



Cataloguing and classification education and training in library and information science/studies in South Africa, Brazil and the USA

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Abstract:

This presentation is a report of the initial findings of a three-country study on cataloguing and classification education. Parallel questionnaires were sent to the heads of library schools and to cataloguing instructors in South Africa, Brazil, and the United States. Each questionnaire was adapted for its context primarily in terms of terminology and predominant practices of questionnaire research, leaving most of the questions the same resulting in largely compatible data. The initial findings are primarily from multiple choice questions. These data provide a basis for deciding which topics are most likely to merit future research. Responses provided data comparing what topics are included in cataloguing and classification curricula, the pedagogical approaches used in teaching cataloguing and classification, the educational programs and the levels at which these courses are offered, and the challenges and suggested remedies across the three countries. While there are many similarities they are stronger between South Africa and the US than between Brazil and either of the other two countries. The authors speculate that these differences may be due to the influence of different European traditions on the development of LIS education in each country. Other differences include the use and availability of technology and the L-word/I-

word controversy. Further results will be derived from analysis of correlations in the data and qualitative analysis of the questionnaires' many open-ended questions.

Introduction

Cataloguing and classification education (CCE) faces many challenges, even though professionals and educators agree that cataloguing and classification are at the core of library and information studies/science (LIS). They strongly support CCE as an important component of LIS education (Cloete et al., 2003; Bowen-Chang and Hosein, 2009; Shongwe and Ocholla, 2011, Ocholla and Ocholla, 2011). Nevertheless challenges persist and they vary across countries and cultures including the three countries represented in the study reported here: South Africa, Brazil, and the United States.

South Africa has 23 universities, 12 of which have LIS schools or information/ library schools with different names and only 8 offer CCE. In South Africa concerns include a shortage of cataloguers and circumstances that prevent full use of technology in CCE (Ocholla and Ocholla 2011).

Brazil's LIS education has seen successful efforts to cooperate within the country and across the Mercosul region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) as well as across information and documentation professions. All types of schools have strong lines of communication with each other resulting in mutual collaboration. Information or knowledge organization in the context of information science serves as the theoretical domain which furnishes a common theoretical and methodological basis for the applied domains including archival, library and museum sciences (Mason, 1990; Homulos, 1990; Smit, 1993, 2003).

In the United States CCE is affected by the "L-word" (library) versus "I-word" (information) confrontation. Library schools are rapidly joining the iSchool group that appears to de-emphasize and devalue cataloguing and classification (Miller et al, 2006). Miller et al examined the issue in official lists of competencies, discussions on electronic lists, a meta-analysis of existing studies of curricula, and current curricula as represented in schools' websites. They concluded that while the principles of cataloguing and classification have remained in the curricula of most of the schools, the hands-on application of those principles that practicing professionals often believe to be essential is limited.

To explore the issues of different experiences and their potential for each others' futures this research addresses four questions:

- a. Do cataloguing and classification curricula vary in different cultures/countries?
- b. If so what are the differences?
- c. Why do they differ?
- d. Is there sufficient similarity in conceptions, motivations, etc. that those who teach cataloguing and classification in a given country/culture can learn from their counterparts elsewhere? Or are they too contextually specific?

These questions are very wide-ranging so the study is of necessity also encompasses a variety of aspects of CCE.

Methodology

We distributed questionnaires to the heads of library schools and to cataloguing and classification instructors in South Africa, the United States, and Brazil. The questionnaire was developed in South Africa (Ocholla and Ocholla, 2011) based on earlier LIS studies (e.g. Ngulube, 2010; Ocholla, 2009; and Ndwandwe, Ocholla and Dube 2009). The substance of the two questionnaires was the same in all three countries, but changes were made primarily to clarify terminology (e.g. various terminology for instructors other than professors) and national conventions for ethics review. However, the questionnaires remain largely the same. The differences made each of them more effective in context, not different in content.

