

Cataloguing and Classification Education and Training in Library and Information Science/Studies Departments in South Africa¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature, level, status and challenges of teaching cataloguing and classification in LIS Schools in South Africa. This study informs cataloguing and classification education in South Africa, and perhaps elsewhere by providing baseline information for planning, teaching, marketing and recruiting graduates qualified in the two LIS teaching and research domain

1. Introduction and Background

Recent reports bemoan the lack of cataloguers in the country to support library information services. Library and information science (LIS) education is experiencing a period of rapid change (see Weigand 1999, Blankson-Hemans and Hibberd 2004, Gerolimos 2009, Ivey 2009), that affects cataloguing and classification in many ways. The most recent studies (Bowen-Chang and Hosier 2009, Blankson-Hemans and Hibberd 2004, Hill 2004, Shongwe and Ocholla 2011) confirm the lack of cataloguers in libraries and strongly support their education and supply by Information schools. The same has also been noted in South Africa and SA i-schools are increasingly challenged and encouraged to produce more cataloguers for the library market. Cataloguing should not be treated simplistically as this has occurred before by assigning it to the use of CIP, or creating an inventory of a collection or in current times capturing a record from OCLC, but more about enabling the students to analyse, synthesize and evaluate publications of different formarts for increased accessibility to information resources. Bowen-Chang and Hosein (2009) are right in pointing out that the infusion of technological innovations into libraries and the changing role of cataloguers have unearthed a new dimension in the sphere of

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cataloguing that influences its teaching as well. Thus, notes Hill (2004), cataloguing education has changed and the process of transformation is on-going and taking different dimensions. We concur with those (e.g. Cloete et al 2003, Bowen_Chang and Hosein 2009 Shongwe and Ocholla 2011) who are in favour of teaching cataloguing and classification for LIS education as an important component of organisation of knowledge. What we do not know is the challenges of supplying and teaching cataloguers in South Africa.

South Africa has 23 public universities, out of which 12 are with LIS Schools/Information/library schools with different names. Among them are University of Pretoria(UP)-Department of Information Science, University of Cape Town(UCT)- Department of Information and Library Science, University of Western Cape(UWC) – Department of Library and Information Science, University of Fort Hare(UFH) – Department of Library and Information Science, Durban University of Technology(DUT) – Department of Information and Corporate Management, University of KwaZulu Natal(UKZN) – Information Studies Programme, University of Zululand(UZ) – Department of Information Studies, University of South Africa(UNISA) – Department of Information Science, University of Johannesburg(UJ) – Department of Information and Knowledge Management, University of Stellenbosch(US) – Department of Information and Knowledge Management, University of Limpopo(UL) – Department of Information Studies and Walter Sisulu University of Science and Technology(WSU) – Department of Library and Information Science. Our survey, observed that Cataloguing and Classification is currently being taught/offered at UCT, UL, UKZN, UNISA, UFH, UWC, DUT and UZ. Others do not teach it at all (UJ and US) and suspended teaching (UP and WSU) because of lack of students in the relevant qualification programme (UP) and suspension of student intake in the LIS Department (WSU).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature, level, status and challenges of teaching cataloguing and classification in LIS Schools in South Africa. This study will answer the following research questions: Is it still necessary to teach cataloguing and classification in LIS schools? Who should study or be taught cataloguing and classification? Which Departments are teaching cataloguing and classification? What is the content of the curriculum in terms of modules and courses being taught? At what levels are the courses being offered? How are the courses being taught in terms of methods used? Who should teach the courses? What are the challenges and opportunities arising from teaching the course?

2. Methodology

Studies of this nature, more recently, have successfully used mixed research methods (see Ngulube 2010)). Therefore a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods through a survey and content analysis was used as been employed in recent related studies by Ocholla (2009) and Ndwandwe, Ocholla and Dube (2009) focusing on information ethics education in South Africa and Africa respectively, Chipeta, Jacobs and Mostert (2009) on information literacy education among others. All 12 LIS Departments in South Africa were targeted. Within these departments, the departments' heads and or lecturers teaching the module and the course outlines/study guides of cataloguing and classification modules/courses were targeted for information. Survey data were collected through questionnaires that were emailed to the respondents of the various LIS Departments. Content analysis was employed for curriculum and syllabus analysis. We were able to access most of the cataloguing and classification syllabus that was useful for confirming interview and questionnaire responses. The research instruments such as questionnaires and content analysis schedules used in the related studies refereed to earlier were largely replicated for this study with some modifications. Visitations to the various Departments and access to their curriculum and syllabus for the two courses was done during the year for duration of two months. Most of the target departments were visited and – in most cases- interviews were held with lecturers teaching the courses. In total we collected information from eight departments which indicated that they teach the courses as highlighted in the previous section.

