

CATALOGUING RULES IN GHANA: A COUNTRY REPORT

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Balme Library

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Libraries in Ghana

Library consciousness begun in 1944 in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana) when the British Council established the first Lending Library in Accra (Pitcher, 1970).

The year 1950 saw the coming into being of the Gold Coast Library Board. The Ordinance for its establishment was passed in 1949. The Ordinance empowered the Gold Coast Library Board to establish, equip, manage and maintain libraries in the Gold Coast. With time, branch libraries were opened in other cities and towns of the country, like Kumasi, Cape Coast, Sekondi, Tamale, Ho and Kpandu. Children's libraries were also opened in Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi. The 1950s marked the period of serious development of libraries in the Gold Coast. This developmental trend continued in later years leading to the present structure of the Ghana Library Board with libraries spread throughout the country.

University library development started in the Gold Coast with the establishment of the University College of the Gold Coast Library now Balme Library, University of Ghana, in October, 1948. This was followed quite closely by the Kumasi

College Library in 1951 (now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Library). The University College of Cape Coast Library (now University of Cape Coast Library) was established much later in 1962. Currently there are several university libraries from both public and private universities in Ghana.

A number of special libraries sprung up in the Gold Coast between 1944 and 1969 (Pitcher, 1970). The earliest of these were invariably government department collections. Some of these early ones being the Education Department Library, the Library of the Secretary of Native Affairs (later given to the Balme Library), and the Library of the Department of Agriculture. With the establishment of research centres and the growth of industry, several special libraries were set up to provide relevant literature to meet the needs of the specialists working in these areas. Corporations, commercial institutions and banks were not left behind in the establishment of libraries. With time the number of special libraries increased steadily.

Library Education in Ghana

The first Library Training School to be established in Ghana was at Achimota College in 1944. The school was set up as a joint venture by the three British West African colonies (Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria) with students from these colonies forming the first batch of trainees. At the end of the course in June, 1945, the students sat for the Entrance Examination of the Library

Association of England which became the first professional examination. There were no jobs for those trained so the school wound up after the first batch had finished the course. This ended the first experiment in organized training of librarians in the Gold Coast.

In 1961, another attempt at library education was initiated and the Ghana Library School was formally established in Accra by the Ghana Library Board. In October, 1965, the library school was moved to the University of Ghana and was renamed the Department of Library Studies (Akussah, 2003). The mandate of the new department was to run a programme of professional library education at university level that would satisfy Ghanaian conditions and to provide trained manpower for the gradually developing national library service.

In 2001, the Department of Library Studies which had evolved over the years in terms of courses being run was re-designated the Department of Information Studies. It is the only institution in Ghana offering courses in library and archival studies. There are sub-degree, undergraduate and post-graduate programmes on offer in the department.

The cataloguing courses at both the sub-degree and post-graduate levels teach AACR2R as part of the courses. The graduates from this department with cataloguing qualification are absorbed by the public, special, school and academic libraries in Ghana.

Cataloguing and Cataloguing Codes

Some major codes have had tremendous impact on cataloguing practice in Ghana. These are the AA Code or Joint Code or the 1908 code and the AACRs. The first Code which was widely adopted for cataloguing purposes in Ghana was the 1908 Code. The Gold Coast, being a British colony was influenced by the British in the choice of the Code. The British edition of the AA or the 1908 Code (cataloguing Rules, Author and Title entries) was used when libraries were being established in the Gold Coast.

The AACR1, however, replaced the AA Code in Ghana when it was published in 1967. All libraries used the British text of AACR1.

In 1981 the AACR2 was adopted in Ghana and from that time, the country has been adopting the subsequent revisions that have been issued. This has been possible because the only institution offering library education in Ghana has been teaching cataloguing based on the AACRs and the Ghana Library Association has been promoting the use of the AACRs.

Bibliographic descriptions, headings or choice of access points are done according to AACR2R.

The language of the country for cataloguing purposes is English. English is the lingua franca in Ghana and descriptive cataloguing is done in English. However, Ghana has a number of government sponsored local languages like Akan, Ga, Ewe, Dagbani, Dagaare, Dangbe, Gonja, Kasem and Nzema and over twenty-six non-government sponsored local languages.

Some of the tools used in cataloguing in Ghana are AACR2R – used by all libraries; Dewey Decimal Classification and Sears list of subject headings used mostly by public and school libraries; LC and LCSH used mostly by academic libraries; and Universal Decimal Classification used mostly by special libraries.

Machine Readable Cataloguing and Library Management System

The Public Universities in Ghana are blazing the trail in the use of Library Management Systems. The library management systems being used in Ghana are Millennium – University of Ghana library service; Alexandria – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa and University for Development Studies; and the Virtual Library Management System - University of Education, Winneba. The private universities are now trying to follow the example of the public university libraries.

Library Consortia

The only library consortium in Ghana is known as the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH) with a membership of more than

fourteen libraries with new members still joining. This consortium was established in 2004. Its main focus is the cooperative acquisition of e-resources to be used by the members. It also trains library personnel in modern information provision to support teaching, learning, research and knowledge dissemination.

Problems and Peculiarities

The use of AACR2R designed in the West to be used by developing countries has its own problems. The use of titles of nobility, office, etc. in Ghana is transcribed in the local languages when cataloguing because there is no English translation or rendition that can suit each case. For example: Nii Amugi II a chief in Accra will be Amugi II, Ga Mantse; Otumfuo Sir Osei Agyemang Premph II who was an Ashanti King will have the heading – Premph II, Sir Osei Agyemang, Asantehene. In both cases Ga Mantse and Asantehene are the titles of nobility and the rendition is in the local languages of Ga and Akan respectively.

Conclusion

The Ghana Library Association is the driving force behind the promotion and use of standards in librarianship in Ghana. The accreditation of members before they practice has also started on a very serious note. The Association is doing all it can to improve librarianship in Ghana.

References

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