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# Introduction to Library Science with Practical Problems

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What are some of the things you might expect a school of librarianship to teach you?

*First and Most Important, Cataloging.* This is a subject so basic that if you could learn nothing else, it would be worth your tuition; in our opinion, two years as a cataloger would supply the perfect "experience" reference for the beginning law library administrator.

In addition to being the most important thing in the library school curriculum, cataloging probably is the only thing you cannot learn eventually just by hanging around as an assistant in a properly run library. It is true that you *might* learn it by hanging around a catalog librarian who had time to explain all of the rules to you as he went along, to see that you understood them, and made you practice them, but the ratio of uncataloged books to catalogers makes it highly unlikely that such a one will come your way.

There is much talk in law library circles about simplified cataloging, and some who know all about cataloging but little about law books have heard it so often that they have developed the idea that law libraries do not need cataloging—just a simple system to list the books—and that law

libraries do not need classification (which, of course, is not cataloging but which seldom is managed intelligently by one without an understanding of cataloging). Both of these assumptions are a lot of nonsense. If your library is so small that you know every book in it and if you or someone with the same complete knowledge is on duty whenever the library is open, then perhaps you do not need a catalog; if your library is so small that a patron has to go no more than four places to see which treatise on trusts best develops a particular doctrine, then perhaps you do not need classification.

There are simplifications which can be made, *e.g.*, substituting checklists for complete cataloging, but those substitutions still have to be tied into the catalog by standard methods. It is possible to eliminate some of the bibliographic detail from catalog cards, but what is left should carry a uniform entry. Uniform entries are determined best by one with cataloging training.

When you go to library school you will take cataloging. There is no escaping it if you are after a degree. Anything you produce, from then on, should be a joy to other librarians. If you offer duplicates or if you ask for an interlibrary loan, your entry will have the proper author heading so your

correspondents will not have to hunt all over their own duplicate listings and catalogs to determine whether they have it. Your entry will carry the edition and the date; and if you are making bibliographies, both your book and periodical citations will carry inclusive paging, so your readers will know how much coverage to expect if they borrow one of the listed items.

It always has seemed strange to me that lawyers, with the training they receive in brief-writing, with the emphasis legal bibliography teachers and court rules place on complete citations, and with their exposure in law school to Price's *Practical Manual of Standard Legal Citations* and the *Uniform System of Citation*, never seem to carry it beyond the brief. They send you a list of books—either because they are going to give them to you or because they want you to tell them their worth—and many times half of the items cannot be identified. There may be authors and titles with no dates, authors and dates with no titles, wrong authors, right titles and wrong dates, and, of course, never an edition. We received one last week listing three items. One was a Connecticut session law. The lawyer apparently had copied most of the title page, including the publisher, and gave a date when there was no session. One was a listing of publisher and date—no author, no title, no subject. The third was described as “an old account book that my wife's father brought from Connecticut”. Neither that man, nor his wife, nor his secretary had been to library school.

Discussion of documentation and specialized information retrieval is cur-

rently popular; it might be wise to postpone investigation of these subjects until after you have acquired a basic knowledge of cataloging. Short of academic course work, something may be accomplished by careful reading of these books:

Akers, Susan G. *Simple Library Cataloging*. 4th ed. Chicago, American Library Association, 1954. 250 p.

Mann, Margaret. *Introduction to Cataloging and the Classification of Books*. 2d ed. Chicago, American Library Association, 1943. 288 p.

Elsie Basset's *A Cataloging Manual for Law Libraries*, most widely used in law libraries, is out of print. Its emphasis is on adaptation of cataloging rules to fit the peculiarities of law collections; we think that some basic instruction in the ground rules should precede instruction in their amendment.

