knowledge under control and orderliness. By extension, information resources are organized by subject affinity for the sole aim of maximizing the utilization of the knowledge contained in the library's books and other resources.

Classification of information resources is a foundation of which librarianship is hinged and this makes classification a system which is old as the library itself, and as well made it one of the practice which is independent of technology advancement because according to Pandita and Singh (2012) in their study, they said that though Information Technology (IT) has made its presence in almost every sphere of human activity but to have fully automated classification scheme is yet to be realized. It is on this note, that Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) investigative team involved in exploring the possibilities of adaptability of standard library classification scheme so as to classify documents and other web resources in automated form but conclusion was made that if yes, how far can the result be close to manual classification, this proves the indispensability of manual classification even in the era of ICT especially in a country like Nigeria. (Godby, Miller and Reighart, 2012).

For this reason, the objective of this paper is to justify the reasons why manual classification should not be jettisoned in ICT age in Nigeria.

NECESSITY OF MANUAL CLASSIFICATION

Classification is one of the core functions of which librarianship is premised and as such gives orderliness and meaning to the collections of the library because it is said that the closest we will ever come to an orderly universe is a good library. Classification of information resources have passed through several approaches in the past and as well in the present and the prominent of it all is manual classification, this in itself is the foundation of librarianship and as such differentiate librarianship from other information profession.

Manual classification can also be regarded as original classification and it portrays the step-by-step procedure on how to classify an information material from the scratch especially when such resources does not have a pre-classification record. So, by extension, manual classification is the step-by-step procedure of systematic grouping of information resources into specific subject affinity by the skillful act of a classifier without the aid of computer or any other

technological tools. To further demonstrate the necessity of manual classification, some reasons that demonstrate its importance to librarianship and libraries in general must be identified. They are:

- Professionalism
- Mentorship
- Originality
- Experience is acquired
- Provision for special collection

Professionalism

The foundation of librarianship as a profession is hinged on classification because it is the difference maker when librarians are compared to other information professionals. Classification is a system as old as the library itself and through its practice in the library, librarians have gained special attention and honor because it is one way of experiencing orderliness in the universe of knowledge. Before the advent of ICT, classification in the library is one practice that has been, of which its practice manually is one of what has brought professionalism in to the light of librarianship which means, if manual classification had not been, professionalism alongside librarianship might be a world apart. For this reason, it will not be inappropriate to state that the reality of professionalism is hinged on manual classification as one of the integral practices in the library.

Mentorship

This is the relationship between people where an individual with more experience, knowledge and connections is able to pass along what they have learned to a more junior individual within a certain field of study. Librarianship is a profession that encourages mentorship, and mentorship in this light is mostly within the premise of a library school or library environment whereby a more experienced lecturer or librarian with a profound knowledge on the rudiment and integral knowledge of library practices, passes along what they have learned to prospective librarians or lecturers.

In the light of this, classification is one of the core subjects that is been taught in most library school and in the process of teaching, it is required that students gain the knowledge of

how to classify and this is done through a practical exercise of manual classification of which student are exposed to various handy classification tools especially classification scheme. For instance, undergoing master degree in Library, Archive and Information studies department in university of Ibadan, has exposed the writer as a student under the tutelage of Mr. Olawale Oyewole and student were exposed to the practical aspect of classification of which there is a provision of Dewey Classification scheme to work with and student were taught the step-by-step procedure of classifying book.

The essence of this is to impact in the mentee (students) the rudiment of classification, which can only be acquired through the manual procedure of which classification made available online through different bibliographic entities databases cannot make provision for because they are ready made work which emanated from the idea of manual classification because what was made available on the internet (database) was first done manually by a professional classifier before uploading them to be made accessible remotely. For this cause, manual classification fosters the inculcating of the fundamental knowledge of step-by-step procedure of classification to student, which is the goal of mentorship.

Originality and Creativity

Originality and creativity are the potential products of manual classification and they stand to display classification in the light of the classifiers' ingenuity. Manual classification ensures that new ideas are discovered of which the classifier would have the credit of such innovation which means, when classifier tends to engage manually classification which is a kind of original classification, it gives room for such classifier to rationalize their way through providing the information needed especially when such information is novel and as such the classifier becomes the creator of such work.

Originality and creativity may be difficult to produce in an online classification because the work offered is pre-made, denying the classifier the ability to think for themselves. As a result, such work cannot be credited to them and does not reflect originality and creativity. As a result, manual classification is where creativity is most often seen.

Experience is acquired

True experience is a function of practice upon which observation, trial and error and synthesis of fact forms the premise of which experience can be truly regarded. Engaging the classification of information resources in a manual way, ensures and promote the amassing of knowledge and experience by the classifier because manual classification involves the exposing and engaging of step by step procedure to grouping resources to the subject affinity and each time a classifier truly follows the steps involve, he/she is exposed to the possibilities of how to classify and this in turn form the premise of experience, and experience comes into play in confirming the correctness of information provided on a database about the class mark of a particular resource.

As a result, manual assistance can help you gain more experience, which will be useful in validating the accuracy of other sources, particularly databases. Because it is a prepared work, computerized or online categorization does not provide experience because it allows anyone to classify materials without prior knowledge or experience of classification.

Provision for special collection

Special collection most time are subject bias of which provision for its classification might not be provided for in the database, hence manual classification is the best solution to classify such collections. The fact that these collections are subject bias does not make them less significant than the general collections which are already classified because all collections are proven useful when they are quickly accessible and special collection also must be proven useful when ways of accessing them quickly are provided for and this is done through the manual classification because it involves classification of such collection from the scratch and after it might have been done, it can now be uploaded on the databases of bibliographic entities for universal accessibility but first, manual classification bridges the gap. Therefore, we can as well say that grey collection or special collections which does not have a pre-classification record, can be availed for with the manual classification regardless of IT.

