



ACTEA Librarians eNews #13, September 2006

The mission of ACTEA is to promote quality evangelical theological education in Africa by providing supporting services, facilitating academic recognition, and fostering continental and inter-continental cooperation.

Dear fellow Librarians and Information Workers,

Greetings to you all! It has been some time since we last spoke, but I hope this newsletter makes up for the long hiatus.

In this issue of Librarians eNews:

1. The Five Laws of Library Science How these apply to libraries and websites
2. How come Information Architects (IAs) are interested in library classification?
3. Text published in books freely available on the internet
4. Library management training course planned for Cameroon

1. The Five Laws of Library Science How these apply to libraries and websites




S.R. Ranganathan (1892-1972) was an inventor, educator, librarian (he was devoted to libraries), philosopher and mathematician. He was ahead of his century. Information Architects (IAs) and computer scientists incorporate many of his principles into their thinking when designing information retrieval systems.

Ranganathan's laws are the first and, to date, the only clear definition of a library's functions and responsibilities. The laws, though simple, require thinking about and contemplating, as well as experience, before the richness of their meaning surfaces. These laws summarize much of what the Information Architect community believes in (Steckel, M 2003 ³Ranganathan for IAs² <<http://www.boxesandarrows.com/>>). Who said that ³librarians are an old fashioned endangered species²? Not so! Get to know your field and you will never become dated.

The five laws:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his/her book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the reader
5. A library is a growing organism

In 1998 Michael Gorman (President, American Library Association, 2005-2006) suggested the following additions to Ranganathan's laws.

-  Libraries serve humanity
-  Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated
-  Use technology intelligently to enhance service

- Protect free access to knowledge
- Honour the past and create the future

In 2004, librarian Alireza Noruzi recommended applying Ranganathan's laws to the web (³Application of Ranganathan's Laws to the Web² www.webology.ir):

- Web resources are for use
- Every user his or her web resource
- Every web resource its user
- Save the time of the user
- The Web is a growing organism (and how!)

Virginia Chan (University of British Columbia School of Library and Archival Studies) has some interesting comments to make on Ranganathan's laws.

First Law: Books are for use

This law also applies to information technology (e.g., internet). Information is to be made readily available. No book is to be locked back rooms! Shelves must be accessible to multiple users at a time. There should be multiple computer stations for easy access by multiple users. Library location, opening hours, type of furniture and the way in which the library is kept are important, as is the attitude of the library staff. (Unhelpful staff attitudes can keep information ³hidden² as users are reluctant to ask questions of gruff librarians!)

Ways of limiting access are : Special Collections with limited access, storing materials off-site, restricting access through membership or fees, making electronic resources available via passwords - ³chaining books to the shelves².

Libraries are about service! Libraries must identify the benefits that their community can expect and then devise means of delivering these benefits.

This law applied to the internet means that websites must be designed for use. People must be able to interact with them, click around and have fun! (Steckel, M : 2003)

Second Law: Every reader his or her book

A tension exists between the cost of materials and the right of access to them. Ms Chan says ³Each acquisition should call to mind a potential user.² Libraries must acquire a body of literature which will benefit each reader. The library's mission must be reflected in its collection. Librarians need to know the materials, their uses, and how to use them. They must know their users and information sources, and they must actively help users find the information they need. The Reference Service is paramount. (Chan, Virginia: 2003).

If a library limits access, it must ensure it does not handicap those it was created to serve. Does your library limit access? Access policies also determine your interlibrary loan facilities, cooperative acquisitions, and consortia to which a library may belong.

Does your library provide alternative electronic formats? Who has access to these? Which format is most useful for the user, what are the issues surrounding access to printing and passwords?

Users of libraries use and value different means of communication in pursuit of knowledge and information. Libraries need to value all means of communicating and retrieving information.

In terms of Information Architects and websites one might speak of ³each piece of content its user² (Stekel,M : 2004). Content is added, for instance, to a website with specific users in mind. Users should be able to find the content they need. The website should not be cluttered with information no one wants!

