

Newspaper Indexing in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi

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Abstract

The subject areas in which newspaper indexing services are provided in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) Library, Bauchi, Nigeria are given. The control of descriptors or terms used in newspaper indexing is described, as well as newspaper indexing procedures which include nineteen guidelines. Sample entries of newspaper indexes in the University Library are included. The importance of newspapers and their use in libraries are discussed.

Introduction

Indexing services in Nigeria are provided in specialised libraries and information centres. For such services to be truly useful, they must be geared to the subject orientation of the parent institutions of libraries offering them. According to Alegbeleye, "An awareness of the research orientation of the users of newspapers is a contributory factor to the success of the newspaper indexing project. It is necessary for the librarian or archivist to be aware of the information needs of the actual and potential users of the newspapers".

For a university library like that of the ATBU, the current and future teaching and research needs of the mother institution have to be given serious consideration in providing newspaper indexing services. To this end, agriculture, economics, education, librarianship, medicine, science and technology have been given prominence in the newspaper indexing services offered in ATBU Library. As the Library is primarily concerned with what is happening close at hand, materials on Bauchi State in which ATBU is located are indexed. Similarly, as political awareness is very important for an academic community, materials on politics are also indexed.

Control of Descriptors or Terms

For descriptors to be meaningful, they must be controlled. Control is achieved in ATBU Library by translating the descriptors into an indexing language or thesaurus. In this case, the Library of Congress Subject Headings list is used. Where a suitable heading is not available in this list, say one that has to do with something that is uniquely Nigerian, a term is derived and added to the list.

By and large, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd ed. (AACR2) and the Library of Congress Subject Headings list are used in establishing entries. The aim is to achieve a measure of standardization in this regard. Peculiarly Nigerian needs are taken care of by the Library's in-house Subject Headings.

Newspaper Indexing Procedure in the Library

Smith described a simplified procedure for indexing local newspapers in small libraries. In this, Smith includes a brief discussion of his twenty-three guidelines and rules for subject heading selection and use, indexing and filing. The ATBU Library procedure for newspaper indexing are as follows:

- (i) All the newspapers are scanned to locate articles on agriculture, Bauchi State (materials on Bauchi State), economics, education, librarianship, medicine, politics, science and technology.
- (ii) Names by which individuals and corporate bodies are well-known nationally and internationally are used. For instance, BABANGIDA, Ibrahim instead of IBB (Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida). Cross references are made from names less often used or less well-known to the names commonly used and well-known, as:

IBB (Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida)

See BABANGIDA, Ibrahim

(iii) Full names are preferred to acronyms and abbreviations. for instance, National Electric Power Authority instead of NEPA. However, cross-references are made from the acronyms or abbreviations to full names as:

NEPA

See NATIONAL ELECTRIC POWER
AUTHORITY

The use of full names in this context avoids the confusion caused when an acronym or abbreviation is used more than once. For instance NEC can stand for National Certificate of Education or National Council on Education.

(iv) Titles such as Sir, chief, Major and Rev. are ignored because of their low retrieval potential.

(v) Titles of articles in newspapers are entered.

(vi) Names of newspapers are written out in full as Daily Times, New Nigerian and The Standard.

(vii) Volume is abbreviated as vol.

(viii) Number is written as No.

(ix) Days of the week are abbreviated as follows:

Monday - Mon.

Tuesday - Tues.

Wednesday - Wed. etc.

(x) Months of the year are indicated as follows:

January - Jan.

February - Feb.

March - Mar.

April - Apr. etc.

(xi) Page is abbreviated as p.

(xii) Descriptors are translated into an indexing language or thesaurus by first using the Library of Congress Subject Headings list and the ABTU Library in-house Subject Headings. Ideally tasks should be carried out by a professional librarian with an interest and some experience in newspaper indexing.

(xiii) Headings are derived for subjects not found in the Library of Congress subject Headings list or the in-house list. Examples are "privatisation" and "traditional medical care". These are used to update the in-house list.