The questionnaires included multiple choice questions and open-ended questions, producing both quantitative and qualitative data. The data gathering techniques were also adjusted for their audiences. In South Africa, questionnaires were sent by email and follow up visits to the heads and cataloguing and classification instructors of all eight South African library schools that teach CCE with a 100% response rate. Findings were confirmed through interviews and course syllabi.

In Brazil, the questionnaires were distributed by email to the heads and cataloguing and classification instructors of all thirty eight Brazilian undergraduate library schools (the thirteen Brazilian graduate information science schools did not take part of the research since the professional librarians are educated by undergraduate schools and the graduate schools are devoted to forming professors and researches in information science) with a 61% response rate. Findings were confirmed through searches of the library schools' homepages.

In the US, email messages were sent to heads and cataloguing and classification instructors in all 53 schools that offer master's degrees accredited by the American Library Association inviting them to participate. The messages included links to the online questionnaires using the Qualtrics survey software. US academics are more likely to respond to a questionnaire if the data will be anonymous which is what they expect to see. This anonymity is supported by Qualtrics. The response rate was low, as is common for online questionnaires, at 20-40%. This presentation reports the findings that have meaningful results from the initial analysis.

Findings

The focus of this presentation is on basic quantitative data analysis, that is, the more obvious results of this study. This first level of analysis partially answers the research questions and points the way to deeper analysis of selected topics as is noted in the conclusion.

Before looking at the research questions it is important to establish whether or not the respondents to the questionnaires felt that the topic of study itself is relevant. Do they believe that it is *still necessary to teach cataloguing and classification in LIS schools?*

The South African respondents from the 8 LIS schools offering CCE considered cataloguing and classification to be a core LIS course; the backbone of librarianship's professional qualification; a course that supports knowledge of library information and reference services; extremely useful for the critical analysis and synthesis of a library collection by knowledge domains/ structures for effective information services; and essential for the organization of knowledge in libraries.

In Brazil, information processing, including classification, indexing, abstracting, cataloguing and information retrieval are believed to be the nucleus of LIS studies, and constitute an average 25% of the hours of the total library course (in accordance to the Mercosul LIS educational agreements). Agreement on this basic concept rests on the relationship between the role of information science as a theoretical domain supporting the practical information domains like archival science, library science as well as museology. All the respondents declared that classification and cataloguing teaching in library schools are “surely very important”, but also consider the need for changes and adaptations to fit new users’ needs including the need to furnish technological empowerment to librarians and users.

All but one of the US respondents agreed, although not whole-heartedly, that cataloguing and classification should be available to students. Most of them suggested it be an elective rather than a required course. Hsieh-Yee (2008) expresses this equivocation when she suggests that the traditional catalogue while trusted by users is not a first choice in finding information and is no longer cost-effective. She concludes, however, that theory and principles of knowledge organization are still necessary and need to be connected with technological knowledge.

Do cataloguing and classification curricula vary in different cultures/countries?

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

The quantitative data revealed a strong common core of concepts covered in CCE (see Table 1). Lussky (2008) analysed online employment advertisements for positions with a “cataloguing orientation” and found that demand was high for knowledge of traditional cataloguing standards, subject knowledge, and communication skills suited to working with people and data. Demands for experience and technological skills were modest.

Table 1: Course content

| | South Africa | Brazil | USA |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| AACR2R | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Abstracting | Yes | Yes | No |
| Authority control | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Bibliographic control | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cataloguing theory/history | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Cataloguing practice & manuals | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Classification theory | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Classification application, policies | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| DDC | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| LCC | | | Yes |

| | South Africa | Brazil | USA |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------|-----|
| UDC | | Yes | |
| Dublin Core, metadata | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Indexing | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Information retrieval | Yes | Yes | No |
| LCSH | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Library catalogues | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Online cataloguing, MARC | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Subject analysis | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Thesauri | Yes | Yes | Yes |

In South Africa 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;LCC; descriptive cataloguing; Dublin Core; indexing; information retrieval; LCSH; library catalogues; MARC 21; metadata; subject organisation and access; and thesaurus construction. These topics are virtually the same as those that Lussky (2008) found in her study of job advertisements for cataloguing and related positions, but Lussky found more emphasis on technology.