3. Results

We present the findings in seven subheadings below

3.1. Is it still necessary to teach cataloguing and classification in LIS schools?

Responses were received from all the universities teaching cataloguing and classification who all agreed that cataloguing and classification should be taught for LIS education. They considered cataloguing and classification to be a core LIS course, the backbone of librarianship professional qualification, supports knowledge of library information and reference services, extremely useful for critical analysis and synthesis of a library collection by knowledge

domains/structure for effective information services and essential for organisation of knowledge in libraries.

3.2. Who should study or be taught cataloguing and classification?

This is an area that has raised different opinions. Some i-schools do not teach cataloguing and classification because it is irrelevant for their qualification programmes(UJ and US), in others where non professional LS qualifications are offered such as undergraduate qualifications/degrees in publishing, records management, Multimedia, Information Science(UP) it is not offered as well. However, there is a consensus that all future professional librarians should be taught cataloguing and classification with some few suggesting that all i-school graduates should be offered the courses(s) as it is relevant for information services of all kinds.

3.3. At what levels are the courses being offered?

We(Ocholla and Bothma 2007:158) categorise i-schools qualifications into five : the nature and type of qualification programme offered(e.g. bachelor's or Master's degree); the duration and credit requirements for a qualification(e.g. three or four years); the academic levels of the qualification(e.g. undergraduate or postgraduate); the mode of instruction(contact or distance); and the orientation of the i-school(e.g. vocational or general education). All these have a bearing on the levels and depth of cataloguing and classification teaching, learning and research. This study shows that cataloguing and classification is largely offered to senior students normally from second year of university study but mostly to 3rd and 4th years (where applicable). There are cases where the courses are offered from first year in a university though normally starting with basics. Where LIS education is offered mainly at postgraduate level such as at UCT and UKZN, the content is largely similar to that offered to undergraduate bachelors students as such students generally take this course for the first time in their career. This is so because one of the requirement for admission to such postgraduate programme is any bachelors degree.

3.4. What is the content of the curriculum in terms of modules, courses and content/units being taught?

It's noted that Cataloguing and classification courses are taught separately and bear a variety of course titles. Such titles - that we picked from the curriculum/syllabus from the LIS Schools that were available to us - included (no particular order): Information Retrieval 1, Information Retrieval 2, Information Retrieval 4; Cataloguing, Classification, Cataloguing and Classification, Organisation of Knowledge; Descriptive Cataloguing; Subject Analysis; Bibliographic

Control, Basic Descriptive Cataloguing and Classification; Subject Organization; Theory of Cataloguing and Classification; Practical Cataloguing; Computerized Cataloguing; Information Retrieval(Classification); Databases and Database Construction(Cataloguing); Basic Cataloguing; Basic Classification; Indexing and Thesaurus Construction; Special Cataloguing and Advanced Classification. In most cases these courses are taught for one semester, some offered at either basic/junior levels while others offered at advanced level. In the latter case there would be a prerequisite for having a basic level of knowledge in the course in order to enrol for a senior level (advanced) course. We observed that course titling could be influenced not only by content but increasingly by the need to attract and retain students. We noticed that there are cases where indexing, thesaurus construction and abstracting are taught within cataloguing and classification courses and vice versa.

The content of the cataloguing and classification courses fall within the following: AACR2; Abstracting; Authority control; Bibliographic control; Bibliographic description; Cataloguing: theory, process, tools, manual, computerised, online, etc.; Classification: theory, history, schemes, process, policies, practical, etc; DDC, Descriptive cataloguing; Dublin Core; Indexing; Information retrieval; LCSH; Library catalogues; MARC 21; Metadata; Subject organisation and access; Thesaurus construction.

3.5. How are the courses being taught in terms of methods used?

Cataloguing courses are largely taught through lectures, practical (manual). Other methods includes group discussions, practical (Online), workshops, seminars, self projects, practical assignment, case studies, quizzes. In most cases, except at UZ, UL, and UKZN (lecture and Library staff) where these causes are offered by Library Staff, the courses are taught by LIS lecturers/faculty.