A poll among recent graduates of our own librarianship course found unanimous agreement on the importance of cataloging and substantial support for placing the following subjects in secondary positions:

*The Awareness of Bibliographic Sources*. Such an awareness includes how to discover what forms a basic law collection; where to locate checklists, bibliographies, union lists; how to locate order information; and how to keep up on current publications. These things, if you attend a library school not specializing in law librarianship, you will not learn in specific detail—that is, you will not pick up an extensive bibliography of titles unless

you do a special research project and dig them out for yourself, because there are so many general sources to cover that there is no time to study Sweet and Maxwell's *Legal Bibliography of the British Commonwealth*, or the New York University *Catalogue of the Law Collection*, or even the *Law Library Journal*. But you will learn to use the government document catalogs, the *Cumulative Book Index*, the *Publishers' Trade List Annual*, the *Book Review Digest*, *Publishers' Weekly*, and the *Union List of Serials*. More important, you will develop a method—you will come to realize that whenever there is a need for information, a need that is general and recurrent, someone may have compiled a list. You will learn to look for it before you start asking your colleagues questions which can be answered by a printed list or go batting off to compile a list on your own. The embarrassment of needless questions is not so important as the embarrassment of the incomplete collection which is apt to grow out of ignorance of the existence of checklists and of sources of current bibliographic information.

*The Prevention of Stagnation.* Lawyers scan advance sheets to keep current with changes in the law. In library school, you learn to scan professional journals in the same way, but you also learn to look at books and periodicals in a different way—not to browse in them in the advance sheet method but to glance at their prefaces and tables of contents to get an idea of their coverage, and, if they are reference books, to see how they work. This brings up something you will not learn in library school, because most of the

students are headed for libraries where it would be impractical for them to try it, and the library school curriculum is not geared to teaching impractical techniques. You may find it helpful, if your acquisition rate will allow it, to make a practice of examining each book as it comes into your collection—not each volume of the *National Reporter System* or of *Corpus Juris Secundum*, but the first issues of periodicals, the first volumes of new reference sets, and each new treatise or monograph. How much time you devote to such pursuits will depend upon the kind of law librarian you want to be (the do-it-yourself kind or the refer-to-the-reference-department kind) and the condition of your memory (the I-remember-it-better-if-I-handle-it kind or the I-remember-a-book-review kind). One law librarian of our acquaintance is so convinced of the effectiveness of handling the book that his acquisition procedure requires that every member of the professional staff have some responsibility in the chain of duties between arrival and shelving of new titles.

*The Meaning of the Budget.* In library school, you learn that budgets do not just appear, that they must be fought for and that every time you ask for something new and about half the time you want to keep something you already have, you must justify the request. You learn that justification means statistics and standards. Unfortunately, you do not learn where to find statistics and standards peculiar to law libraries because, again, the matter is of limited interest to the general student body. But, having learned the method, you can later ap-

ply it with the aid of Roalfe's *Libraries of the Legal Profession*, the Association of American Law Schools' Standards, the American Bar Association's annual questionnaire-gathered information, and assorted quotations from professional literature and friendly correspondence.

*The Care and Treatment of Money.* Schools of librarianship generally proceed upon the theory that what you do with your money after you get it is a problem not worthy of the notice given your struggle to get it—libraries have bookkeepers to handle such things; there is always some higher authority like the Country Treasurer or the University Accounting Department to render counsel or admonition; and in the unlikely event neither of these things is true, one can always call in an accountant. The number of law libraries which are without bookkeepers, or higher authorities who are up to date on their posting, or authority and means to call in accountants seems sufficiently large to justify an exception to the general theory in a special law librarianship curriculum. The beginning law librarian should have knowledge of the essentials making up an adequate system of financial records, whether those records are to be kept by the law library staff or by the higher authority. We count those essentials as five:

(1) A system which keeps track of cash expended and therefore provides the current cash balance.

(2) A system which records encumbrances and therefore provides the current unencumbered balance (encumbrances should include the expected cost of continuing subscriptions,

binding, and fixed charges during the budget period, as well as estimated cost of separate items on order).

Better practice divides both expenditure and encumbrance figures into categories, at least separating the figures for new books, continuations, binding, equipment and supplies, and in more statistics-conscious libraries, further subdividing into types of books—treatises, statutes, reports, periodicals, search books, foreign books, etc.