In Brazil, the content of CCE is very similar to that taught in South Africa. In terms of classification, DDC and UDC are taught in all the Library Schools and only a very few cover Library of Congress Classification (and under a historical approach) since this system is not used in Brazil. There is also an emphasis in special classification schemes and it was possible to observe a deep concern on the subject analysis processes, with a strong French (Coyaud, Gardin) and English (CRG) influence.

Similar content is covered by courses in the US with the addition of Library of Congress Classification. In many cases theory is covered first in a prerequisite to cataloguing and classification which is an overview of information organization. Generally, there is a greater technological emphasis in the coverage described by US instructors. Half of the instructors used a single text book which will have a homogenizing effect on course content. The other half were divided between only two other texts.

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

The basic data show commonalities of pedagogical approach (see Table 2 for tracking commonalities and differences). The differences are largely attributed to differences in access to technology.

In South Africa cataloguing courses are taught mainly through lectures and manual exercises. Other methods include group discussions, practical and limited online assignments, workshops, seminars, projects, case studies, and quizzes. In Brazil, lectures, exercises and discussions based on previous readings are the most common teaching strategies....US courses are also taught predominantly with lectures and exercises, but the exercises are more likely to be online. Small group work is also common. Nearly half of respondents taught onsite face-to-face but as many taught online or in some other distance format in which the instructor and student interacted through technology.

If so what are the differences?

Who should study or be taught cataloguing and classification?

At what levels are the courses being offered?

Who are the students? In South Africa some iSchools, teaching vocational or general education, do not teach cataloguing and classification because they deem it irrelevant to their programs. Non-professional librarianship programs also omit cataloguing and classification. However, future professional librarians are expected to take the course. Generally, cataloguing and classification courses are taught in professional library schools to third and fourth year students and/or master's students.

In Brazil all LIS undergraduate schools (as well as the other Mercosul schools) have classification and cataloguing as mandatory disciplines in their curricula. On the other hand, the information science graduate schools (only Brazil has graduate schools in the information domain in the Mercosul area) do not focus their studies in classification and cataloguing themselves, but do consider them as a part of a broader theoretical domain called information organization or even knowledge organization. In this sense, while undergraduate library schools are mostly concerned with classification and cataloguing as professional library practices, information science graduate schools are basically concerned with the theoretical basis of classification and cataloguing as parts of the IS branch of so called information organization.

The US responses show yet another different picture. Most library schools teach cataloguing and classification only at the master's level (although two reported it at both undergraduate and master's). Because the master's is the basic professional degree in the US and few master's students have an undergraduate degree in LIS, the levels are different than in South Africa. Additionally, while some iSchools may not teach cataloguing and classification or may offer it only as a specialized elective because they view cataloguing in particular as not relevant beyond a library context. US iSchools describe themselves as "interested in the relationship between information, people and technology" (iSchools 2012) and those that are library schools are generally regarded as the more elite library schools with PhD programs and plentiful external research funding and not 'limited' to libraries or librarians.

Is there sufficient similarity in conceptions, motivations, etc. that those who teach cataloguing and classification in a given country/culture can learn from their counterparts elsewhere? Or are they too contextually specific?

Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarize the commonalities and distinctions among the library schools in South Africa, Brazil, and the US when it comes to cataloguing and classification courses. Similarities include the course content, and teaching methods to a large extent.

Table 2: Commonalities and differences

| | South Africa | Brazil | USA |
|--|--|---|---|
| Need for CCE | Yes | Yes | Equivocal yes |
| Course content – see Table 1 for details | Theory & established standards | Theory & established standards | As South Africa except theory may be in earlier overview course |
| Methods | Lecture & exercises (manual and limited online) | Lecture, exercises and discussions based on previous readings | As South Africa + influence of online |
| Programs | In professional library programs | | May be elective for specialists |
| Levels | 3 rd -4 th year undergraduate and master's | 2 nd -4 th year undergraduate (master's are more concerned with the theory of information organization) | Master's and occasionally undergraduate |

Differences are more conspicuous. South Africa is faced with large classes of students, staffing problems or lack of instructors, a need for more cataloguing /classification tools and access to technology for teaching CCE in its library schools. Digital and manual tools for students to use in the course are expensive and scarce. The L-word/I-word dichotomy as it is manifested in South Africa has had an effect on CCE. For example, the Bachelor of Arts – Information Science programme at the University of Zululand is aimed at the broad information service market so cataloguing and classification was initially removed for fear of losing students focused on information technology. However, they found jobs in libraries where this gap in their education became a problem (Shongwe and Ocholla, 2011).

