

From Pack Carrier to Mountain Guide: the Periodicals Subsection and the CHECKIN System at the British Library for Development Studies

Mrs B.C. Downey. British Library for Development Studies. Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex.

Disclaimer

The views expressed here by the author are her own and do not necessarily represent an official view of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

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Introduction

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a centre for research and training on development, primarily related to Third World countries¹. Its library, the British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) is the national centre for documentation on development and is one of the leading centres for Third World literature in Europe if not in the World. Its particular strengths lie in four main fields (a) government publications of developing countries (b) publications by and about the more important parastatal organizations, such as government corporations, in those countries (c) papers and publications of other

institutions, both national and international, working in the development field, and (d) records and papers of the United Nations (UN) agencies particularly those working in development.

BLDS specializes in the literature of economic and social development mainly in Western European languages; this latter largely owing to restrictive staff numbers. It holds a comprehensive collection of serials and it is this collection which is dealt with here. A large percentage of the collection is non-conventional literature (NCL) with issuing bodies ranging from commercial publishers to government departments, interest groups and the like. The literature is normally scholarly in nature.

It will be of interest to the serials community to know about the serials registration at BLDS as the Periodicals Subsection nears the end of a period of intense activity involving the transfer of records from paper to machine readable form.

Since August 1988 about 10,500 titles, varying in frequency from daily to quinquennial, have been transferred to the computer and although some titles, mostly annuals or irregular ones, are still being input the main flow has ceased. A BLDS periodicals holdings list is expected to be published later this year² and this is to be

updated by a monthly library accessions list which is to contain newly acquired serials titles as well as monographs³.

Acquisitions statistics

The BLDS acquires its titles in the following ways: Bought/Standing Order — about 4500 titles; Gift — about 3700 titles; Deposit — 25 titles; Exchange — about 615 titles. The remainder are closed files or specimen journals.

As to the frequency of the above titles there are: 4433 Annuals; 759 Semi-annuals; 1489 Quarterlies; 714 Monthlies; 75 Weeklies; and 2830 with alternate frequencies (including irregulars).

It should be noted that computerisation has enabled us to produce such statistics more readily.

It must be stressed that a large percentage of BLDS' serials are not serials in the ordinary use of the term: many are annual reports of companies, banks, government departments and other organizations; many are government documents such as budgets and statistical reports; many are irregular, being newsletters, bulletins and press releases.

Many of the commercially-published titles from Europe and North America are bought from subscriptions agents such as Blackwell's Periodicals and Swets United Kingdom Ltd. Most of the Latin American titles of all descriptions are bought from book dealers such as Susan Bach Ltda. for Brazil; Soberbia C. A. for Venezuela and Libros Centroamericanos for Central America. Many African titles are obtained from their issuing bodies, except for those on blanket order from African Imprint Library Services, Hogarth Representation, and Leishman & Taussig. The Acquisitions Subsection is continually looking for the best way to develop their acquisition methodology. For Asia, again most of the items are obtained direct, although Indian material is mainly bought from book dealers Manimala and Prabhu Book

Service. Subscription agents in UK are very reluctant to accept orders for any Third World serials titles except the well known ones such as the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*⁴.

An indication of the variety and depth of the Library's collecting policy is that there are over 7600 suppliers currently registered on our files. Some suppliers send us either monographs or serials; some send both. They range from interest groups of a few people to large banks, firms and government departments as well as the more usual bookdealers.

The top 20 countries from which the IDS Library gets its serials publications can be seen in Table 1.

Country	Serials	International organizations
United Kingdom	957	97
United States	937	213
India	751	8
Nigeria	283	7
Philippines	250	32
South Africa	249	0
Germany	245	0
Switzerland	231	141
Pakistan	187	5
France	184	64
Indonesia	164	4
Sri Lanka	152	11
Malaysia	147	9
Thailand	141	25
Kenya	130	43
Argentina	125	11
Netherlands	120	15
Zambia	113	2
Hong Kong	111	0
Zimbabwe	109	0

The total serials number for each country also includes serials of international organizations based in that country. The latter figure is also given separately to indicate the number of such serials. The Indian figures contain 548 annual reports, many of which come from state government and local organizations. The Nigerian total also contains many state publications including 165 annual reports; the

Philippines total contains 93 annual reports though these are mainly central government or country-wide organizations. The South African total includes 131 annual reports of which 90 are from companies. Of the German total 160 titles are of the "Statistik des Auslandes: Länderberichte" issued by the Statistisches Bundesamt.