Third Law: Every book its reader

Open access means that the collection can be examined with as much freedom as if it were the patron's private library. The patron should be sure that when he uses the library he will find certain kinds of materials that will meet his/her needs. The library needs to make the connection between user and materials as speedy and practical as possible. Ms Chan suggests a couple of ways of doing this:

- Distribution of acquisition lists
- New book displays
- Providing research guides
- Newsletters
- Book lists

A good classification system will help connect library users to materials, as it ensures uniformity of treatment of various materials on similar topics. Accurate arrangement of materials is important a misshelved book is lost!

Libraries today deal with electronic resources which are available ³within² the library but are neither owned nor shelved by the library. Technology supports the librarian's mission to assist in ready and free access to recorded knowledge and information and to do this effectively.

Fourth Law: Save the time of the reader

Policies, rules, procedures and systems should be examined with this aim in mind. Hours of operation must ensure appropriate, convenient access. The collection must be arranged in an inviting, clear, and obvious way. Efficient, thorough access to materials saves the user's time. (Chan : 2004)

Appropriate access must be provided for electronic resources. Multiple access points and printing resources must be made available. IP and networking technology should also be available. Easy and timely retrieval of items stored off-site is important.

Library handbooks, stack guides, library tours and research instruction sessions save the time of the user. There must be adequate staffing for reference (not possible for those of us in solo libraries!). There should be information and circulation desks as well as telephone/chat reference.

As regards websites, people need to quickly find what they are looking for, this is achieved when data is structured in a way that makes retrieval rapid. (In a library this is done via the cataloguing and classification systems.) It is important to understand the goals users are trying to achieve on the site. (Steckel,M : 2004).

Fifth Law: The library is a growing organism

We need to constantly adjust our outlook. Libraries grow and change. Collections increase and change, technology changes and budgets change. With growth there must also be flexibility in the management of collections, in the use of space and the nature of our programmes. The shift to electronic resources has had a major impact on library funding and budget management. Genius rests in simplicity.

As regards website design, designers need to plan and build with the expectation that sites and users will grow and change over time. Skill levels of Information Architects (and librarians!) also need to move forward.

Many profound insights can emerge from a consideration of these simple laws. If you want to see if your library is ³on track² sit for a while and consider your library within the framework of these fundamentals. Amazing to think they can be applied to everything from shelving books and ensuring that the floors of the library are clean to designing a new classification system or designing a sophisticated interactive library website!

2. How come Information Architects (IAs) are interested in library classification systems?

What, you ask, would a library classification system have to offer to the high-flying information technology community?

Taxonomies (systems for naming and organising things into groups that share similar characteristics sound familiar?) are, according to the Montague Institute Review (Nov 2002), the ³silver bullets that will help users find the needle in the intranet haystack, reduce friction in the electronic commerce, facilitate scientific research, and promote global collaboration². (www.montague.com). There have been many attempts to try and establish order and apply organization to the chaos of the internet. Good old library classification has something to offer! Witness the success of Google which built on much of the earlier discussion around taxonomy and facet analysis.

To understand what all the hype is about we need to delve into the worlds of enumerative, pre-coordinated classification (taxonomic) systems (e.g., Dewey Decimal Classification) and analytico-synthetic, post-coordinated, faceted systems (e.g. Ranganathan's Colon classification system). Sounds complicated and difficult, but it really isn't.

Dewey Decimal Classification, on the whole, tries to list all possible subject and assigns each a predetermined class number, and subsequently fits every book into existing pigeon-holes. There is room, however, in Dewey for limited use of the facility of ³building² or ³synthesizing² numbers from the existing pre-determined numbers.

For instance, the Dewey classification number for New Testament theology is:

$$225.8 + 23 = (225.8 \text{ special subject division} + 230 \text{ main subject class theology}) = 225.823$$

Precoordinated systems like Dewey are, however, rather limited when it comes to classifying new subjects. Have you personally experienced this problem? Do you find it difficult to classify new subjects which DDC does not mention or subjects which have many aspects or ³facets² to them?

Ranganathan's Colon Classification, which is analytico-synthetic and post coordinated, in contrast to DDC, has raised the interest of Information Architects in that it has the facility of being able to describe in a multifaceted way and the main classes are ³not set in stone² i.e., they can be manipulated or moved around. It is a descriptive classification system and the level of specificity that can be achieved is high.