LIMITATIONS OF ICT IN CLASSIFICATION AND THE AVAILING OF MANUAL CLASSIFICATION.

Information and communication technology is the use of technological tools and devices for information processing task of which classification can as well be categorized. This implies that the application of ICT in classification means the adoption of various technological tools like the computer, databases, internet to create and make classification of information resources easy and accessible by all.

Nigeria is a developing country where ICT adoption is stumbling and has yet to acquire traction, and the reason for this may be related to a variety of reasons, the most of which are relative and subjective. Even while the use of ICT in classification is intended to improve efficiency and effectiveness, it is also used for this reason. Nonetheless, there are inherent limitations to the use of ICT, which may be unique to a geographical region like Nigeria. The following are some of the challenges:

- Technological dependency
- Inadequate power supply
- Cost of technological tools
- Obsolescence in technology
- Location/access restriction
- ICT skill or knowledge is required

The foregoing issues are among the reasons why manual classification is still necessary in Nigeria, despite the fact that we live in an information era. In the face of these obstacles, manual classification is the only alternative that provides for consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness. Each challenge will be discussed in detail below, as well as how manual classification can help in such a case.

Technological dependency

Technology is required for online classification because most of this readymade classification are made available on a database, CD ROM or a space in the internet and as a result, having access to the classification information is technology required. Such technology tools needed are computer, internet network, bandwidth and printer etc. for this cause, it poses a

degree of challenge because if appropriate technology tools are not made available, the relevance of online classification will be discredited and compromise and as such alternative is needed.

Manual classification is the only way out of such a situation of relying on technology tools before classifying because manual classification predates the advent of technology and is therefore independent of it. As a result, manual classification remains indispensable in Nigerian libraries despite the ICT age.

Inadequate power supply

This is the most challenging factor in Nigeria and it is one of the alarming issues hindering the full maximization of ICT in the country because, technology usage is mostly power required and if there is no power supply, the use of such technology will be abortive and classifying via online way would not be possible. So, does this mean that if there is not power supply classification of information resources should be stopped? Then the only solution to such is manual classification.

Manual classification does not require power supply before classification of information resource can be done. In most libraries, manual classification has been totally replaced with online classification and as such, if there is power outage in such library and there is a need for classification, such library would need to hold on for light to be restored but it does not have to be because manual classification can be engaged in such a situation.

Cost of technological tools

Hardware and software expenditures might be too expensive. Costs are paid not only while purchasing technology, but also when updating equipment and systems, which is necessary to stay up with evolving technologies. This continuous expenditure is a major obstacle for libraries that uses online classification as their only means of classification. In this regard, unnecessary expenses should not be incurred in purchasing technological tools rather manual system of classification is cost effective.

Obsolescence in Technology

The ever-changing nature of software and computer technology has resulted in a phenomenon known as "technological obsolescence." Old systems become outdated as new advances in computer technology emerge, and the computer industry no longer supports them. Hardware isn't the only thing that suffers from technological obsolescence. Many once-popular software applications have become obsolete. Some of these technological shifts are the result of shifting economics and markets, while others are the result of breakthroughs and changes in software and hardware. All this hardware and software in question are needed if online classification is to be done and of such, if hardware and software keeps on getting obsolete by the change in time, it will affect the library if they are too continual in using online classification because it will require of them to keep on updating as newer version is evolving and this as well will be expense on the part of the library.

Therefore, in the light of the foregoing, in order for library not to find themselves battling with obsolete technology and spending all budget on updating, it is required to resort to manual system of classification. As this, will avail the challenge of obsolete in technology.

Access/Location restriction

Online classification is mostly designed in such a way that accessibility might be restricted to some geographical location of which Nigeria is most time a victim of such circumstance and these might affect the access to the online classification and also access to some bibliographic entity database requires password and if such library is not buoyant to subscribe, access to such database might be difficult and this poses a threat to classification if the only means is online but in such instance, manual classification is the only option that can be initiated because it does not restrict access neither does it places restriction based on location.

ICT skill or knowledge is required

Apart from having the needed skill as a classifier, to operate online classification requires for such individual to be digitally literate and as such, if one is not literate enough to operate the computer and the internet, definitely online classification cannot be done, but operating manual classification as a classifier only needs the knowledge of classification and nothing else. Therefore, online classification, is a challenge for library whose classifier in not digitally literate, this will result to ineffectiveness of such classifier if he/she only depend on online classification

but in such situation, without ICT skill and a classifier only possess classification skill, then manual classification would be the best option, as it does not require digital literacy.

CONCLUSION

Manual classification is one library technique that cannot be overly substituted due to its significance, and as such, it is seen as the cornerstone of librarianship even before the arrival of technology, and as such, if the foundation of a profession is destroyed, the profession itself is vanquished. Though ICT has a significant impact, it will never be able to completely replace manual classification because it is deeply entrenched in the profession and may be difficult to disconnect. Also, manual classification serves as a great relief and saving route for countries like Nigeria, which are constantly confronted with various constraints associated with ICT adoption, so manual classification is available in this regard, allowing them to avoid feeling the heat of not having what it takes to fully maximize ICT application.

REFERENCE

- Chollom And Daniel (2013). Importance of Cataloguing and Classification in Libraries. International Journals of Research in Multi-Disciplinary Studies, Vol.1, No. 1.
- Ramesh Pandita and Shivendra Singh (2012). Need and Importance of Library Classification in ICT Era. Journal of Indian Library Association, 48(4) 25-30.