The number of serials titles in the 4 main collections at BLDS are: Government publications — 3602; International organizations — 1396; Non-governmental — 3377; Reference collection — 1446 (includes many newsletters and annual reports).

The remainder are in other collections such as Quick reference; the Reserve collection and the Microforms. For a more detailed discussion of the IDS Library's acquisitions policy readers can consult a recent study on the subject, which also gives the addresses of the dealers used⁵.

The Manual System of Serials Registration

The BLDS used to employ a manual system for registering serials, using Kalamazoo paper records. In this system, the front of the slip allows the title, the issues received and their receipt date to be recorded; while the back can show the source, whether gift or bought, and if the latter, the invoice details.

The system was adequate but gave rise to problems in the following ways:

- (1) All the details on the slip had to be entered by hand.
- (2) Finding individual titles could be difficult with only one entry point. The arrangement of titles on the kalamazoo slips followed the catalogue entries, so that many of the serials titles were listed under their corporate entry and had to be traced through the card catalogue if they were unfamiliar to the staff member.

- (3) The Periodicals Subsection was running out of space to house the kalamazoo slip folders. 52 were closely packed on the work counter.
- (4) With the Kalamazoo system, unlike some other systems, it was found too difficult to use tagging to show overdue or missing issues, and letters were typewritten following manual searches.
- (5) Without computer assistance the present Periodicals Subsection staff of approximately 3.75 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff would not have been able to keep the serials collection in such good shape. Much of it is of "grey" type literature from many unusual sources.

Minisis and the Checkin Processor

When BLDS changed to the MINISIS computerised system the opportunity was taken to move the serials processing to the World Bank (IBRD)/International Monetary Fund (IMF) Joint Library's CHECKIN serials module, which is part of the MINISIS user contributed library of programs. MINISIS itself is a generalised information management software package which runs on a Hewlett Packard 3000 minicomputer. It is expected that new versions of MINISIS will also run on other machines. The system was developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada which still maintains and upgrades it. MINISIS is a modular system in that it has many different processors which perform different operations on the same data.

CHECKIN is one of the processors and is used to support the "checkin" of serials: that is to register the arrival of individual issues of a serial and to identify missing or overdue issues so that claims can be generated. It was designed to replace a manual Kardex system, which strongly resembles the old Kalamazoo system used by the BLDS Periodicals Subsection.

CHECKIN supports record selection through a variety of fields. At BLDS there is a heavy work-flow and unlike the case of ordinary serials, the name of the issuing body is often difficult to determine. The Periodicals Subsection cannot make use of mailing labels provided by the suppliers giving identifiers. Although this system is used by some libraries, the BLDS cannot expect the majority of suppliers to accommodate this, since they have barely enough staff to address the envelopes.

At BLDS, CHECKIN was intended to replace a Kalamazoo system handling a large serial intake. The new system had to provide a very quick path through the standard receipt transaction, that is the recording of a full or partial receipt of the next expected issue. In addition, it provides a command mode which supports more extensive processing within a record, for instance by altering the identity (ID) of an item received, or by substituting the month of the issue, when it has been changed by the publisher.

There has been considerable room to customize CHECKIN. Fields for invoice details, and a field for notes to aid and alert staff, have been added. At the moment these can only be seen in the CHECKIN processor, but have to be altered in Update processor, another MINISIS module. It is expected that the facility to alter and add to these fields, which are supplied extra to the basic ones, will be available in the CHECKIN processor itself in the next upgrade of MINISIS.

Transfer of Records to Computer

How to proceed with this transference from paper to machine-readable records called for considerable discussion and consultation. A decision was made which has worked out very well indeed, this was not to work alphabetically through the paper records but to transfer the data related to titles that were arriving currently and most frequently. First embarked on

were the few dailies, the weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies and then the less frequent publications. The time saved by computer registration of incoming high-frequency items enabled the many annual publications received by the BLDS to be added at a less intensive pace. In some circumstances where a membership subscription is placed with an organization the opportunity was taken to transfer all the current titles of that body to MINISIS so that the inclusive invoice details could be on the computer. Steadily the original paper-recorded data were moved over to the computer records, but during this process all the staff concerned had to exercise patience and caution while working with two systems in tandem. To link the paper record with a MINISIS record the Internal Sequence Number (ISN), automatically given by the machine to the new machine readable record, is written on the old Kalamazoo slip.