3.6. What are the challenges and opportunities arising from teaching the course?

There are many challenges identified by the respondents. The following challenges were identified by at least one or more of the respondents. Students lack of general knowledge and analytical skills; some students need lot's of individual attention; not enough fieldwork where students can test the acquired knowledge; not enough cataloguing tools. Further, lack of current tools (the AACR 2R and DDC22), lack of computers and software programs for online cataloguing. One semester allocated for teaching Cataloguing or Classification is not adequate. It is difficult to get the students to order

the tools for practical work from the library. One of the Universities assessment rule/ regulations such as setting a Two hour paper (theory & practical) is limiting sufficient assessment of students taking the modules. The use of manual practical only in most cases limits acquisition of knowledge and skills for computerised/online cataloguing that is becoming increasingly common in our libraries. In some cases, the size (e.g. over 100 students in one university surveyed) of the class is too large to enable adequate teaching and learning. Other challenges were; students level of competency is low; not enough practical in cataloguing and classification; not enough cataloguing and classification tools (e.g. AACR2, DDC, LCSH); continuous training is needed for the lecturers to keep current; staffing problem as only 3 people in the department in one of the universities. It was stressed that classification, in particular, is a vvery challenging course that demands adequate preparation and students learning competency. Equally disturbing in some cases is the sstudent's lack of reading interest making learning more difficult. In addition expensive cataloguing tools; lack of mathematical skills; language/communication problem for students whose mother tongue is not English; Cognitive problems (not the best students attracted) and lack of general knowledge was noted.

3.7. What suggestions can be made for the future?

In order for cataloguing and classification teaching and learning to be improved, the challenges identified in 3.6 need intervention. Small group practical sessions are needed and this requires staffing and adequate time allocation in the timetable. Individual consultation time for lecturers to interact with students need to be regularised where that does not occur. Modern libraries are increasingly computerised demanding computerised/web based information processing and retrieval knowledge and skills for LIS graduates. We noted that only few i-schools enable access to web-based cataloguing as manual cataloguing is predominant. A strong blend of both computerized and manual cataloguing is recommended. There were also suggestions such as "Make copies of relevant pages (e.g. title page, table of contents, etc) for practical teaching in class"; - "Teach changes in the latest edition theoretically and where possible show them (because as lecturer I have the latest edition but cannot be given to students)". In addition, enable students to practise using the online university library system and through fieldwork experience. Other issues includes: cataloguing tools should be made available; size of classes should be limited/small; i-schools should be involved in student selection; more people should be employed. Also suggested was that

Lecturers should be IGBIS members and should attend to all current changes. Equally, it is important to use everyday life examples to relate to students better.

4. Discussions and Conclusions

The results show that all departments that responded teach cataloguing and classification but the degree, level, depth and breadth is not uniform as this depends on several variables such as levels of pitching the course, the objectives and the outcomes required. There are different opinions on whether cataloguing and classification should still be taught in LIS schools as noted earlier. This study supports the teaching of cataloguing and classification, because there is a need for such knowledge and skills for library and information services in the South Africa, it is core and essential for LIS education particularly for future librarians providing information services. Given some of the concerns raised as challenges, cataloguing and classification should be taught at senior levels of university education preferably from second year. In our opinion, students need to be introduced to the concepts and background of information science, librarianship, information literacy, information collection and information sources before they tackle cataloguing and classification at the very least. Titling of LIS courses under the changing information environment is becoming an art of itself and a compromised necessity for student attraction and retention. As noted in a recent tracer study of UZ graduates (Shongwe and Ocholla 2011) in the bachelor of Arts –Information Science programme that was aimed at the broad information service market, cataloguing and classification was initially removed for fear of losing students that would not necessarily work in libraries and who were obsessed with strong IT component in their IS education. However, when they graduated, most of them found jobs in libraries and lack of cataloguing and classification knowledge became a problem. We had to introduce the courses under “Information Retrieval 1(largely cataloguing) and Information Retrieval 2(largely classification) to enable them obtain the knowledge they might need in the market but at the same time not sending away the potential students of the qualification programme (we do however call the courses by their actual names in the four year librarianship qualification programmes we do offer). This is a dilemma faced by most LIS schools in South Africa as far as titling of courses is concern. However, ideally, course titling should reflect the content being taught and should not be overly swayed away by customer/student perceptions and attraction needs. We have noted more similarities than differences in the course content being offered in LIS Schools in the country. The differences exist in the

course objectives, levels of pitching, duration of the course, theoretical and practical knowledge of lecturers and the use of appropriate technology in the content and for content delivery. There is evidence showing efforts being made to achieve appropriate delivery. Regarding teaching methods, lectures and practicals are predominant as it should be. However, fieldwork/ experiential learning that are also essential for teaching and learning was not mentioned. Although the challenges identified for teaching cataloguing and classification are not necessarily new, they require intervention through short, medium and long term plans that has to be prepared urgently by I-schools in the country. Ivey (2009) concludes that 'although library science programs will need to train students in the new cataloguing tools, they must also prepare them to be effective teachers and researchers.' He then continues that "the cataloguer of the future must be visible, be a good communicator, and be capable of performing many different library functions"

We believe that this study will inform cataloguing and classification education in South Africa, and perhaps elsewhere by providing baseline information for planning, teaching, marketing and recruiting graduates qualified in the two research domains.

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