(xiv) Chosen descriptors are entered at the top cards containing other information about the article.

(xv) Cross-reference is made from a subject not used but found in the article to that used as the main subject heading of the article, as:

RADIATION

See PUBLIC HEALTH.

(xvi) Syndetic entry is made from one related subject to another as and when necessary, for instance:

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

See also BURUKUTU

BURUKUTU

See also ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

(xvii) Cards are cross-checked for their adequacy and consistency. This work is done by a professional librarian.

(xviii) Entries are filed in alphabetical order by subject.

(xix) Sample entries are as follows:

AGRICULTURE

ANAMBRA RIVER BASIN AUTHORITY

IHEANACHO, Loveday. Anambra Rive

Basin Authority gets rice destoning plant.

New Nigeria. No. 5,464,

Mon. 10, Oct. 1983, p.2.

CO-OPERATIVES

AKINFEMIWA, Akinayo. Reasons for intensification of agric. co-cooperative societies.

Business Times. Vol. 22, No.22,

Mon. 30, May, 1983, p.13.

LIBRARIANSHIP

CO-OPERATION

OSHAGBEMI, O. H. Inter-Library co-operation in Nigeria.

Nigerian Herald. Vol. Xi, No. 3, 169,

Fri. 28, Oct. 1983, p.7.

DOCUMENTATION

IBRAHIM, M. B. Need for national documentation centre.

National Concord. Vol. 4, No. 1,085,

Fri. 19, Aug. 1983, p.3.

Vierra and Trice described the development and operation of the local newspaper indexing project at the Napa City Council Library in California. An indexers manual was developed to provide a portable authority file and to instruct indexers on indexing principles, scope rules and difficult components. In the case of the ATBU Library, a similar newspaper indexing manual was drawn up. The purpose in having such a manual is to ensure stadardisation in the library's newspaper indexing activities.

Importance of Newspapers

Komorou observed that in the past decade the value of newspapers as source of information on the history of a nation is widely recognised. Alegbeleye also remarked, "Newspapers are an important source of local and international happenings. The importance of newspapers comes only after that of the radio and the television".

Adeyemi feels that in developing countries, where monographic and journal publications are reduced, newspapers serve as primary sources of information for the researcher and for the general education of the citizenry. Hence the provision of newspaper indexing can be thought of as a step forward in the services with which ATBU Library furnishes its patrons.

The indexes have become very useful as the University is growing and students are working on occasional essays, term papers and final year essays. The lecturers too are finding the indexes valuable in their work.

Use of Newspapers in Libraries

In September 1981, the National Library of Canada made a survey on the use of newspapers in Canadian libraries. The report indicated that of the 30 libraries studied, nearly all answer reference questions about their newspaper collections, 14 libraries provide indexing and clipping services and 11 can search computer databanks containing newspaper indexes. Lenahan made a study of the use of periodicals and newspapers in a mid-sized public library. During the twelve-day study period, a total of 3,038 requests for specific magazines and newspapers from retrospective collections were processed. Of these, 1,210 or approximately 40% were for magazines and 1,828 or 60% were for newspapers. Above studies attest to the importance and use of newspapers in libraries.

In ABTU Library, the newspaper indexes had proven helpful in responding to reference questions from clientele. For instance, reference queries on "privatisation" and "technology transfer" had been adequately handled with the help of the library's newspaper indexes.

Conclusion

A good newspaper index requires skill, interest, doggedness and consistency. To this end, libraries embarking on specialised services as newspaper

indexing, abstracting and thesauri construction activities should think of establishing a research and documentation unit to handle these specialised services full time. Aina investigated the attitude of researchers in education towards newspaper indexing. He found that users would welcome publication of newspaper indexes in Nigeria in order to facilitate the use of newspapers in research studies. The research and documentation unit in libraries would guarantee the publication of newspaper indexes and ensure the professional reward and challenge of newspaper indexing.

References

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