Now that there are some 10500 titles on MINISIS it is estimated that a further 6,000 titles remain in the Kalamazoo system. However most of these are closed files and are unlikely to be transferred.

When a paper record is transferred to the computer it is physically removed from the folder and kept in a separate file. That record shows all the past issues' receipts and gives some history of previous transactions.

Ordering by Computer

New serials are in the main ordered via the MINISIS system through the Acquisitions subsystem ACQUIS. It is on the arrival of the first issue of a newly-ordered title that the "order" record is transformed into a "serials" record by the addition of certain additional fields. These same fields are used when a transfer of an old paper record to MINISIS is made.

CHECKIN Title Entry

An entry for a serials title record can contain title, variant titles, corporate bodies,

ISSN, shelfmark, invoice details, vendor, frequency, notation (where for example a journal giving on its front cover Year, Volume and Number would have the notation Y/V/N), numeration (which describes how the elements in the notation field change so that, e.g. a quarterly title with the notation Y/V/N would have the numbering 1/4 requiring the system to change the volume numbering after the 4 issues of each volume and year have been received). Other fields comprise place of publication country code, and, very usefully the aforementioned field for notes (Fig.a) Eventually the many old titles which have been transferred to MINISIS will be fully catalogued to AACR2 standard by the Cataloguing Section staff. This involves modifying the records and adding extra fields, e.g. subject descriptors, as is already done for new titles.

CHECKIN Title Registration

Having entered the serial details on the system it is easy to register the receipt of issues in a separate processor. Serials can be searched for by title, corporate body (or their variants), frequency, ISSN, country of origin, vendor, or a combination of any or all of these. The serial's own ISSN can also be searched on. When the title is found the system offers the next issue identity and asks for receipt confirmation by "Y" or "N". It is possible to alter the identity where there has been a change; similarly the holdings and frequency can be altered. If an issue has not arrived its status is altered to MISSING. Figure b shows a registration.

CHECKIN claims

What a transformation the system has made to the well nigh impossible production of claim letters for the checked missing and overdue title issues when they were on a paper record system.

Fig. a.

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ISN=40912
L070 BIBLEV : S
B000 SERTIT : 1 $aChina environment news$a monthly English -
        language newspaper edited and published by
        China Environment News
B070 SERNUM : $aNo. 3 (Oct. 1989) -
G170 CBCODE : 6399
B100 IMPR : $aBeijing$cChina Environment News$d1989
C000 NOTE : $aSponsored by the Environmental Protection
        Commission of the State Council

T980 SCATC :SR
T990 SHELFM : (53) CHINA ENVIRONMENT NEWS.
W200 FREQ : M
W230 NOTAT Y/M/W/N
W240 EXPDAT : 1992-03-25
W210 WAIT : 60
W220 COPIES : 1
W580 HOLDS : 1989/OCT No.3
W801 INVWUM :
W802 INVUM :
W803 INVPER :
W804 INDPAS :
W80 INVAM :
W808 INVINT :
V010 VCODE : CNOCN
X300 VENNAM : China Environment News
X400 ANOTES :
        At 24/10/90 this may change freq, their note in
        grey fil. cab. WATCH OUT

W900 STATUS : FCAT
W910 SCDATE : 1990-01-09
W100 CATALR :
W500 GEB : standing order
V630 TYPIST :
Our Order : 10333
A010 LANG : 0 $aENG
A020 COCODE : $aCN
Note this is a fully catalogued entry.

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fig. b.

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Entrepreneurship & regional development. ISSN: 0898-5626
SR (32) ENTREPRENEURSHIP & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Circulation:
FREQ: Q NOTATION: Y/M/V/N NUM: 1/4 EXPDATE: 1992-06-05 WAIT:
100
COPIES: 1 ISN: 85902
HOLDINGS: 1992 V.4 -
Issues: 1992/JAN V.4 N.2 1992-03-06 PRES

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The MINISIS system can automatically produce claim letters for missing and overdue issues. The registration status code is the means by which missing issues are identified. All those with the status MISS are automatically claimed. For overdues two other fields are used. The first is the helpful field "Expected date": that is, the expected date of arrival of the next issue, which the computer forecasts on the basis of the frequency, the notation and numbering of a title. This is added to a "wait" period, which the staff have given the title to allow for vagaries of the post and production. If these added together are less than the date on which the claim is being generated then an overdue claim is produced. All the records for which claims are made have their status automatically changed to show

such a claim has been made.

