Title
The Relationship Between Human Librarians and Library Systems

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The Relationship Between Human Librarians and Library Systems

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The Ideal Librarian

The ideal librarian knows the collection well and the understands the readers. In the 17th and 18th centuries libraries were small. The collection was arranged in a “natural” order. Little attention to catalogs. A scholar librarian mediated the collection for the few readers. The best quality service is in small libraries, e.g. special libraries, small public libraries, school libraries.

Two design problems with human librarians:


2. Risk of failure: Librarian leaves, dies, has memory problems.

With increasing knowledge, publication, and readers by 1800 a crisis was developing in libraries.
An event 200 years ago

Secularisation: In Bavaria 200 monasteries closed; 200 libraries transferred to the royal library. Chaos.

Ex-monk Martin Schrettinger: We need a library system: Every volume a unique ID and an specific shelf location. Shelf arrangement not important, but simple subject arrangement is convenient. Good catalog, preferably with a subject index, links to volume’s shelf location.

Reduce dependence on the human librarian! Self service!

Schrettinger wrote a book in 1808 to explain. It began:

“A ‘library’ is a large collection of books whose organization enables every knowledge seeker to use every treatise it contains without unnecessary delay according to his needs.”
Schrettinger invented the phrase “library science” to describe his ideas. Melvyl Dewey and others developed the same ideas.
Library Systems Represent the Librarian

1. Library systems provide an alternative, a replacement, for the librarian.

2. Catalog records represent what the librarian believes about the book. So the catalog represents what the librarian believes about the collection.

Not an exact replacement: The catalog remembers better, but does not include all that the librarian knows, e.g. superseded by a better, newer book.

3. Catalog theory is incomplete: Usual focus is on efficiency and effectiveness as description of documents. Could theorize how catalogs (or bibliographies) represent the beliefs and culture of the compiler, e.g. Sanford Berman. *Prejudices and antipathies: A tract concerning the LC Subject Heads concerning people.* 1971.
Classic Library Access Design

(1) The catalog is a self-service alternative to the librarian’s direct mediating between readers and the collection.

(2) Library catalogs record locally owned documents; union catalogs include books owned by other libraries.

(3) A library catalog is a specialized form of bibliography: Library catalogs record locations of copies, bibliographies do not.

(4) Catalogs record publishers' units (whole books; periodical titles), not necessarily intellectual or literary units.

(5) Subject catalogs are an acceptable substitute for subject arrangement on open shelves;

(6) Standardization brings beneficial cost-effective uniformity for everyone.

This combination is becoming obsolete and/or questionable.
Technology shapes implementation: Three ideal types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library records</th>
<th>Library resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper library</td>
<td>Paper &amp; card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automated library</td>
<td>Computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital / Electronic</td>
<td>Computer</td>
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Readers now use both electronic and paper resources. Networks make remote digital resources accessible. All existing libraries a some combination of these three. The “Classic Library Access Design” based on the Paper Library.
Paper and Electronic library environments

In a paper environment what is collected determines what is accessible. The *local collection* effectively defines service in an integrated way on two criteria:

1. **Demand:** Providing what readers’ request; and
2. **Need:** Privileging what the librarian considers good for readers.

Union catalogs extend access, but not convenient.

In an electronic environment collecting and access diverge:

1. **Physical access** is an engineering problem.
2. **Selecting which resources to privilege** remains important but now more wholesale than retail. Licenses as temporary ownership.
3. **Local collection and union catalogs** less and less important because readers are interested in access not ownership.
Open Access

University of California requires open access to professors’ articles as a condition of employment.

Open access offers access without ownership. Library catalogs show what is owned, not what is accessible.

Example 1

http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/docam/

If my library paid for it, it could cataloged, discoverable, and accessible through the catalog. But access is free. The library does not buy it. It is not included in the catalog.

The logic is clear, the result unhelpful.
Open access Example 2

- My personal copy is lost.
- Cannot buy new one. Out of print.
- Library catalog shows a copy in storage.
- But does not have a link to open access at http://books.openedition.org/editionscnrs/8555
Library Access Design: Locations

Library catalogs record locations of copies, bibliographies don’t.

-- Uneconomical to provide locations in bibliographies in a paper environment because of cost: one location of very little use; many locations impractical and soon out-of-date.

-- This rationale no longer valid with networked access: One link to one location is enough for everybody.

-- Get the best of both bibliography and catalog!

-- Medline on Melvyl service: Bibliography as front-end to catalog.

-- OCLC Worldcat identifies holding libraries. Could access call number. What if a link to an accessible digital copy?
Library Access Design:  What Units?

Catalogs record publishers' units (whole books; periodical titles). Publishers’ units not = intellectual units or literary units.
-- Not a cataloging principle.
-- Cataloging rules provides for “analytical entries”.
-- Too expensive for individual libraries.

Example of standard record and associated analytical record:

*Catalogue of the Library of the Peabody Institute of the City of Baltimore.* Baltimore, 1887.


**Hannah**, Rev John, 1818-. Biographical notices of Bp. Henry **King**. 79 pp. [In] (King, H. *Poems and psalms*, p. 1)
Library Access Design: Records as Substitutes

Subject catalogs are an acceptable substitute for subject arrangement on open shelves.

-- Necessarily so with electronic documents.

-- Visualization possibilities.
Library Access Design: Uniformity

Standardization brings beneficial cost-effective uniformity for everybody.
-- But no reader is “everybody”!
-- For cultural and language reasons, multiple diverse catalogs to same collection desirable. Bibliographies could be used. Vocabulary mapping. Search term recommender services.
Design Relevant to Networked Environment

(1) Readers want access not verification of ownership.

(2) Dissolve distinction between catalog and bibliography. Obsolete! Bibliographies should include links to documents.

(3) Catalogs and bibliographies should both include everything accessible through ownership, license, and open access.

(4) Catalogs record publishers' units (whole books; periodical titles), include intellectual & literary units within publishers’ units. And also other small or neglected genres” working notes, blogs, self-published works, . . .
Library Service in Japan 1


Library Service in Japan 2

Strong Californian influence in Allied library initiative during occupation.

Philip Keeney’s plan *Unified Library Service for Japan* (1946) based on the California County Library System introduced c. 1910 by Stanley Gillis, a railway manager who became charismatic State Librarian. *Public library service systems as an efficient engine for social progress!*

Anticommunism and Cold War politics became a higher priority for the Occupation than cultural reform.

Stanley Gillis, 1857-1917
Danger: Library Systems are not Personal Enough

One criticism of Schrettinger’s system: Loss of expert *personal* interpretation and advice.


Denounces “pure librarianship, the impartial custodianship and administration of books” (p. 76).

“Arranging a lecture program or managing a forum takes time that should be devoted to the administration of the book collections” (p 48).

Learning to learn.

Pathfinders, guides.

Wikipedia as a bibliography.
Design of Library Systems

Based on technology, on users, on characteristics of documents. I suggest an additional design consideration:

Design Library Systems to be more like the Ideal Librarian.

And, “the collection” has changed.

Thank-you!

More and most sources listed in:

http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9gs9p655