For instance, the classification for a book entitled ³Research in the cure of the tuberculosis of lungs by x-ray conducted in India in 1950's is:

L,45,421:6;253;f.44¹N5

Restated in words this translates as:

Medicine,Lungs;Tuberculosis:Treatment;X-ray:Research.India,1950
(Glassel,A. 1998. ³Was Ranganathan a Yahoo!?² Internet Scout Project)

The flexibility as well as specificity allowed in arranging subjects according to a faceted classification like Colon Classification, means that it could be of great use to those trying to create order out of the ³chaos² of the internet. Colon Classification is accommodating of new subjects (especially multifaceted ones) and is admirably suited to use on the internet. Google has used ideas gleaned from discussion of taxonomy (classification systems and relational databases) to achieve its worldwide success.

The main point I want to put across is that when classifying one needs to think broader than just ³giving a book a number so that it can be placed on a shelf². In our little solo libraries (and larger ones, of course) we are engaged, on one level at least, in the same intellectual and fun task as those who are designing sophisticated retrieval systems for the internet. We need to try and understand some of the theory behind our everyday tasks in order to achieve a new level of enthusiasm. Information Architects are excited about the possibilities of facet analysis its origins lie squarely within the library science field. Be proud!

3. Text published in books freely available on the internet

Are you aware that much text from published books is freely available on the internet?

You can read Tyndale House (a well-known evangelical study centre in Cambridge, England) library books online. The Tyndale library catalogue lists any Biblical studies books worth reading. You can read a large proportion of them online (unfortunately you can't print!), thanks to Amazon and Google.

http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Tyndale/links_books.htm#OnlineBooks

You can read books online at TynCat or you can use Amazon and Google online books. To see the pages at Amazon you need to sign up with them, with a credit card (you will not be charged unless you buy the book!). Unfortunately, this does limit the use of Amazon's service to those with credit card access.

Google plans to scan 50,000,000 books. They have three categories of books:

- Out of copyright: 100% of the pages are scanned and readable
- Copyrighted with publisher's donation: 90% of pages are scanned/readable
- Copyrighted, with no permission from publisher: a few paragraphs are readable

Amazon sells books, Google wants to add material to their search engine. Why would publishers allow free copies of their books on the web? Free publicity and space on the web.

<https://Print.google.com/publisher/crossway>
<http://scholar.google.com>

Google plans to scan complete libraries, e.g., university libraries of the University of Michigan, Harvard, Stanford, Oxford (Bodleian) and the New York City Public Library.

Other interesting sites offering books online are:

- Project Guttenberg - For Biblical Studies there are a few significant collections of free books.
<http://textual.net/access.gutenberg#E>
- Powells Books General Christian eBooks
<http://www.powells.com/subsection/ChristianityeBooks.html>
- Questia General college books with a good Religion section
<http://www.questia.com/library/religion>
- EEBO nearly every English book from 1473-1700
<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>
- EBRARY many Cambridge University Press Books
<http://shop.ebrary.com>

The above information was gleaned from Dr David Instone-Brewer's newsletter. Dr Instone-Brewer is Senior Research Fellow in Rabbinics and the New Testament at Tyndale House, Cambridge.

4. Library management training course planned for Cameroon

Gordon Harris, Senior Information Officer at TearFund UK, and a good friend of ACTEA, has given us this announcement:

I will be delivering library management training in Yaounde, Cameroon on October 9-10 (Basic Course), Oct 11 (Advanced Course), then a seminar on knowledge management (Oct 12). The courses are being hosted by Navigators of Cameroon
<http://www.usimg.org/opps/countries/c.php?c=11>

For further information about this training opportunity contact the group's leader Peter Taniform, e-mail: tpngwa@gmail.com

Thanks, Gordon.

I hope this letter has given you all some food for thought. Please write in and tell us about your libraries and let us know what you are doing.

God bless,

David Fitz-Patrick

Librarian, Bible Institute of South Africa dfitz@bisa.org.za



This page last modified: 9/27/2006 11:36:27 AM

Copyright © 2002 - 2006
Theological Education in Africa in coordination with the
contributing organizations and individuals.

info@TheolEdAfrica.org