MINISIS is a relational database system which produces a claim letter to the required vendor by linking the bibliographic record through a field containing the vendor code to the separate vendor database where the addresses are held. Appropriate claim letters are produced according to whether the source is gift, exchange, or standing order, yet another field which is supplied when the serial title is first entered on MINISIS. All the claim letters despatched show each title's ISN as the reference. This facilitates dealing with responses. Naturally correspondence is generated by some of these claims and also by other aspects of serials work such as invoice queries. For this a brief entry is made in the note field of the relevant record. Using the vendor as a guide, copies of the correspondence are kept in alphabetical order.

The Development Periodicals Index

One final exciting development which has been undertaken because of the opportunities offered by the computerised system is the article database. At the present a range of about 588 serial titles are being scanned for this. These journals are considered as scholarly in nature. At the time of writing we are not indexing articles from periodicals held by the Joint World Bank International Monetary Fund Library because these are already entered elsewhere, nor are we indexing foreign language serials⁶.

For each of the chosen serials a note is made in the Circulation field for a member of staff to scan them for those articles which might be selected for indexing. Coverage is Western language material on economic and social development in Third World. Begun in February 1990, there are now over 12000 articles processed. Figure c shows an Article entry. This work is undertaken by members of the IDS Periodicals/Acquisitions Section.

The 1990 Articles database has been

produced in paper copy as the Development Periodicals Index⁷. It is hoped that the 1991 articles database will be issued as an annual publication; thereafter it might be issued more frequently.

Fig.c

14.05
Adamchak, Donald J.: Mbizvo Michael T.
Family planning information sources and media exposure among Zimbabwean men
In: Studies in family planning: a publication of the Population Council (US) 22, no. 5 (1991), 326-31
DESCRIPTORS /Zimbabwe/ /family planning/ /information sources/ /media/ /men/ /attitudes/
SHELF CATEGORY: [NON-OFFICIAL SERIALS COLLECTION]
SHELVED AT (112) STUDIES IN FAMILY PLANNING...
Record no: 84979

On-line Access

The library's public catalogues will shortly be available remotely online via VOLNET, the online service run by the Volunteer Centre U.K. and subsequently, it is expected, via JANET, the UK Joint Academic Network. Details of access to any of the BLDS information sources and services can be obtained from Maureen Mahoney, BLDS User Services Librarian.

Conclusions

CHECKIN has given the BLDS staff and users easier access to the serial titles, a more certain check of overdue and missing items, and an opportunity to analyse the contents of the serials themselves. The Subsection has not experienced any lessening of its workload. Readers will be amused to learn that when the system began to be computerised it was thought that work and correspondence would be eased. In fact so efficient is the system that there is now more work, because problems are automatically and speedily identified. The additional work consists of dealing with tasks previously neglected such as writing for queries from the old manual system on transferring titles to MINISIS. New queries arise from the computer system's automatic requests for missing and overdue issues which sometimes

require follow-up letters. All this work has been done as well as the indexing of the serials. However, there is now the satisfaction that on the computer system, unlike the previous paper records, there are no unaccessed and unchecked files.

From pack carrier to mountain guide describes the Periodicals Subsection which has toiled from the foothills of serials maintenance to have the pleasure of being also able to guide the users to the mountain tops of knowledge contained in the serials themselves.

References

- (1) For a recent survey of developments at the Institute see its Annual report for 1990 issued on the occasion of its 25th anniversary.
- (2) J.A. Downey ed. *Periodicals holdings list*. 1992. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- (3) *Library accessions bulletin*, 1992. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- (4) *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*. Ibadan: Nigerian Economic Society.
- (5) J.A. Downey *Dealing with the unexpected: policy and procedures involved in document acquisition at the Institute of Development Studies*. Brighton, the Information Resource Unit, Institute of Development Studies, 1991 (Documentation & Library Advisory Report, 16)
- (6) The Joint World Bank International Monetary Fund Library articles index is available on CD-Rom from Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge Place, Cambridge CB2 1NR; while Spanish language serials can be scanned by using HAPI-Online, information on which can be obtained from Director, HAPI, University of California, Latin American Center, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1447, U.S.A.
- (7) *Development periodicals index, 1990* (Brighton; Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex 1991) 2 vols. (Development bibliography series, 5).