(3) An order and payment record for each acquisition, arranged so that it can be consulted without reference to the time of its arrival or the time of its order (preferably, an alphabetical order card file or shelf-list record for individual orders and a serial record for continuations.)

(4) A file, by dealers, of invoices paid.

(5) A double-entry check for accuracy (this may be supplied, if the higher authority's reports are current, by balancing their monthly and cumulative money-expended figure against the law library's own record of totals resulting from either essential (1) or (4); if not, a balance between the law library's totals in (1) and (4) achieve the same result).

*Dealing with Serials.* In library school you learn the basic rules for dealing with serials. What you may not learn because, again, it is a specialized subject, is the amazing percentage of your law collection which is serials or pseudo-serials. In practice, you learn that it is a simple thing to apply the basic rules to the regularly established, calmly edited, adequately indexed sets like *A.L.R.* and the *Yale Law Journal*, but you begin to look askance at peo-

ple who say that of course there is not much to law cataloging because so many of the books come in sets. Two peculiarities take credit for most of the trouble: frequent changes of title and rapid production of unindexed monographs in series.

The *A.L.A. Catalog Rules* recommend cataloging serials with split titles under the latest form, with "see" references from the older titles to the current one. The consequence is re-cataloging and reshelving with each change. You learn, in library school, that one must know the fundamental rules of cataloging but that intelligent modification to fit the circumstances in a particular library is considered something of a virtue. In law libraries, modification of the rule governing title changes is probably generally accepted, or, if it isn't, should be. There are two solutions: cataloging the serial under its first title and leaving it there, with only "see" references from newer titles, or splitting the cataloging by closing out each entry with the final issue of the old title and treating each new title portion of the set as a separate unit, with appropriate cross-references. The first solution is easier on the catalog department. The second is easier on the circulation staff and on open-stack patrons, because few law libraries shelve periodicals (the most frequent title change offenders) by classification and Cutter-number but rather alphabetically by title, and those who would use a volume go to that portion of the alphabet related to the citation at hand. Thus, an *Index to Legal Periodicals* user who finds a reference to the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* will gravitate to-

ward the "U" section or will cause a page to gravitate there. Neither of them, finding a dummy saying "see American Law Register", is going to be thinking about the work this system is saving the cataloger. Their annoyance and the amount of time wasted per wrong try is just as great under the A.L.A. rule system, but the smaller incidence of need for the older title, with consequent referral to shelving under its newer form, makes its cumulative effect less troublesome. The solution, in law libraries, may be a combination: leave-it-under-the-original-title cataloging, at least until the serial comes to an end, and split-title classification, shelflisting, and shelving. More detailed and more authoritative suggestions can be found in C. Sumner Spalding's *Keeping Serials Cataloging Costs in Check* in *1 Library Resources and Technical Services* 13-20 (Winter 1957).

The second most troublesome aspect of serials, that of the problem of the inadequately indexed monograph-in-series, is more difficult to solve. Legislative council reports, state legislative committee reports, and governmental research bureau studies grow in importance and frequency, and few cataloging staffs can afford to analyze them so that they can be found through the library's catalog. There is a current checklist of these materials, but its distribution is restricted to legislative agencies; even if the restriction is lifted, as we hope it will be, its non-cumulative form makes it unlikely that it could be used as a checklist-index substitute for cataloging. The *Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications* can substitute

for the cataloging of Congressional hearings and reports but only because the user has other means of determining subject matter and approximate date of publication. Some of us have begun index-checklisting state legislative materials on an experimental basis, using punched cards or clipping and pasting purloined legislative checklist entries on subject cards, but, so far as we know, no one has made progress on a cooperative basis. If law librarians are to help make ripples in the puddle of documentation, this might be the place to start.