With Brazil's development of the IS graduate schools, many scientific venues were created like the Brazilian Association of Information Science Research and the Brazilian Chapter of ISKO. This means that in Brazil, the L-world of LIS undergraduate schools and the I-world of the IS graduate schools have a strong dialogue and a mutual collaboration. Such a situation has promoted a “revival” of classification and cataloguing studies, especially with the challenges coming from digital information, new models of information organizations and new forms of information retrieval.

The US is unique in having professional education for librarians at the master's level usually with no related undergraduate. As Ocholla and Ocholla (2011) note, level is one of the factors that “have a bearing on the levels and depth of cataloguing and classification teaching, learning and research.” The other factor of difference in the US context is the L-word/I-word friction. Different from the South African experience, the iSchool movement, which began in the US, has 36 members, 23 in the US and 13 in other countries. It has had a major impact on the relationship between library schools and professional librarians (Miller et al, 2006) and

has fanned the L/I rhetoric. Cataloguing and classification expertise is an area in which some professionals suspect library schools of abandoning librarianship for the cachet of being iSchools.

What are the challenges arising from teaching the course?

In spite of some significant contextual differences, the challenges of CCE are surprisingly similar (see Table 3).

Table 3: Challenges in teaching CCE

| | South Africa | Brazil | USA |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|
| Student lack of general knowledge | Yes | | |
| Students lack of critical thinking | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| No time for or interest in theory | | | Yes |
| Students are unprepared | Yes | | Yes |
| Students need individual attention | Yes | | Yes |
| Language concerns | Yes, first language may not be English which is the language of instruction | Yes, there is a “need of more instructional material in Portuguese | |
| Time allotted not enough | Yes | | Yes |
| Not enough tools | Yes | Yes | |
| Not enough online work | Yes | Yes | |
| Students lack interest | Yes, in reading materials | | Yes, in the course content |
| Instructors staying up-to-date | Yes | Yes | |
| Challenging content | Yes, especially classification | Yes, especially classification and applying rules | Yes, especially applying rules |

| | South Africa | Brazil | USA |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| University rules & regulations | Yes, required exam regulations | Yes, sometimes they act in conflict with the information market needs | |
| Content is dull | | | Yes, even an instructor found it dull |

Challenges encountered by instructors teaching cataloguing and classification in South Africa included issues with many students who lack preparation, general knowledge and critical thinking skills. These students require individual attention. Most of the same issues arise in Brazil and the USA, except that Brazil has fewer challenges involving students. Another commonality between South Africa and the USA is the difficulty of fitting cataloguing and classification into a course of the standard length. Further, some instructors find the course content itself is problematic for students in terms of being difficult or dull.

What suggestions can be made for the future?

Meeting the challenges is necessary for effective CCE. Some of the suggestions are double-edged. For example, more time spent bringing individual students to the level of others in a class can have staffing implications. Replacing AACR2 with RDA can leave students ignorant of AACR2 making it difficult to deal with existing catalogue records. Table 4 draws on the open-ended responses to provide a sample of the suggestions.