*How Shall Your Serial Check-in File Be Arranged?* Shall the cards carry bibliographically correct entries in the form used in the *Union List of Serials* (for example, National Association of Referees in Bankruptcy. Journal), or headings which conform to the current issue cover (Journal of the National Association of Referees in Bankruptcy), or which follow the abbreviations in the *Index to Legal Periodicals* (Ref. Journ.)? In library school, you will learn that there is no inflexible rule, that the decision should be governed by the needs of the people who will use the file. If only the acquisitions staff is to use it, then the *Index to Legal Periodicals* form will be immaterial; if the circulation staff and the public use it to check on holdings and location, most of their citations will come from the *Index*, and it then makes some sense to arrange the file accordingly. Either class of users will be inconvenienced at times if your decision favors the other class. It is well to consider the fact that the acquisitions staff is less likely to be completely nonplussed by this sort of inconveni-

ence than the public. The acquisitions staff is more familiar with cross-references, and, in the event there is no room in the file itself for cross-references, is more apt to consult a list without grousing than is the public apt to consult the *Index's* table of abbreviations (with or without grousing).

If your serials record is not public, you probably will leave it to the circulation staff to translate abbreviations used in the *Index to Legal Periodicals* when the occasion arises, and choose for the acquisitions staff, between the bibliographically correct and the cover entry, on a basis of who is going to do the checking-in. Untrained and temporary people will have less trouble with the cover entry; untrained permanent people can learn the bibliographic rules and professionals have a liking for them.

Shall your serial record serve only as a record of receipt and holdings of current serials, or shall it include too payment and binding records? Here again, much depends on who is to make the entries. In libraries where the same person does both, the combination record is more efficient. If the work load and staff schedule are such that different people will be getting in each other's way trying to use the same file, a divided record may be preferable.

Highly recommended reading, even if serials trouble has not yet occupied much of your attention, is Osborn, Andrew D., *Serial Publications: Their Place and Treatment in Libraries*. Chicago, American Library Association, 1955. 309 p. It will give you ideas you did not know you needed.

*The Respect for Detail*. This, learned in library school, is almost a

matter of attitude, an attitude worth cultivating. If you are impatient of detail, then you are in the wrong profession; if you are merely careless about detail, you can learn. You can learn that writing things down is worth a volume of talking—when the demand for a particular book gets too great, you write an initialed and dated note to the order librarian; you do not stick your head in his door and discuss it with him while he is checking invoices. You learn to label things and date them; your lists of "Books in the Library Dealing with Bankruptcy" indicate what library and as-of-when, so that it will be of some use to others later. You stop overestimating the power of your memory and underestimating the value of miscellaneous information. For example, if you receive a letter saying that a requested item is out of print but will be sent when reprinted, you note the information and the source and the date on your order record, both to prevent a premature claim and to provide a citation of authority if (as often happens) you have to ask again. You learn to record decisions and to record them in the place where they will do the most good. For example, a decision to route a certain set of advance sheets after displacement to a certain person for clipping—perhaps you can remember the decision, if you do not make many, but your successor will not, so it should be written down. The person who shelves the bound volume is usually the one who discards advance sheets, so you record the decision on the bound volume check-in file and expect him who sends through each volume to send along a note of instruction. Otherwise,

unless everyone on your staff is a genius, some of those advance sheets will get thrown away, or the processor will keep popping in and saying, "What was it I was supposed to do with this?" You will learn to label the questions you ask of those who are as busy as you are, *e.g.*, you learn not to send to the catalog department, for cataloging, a 1957 report bearing the bare inquiry, "No record of 1956. Did we get it?" If you did not learn it in library school, the catalog department will be doing you an educational favor in sending your note back to you with a "yes" or "no" answer.

This habit of writing it down, and the widely accepted use of signals for deadline and claiming reminders, seems to make librarians more dependable than they otherwise might be. If one of them tells you he will do something by a particular time, it is probable that if he does not keep his promise it is not because it slipped his mind. The same results do not follow so universally from other types of professional training.

It would be pleasant to be able to observe that library training leaves one a satisfactory and reliable correspondent. We are not able to observe an established pattern. There are some lawyers, and some librarians, and some with neither or both kinds of training, who always can be depended upon to respond to civil inquiry, and there are some whose habits make a prompt answer as likely if you tack the letter to a tree outside your window. For this problem, there seems to be no solution. It is something you will not learn in library school.