Table 4: Suggestions for overcoming challenges

| | South Africa | Brazil | USA |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Small group work | | Yes | Yes |
| Individual consultation | | Yes | Yes |
| Adequate staffing | For groups and individuals | | |
| Constant curricular evaluation and improvement | | Yes | |
| More practical exercises | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| More case studies | | Yes | |
| More computer resources | A priority | Yes | |
| More technical visits | | Yes | |
| Patience | | | Yes, mentioned by several |
| More emphasis on RDA | | Yes | |
| Replace AACR2 with RDA | Yes, with lots of questions | Yes | Yes, with only a brief backward glance |
| Public funding for instructional material | | Yes, in Portuguese | |
| Retirement | | | Yes, solution of two responses for addressing RDA |

Hsieh-Yee (2008) suggests three goals for CCE: 1) increasing awareness and appreciation of information organization, particularly cataloguing; 2) educating future cataloguers and metadata specialists; and 3) developing future leaders in the area of cataloguing.

Exploration of these same questions in relation to other countries may be useful. For example, Harvey and Reynolds (2006) describe the context of CCE in Australia in terms very similar to the L-word/I-word issues in the US and like Hill and Inter (2002) in the US, Harvey and Reynolds also note the responsibility of employers in the hands-on training of cataloguers in Australia.

Respondents in South Africa and the US are rapidly incorporating *Resource Description & Access* (RDA) into their courses as the new set of cataloguing rules. Most are setting aside the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules 2nd ed* (AACR2), not surprisingly given the time constraints of university terms and the difficulty of covering all of the key standards and practices in cataloguing and classification. Several indicated a focus on *Functional*

Requirements for Bibliographic Description (FRBR) and *Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD)* which are conceptual frameworks rather than rules. This shift of focus could take CCE further from practice and further toward theory. Handling RDA seems likely to be a continuing question. Some US respondents left concrete measures behind and suggested that student concerns be countered with patience and, in one case, “handholding.” Two US respondents plan to cope with introducing RDA by retiring before it has to be done – not an option open to everyone.

Conclusions

The findings of the initial data analysis reported here reveal numerous areas that merit further scrutiny. Some are treated in this presentation including the interests and capabilities of students; sufficient and current staffing; linking theory and practice; the different impacts of technology in different countries and cultures; and the different yet similar manifestations of the L-word/I-word controversy. Other topics were too complex to include in this brief overview, particularly the delicate issue of instructors from the field and from the faculty and the language used in representing CCE (notably course titles). The researchers look forward to delving deeper into these topics as well as the broader discourses that characterize the local/global experience of CCE in South Africa, Brazil, and the US and how they can be mutually supportive in recognizing the importance of, teaching future professionals in, and fostering leadership for cataloguing and classification.

An unexpected finding is that CCE in South Africa and CCE in the US appear to be more similar to each other than to CCE in Brazil. It would be worthwhile to explore how much this difference grows from the different outside influences on each country’s LIS education. South African LIS education was originally largely patterned on a British model. The US had its own pioneers like Dewey and Cutter but their predecessors such as Panizzi brought a mainly British influence. British research such as the Cranfield studies also heavily influenced US practice.

In contrast, LIS in Brazil was built under a merging of different foreign influences (During the seventies and the eighties, the Brazilian Government generously funded sending professors abroad for getting their PhDs. They went to France, Canada (both British and French traditions), Spain, the UK and the USA. Those professors formed a Brazilian generation of LIS professors and researchers whose scientific profile is a melting pot of different foreign influences like Brazilian culture itself. One example for this is the common use of the expression ‘documentary analysis’ for subject analysis as well as ‘documentary languages’ for indexing languages, which reflects both the French and Spanish influence, the studies on indexing in Archival Science as well as of Diplomats in LIS (which reflects the Canadian influence), the ever growing research in classification theory (under a British influence). Extensive information retrieval research as well as the widespread use and teaching of DDC reflects a strong American influence.

Future research might combine historical traces of influence with differences manifested today to give us a much clearer picture of why we do what we do in CCE and beyond.

In spite of different influences, a preliminary conclusion to this study is that there are enough similarities to form a common foundation for the fruitful exchange of ideas. However, deeper analysis is needed to determine whether the commonalities offer common solutions to common problems leaving little to learn from each other; or, do the commonalities grow out

of different contexts to lead to different solutions. Such a circumstance would indicate potential for constructive exchange of ideas to address our common problems.

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