Indexing Service in the Library: Is It Dying Or Not?

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine if indexing service in the library is still a relevant or a dying function of librarians. It made use of quantitative method of research. The questionnaire was created in Google Form and sent through email in gathering data. The respondents were 34 librarians from school, academic and public libraries in Northern Luzon, Philippines. The study revealed that the most common type of indexes that are readily available in the library were periodical and newspaper indexes in both in-house and commercial indexes while microform, computerized and index to literature collections were almost neglected. Periodical, newspaper and computerized indexes were reported as being practiced by the majority of the librarians, only one who declared on doing index to literature collections, and none for the microform indexes. The librarians viewed that indexing: 1) is a challenge to develop or enhance your knowledge and mastery; 2) is needed for fast and easy access of information; and 3) is a regular task of a librarian. They also revealed the following major function of indexes: 1) it facilitates easy retrieval of information; 2) it facilitates reference to the specific item or locate wanted information; 3) it facilitates document analysis; 4) it makes the information storage and retrieval system useful to individual; 5) it indicates relationships among topics; and 6) it directs users seeking information under terms not chosen as index headings to headings that have been chosen, by means of see references. Librarians believed that indexing has a function to fulfill in the library and their identified reasons were: 1) It is still useful even in this computer age; 2) It is useful for compliance to the different accreditation bodies; 3) It gives quality service by providing users tools that can aid them in easy access and retrieval of information; and 4) It is continuously evolving with the help and use of technology. Furthermore, they conveyed that indexing is still a very vital function of the library for it is still being used as an aid to information retrieval and they pointed out that with the emerging technology, information can now be easily retrieved from the internet but still indexing has a vital role.

Keywords: *indexing service, information access, information seeking, information retrieval tools, library practices, library services.*

INTRODUCTION

The essence of a library is to provide access to information in any format to the right user at the right time. All library and information centers are bound to provide accurate, relevant, and updated information to users and researchers and this can be realized through the use of an effective and efficient information retrieval tool.

One of the services that geared towards high user satisfaction and information resources utilization is indexing which must be given with utmost importance. In this age of information explosion, where almost all sources of knowledge in all walks of life are found on the internet. This is attributed to the advanced information and communications technology and increasing demand for information, particularly in research and development. Library users need quality information from reliable sources more than quantity from a list of search results.

Hence, this is where the task of indexing happens. Indexing provides access to information from different sources from within or outside the library and information center. Such access will improve information dissemination and use to its primary users and readers. Furthermore, it aids every user to find articles as indicated in the

keywords the user searches, allowing the user to discover information and content, and making it more likely that the whole record be relevant (Jones, 2018). In addition, Nnadozie (2007), as cited in Mohammed (2015), stated that indexing serves as a guide to content of a publication and what literature exist in a given field or by a given author thus, it helps as a locator to the whereabouts of a certain resource or information.

However, there were major issues concerning indexing. According to Matanji (2012), one of the issues is the evidence in the literature that suggests that some publishers of periodical indexes do not employ qualified indexers while others compile poor-generated indexes. This is supported by Wellisch (1994) as cited in Matanji (2012) that only few periodicals offer their users with comprehensive indexes and in an even worse case scenario, many journals only provide author indexes that can be easily complied without any human involvement from machine-readable text, while others rely on basic keyword indexes made automatically from titles to save costs. Yet the compilation of subject indexes was done by semi-literate staff, while many periodicals remain without any index at all. Furthermore, Matanji (2012) also raised the issue that there had been marked cancellations of periodical subscription including indexing services due to the skyrocketing of cost and this trends of journals had been observed throughout the decade of economic downturn, bringing universities and libraries of the poor countries to the brink of chaos.

On the other hand, Drott (2002) as cited in Lancaster (2003) pointed out that locating information on specific topics on the web is getting difficult. These new advances in automated web searching and algorithmic indexing had been largely offset by the enormous growth in the amount of information or resource available. The estimates of search engine coverage of the web by Lawrence and Giles (1999) suggest the impossibility of using robots to index all of the web, and clearly, the more analytical time that a robot must devote to extracting index terms for a single page, the smaller the amount of the available material that can be indexed. Further, strides were being made in improving the accuracy of automatic indexing and the fact remains that assigning index terms to a database as diverse as the web remains a problem with few promising solutions.

Reitz (2004) defined indexing as a process of collecting one or more indexes for a single publication such as a monograph or multivolume references work or adding entries for a document to an open index encompassing a particular publication format such as newspapers and the like, works of literature such as biography, book reviews and others, or the literature of a field discipline or group of discipline in academics. According to Aina (2004) as cited in Musa and Dangani (2013), indexing practice produces indexes which can be relied upon as a guide to intellectual context of a document, collection of document or other information source.

The offshoot of an indexing process is the index which plays a vital role as a tool for easy retrieval of pertinent information. An index contains a series of entries appearing, may it be in alphabetical format or the chronological one, but the former one is more utilized by users because it is easier to use. Indexes serve as an aid to intellectual content of different resources such as publications or reading materials for the contents are already presented as a list covering the major terms, concepts, subjects, topics and names that are particularly arranged alphabetically or chronologically with references to show where each item indexed can be found in the document (Nnadozie, 2007). Banjo (1987) as cited in Nnadozie (2007) explained that an index is a crucial tool for assistance in the complex content of information resources, whether be it a newspaper, journal, magazine, document or even report. Different types of indexes such as individual books or back of the book index, indexes to collection of books (the card catalogue in a library), index to the contents of journals or periodicals are found in a standard library. Indexing service is a very vital device provided to help the users in locating and retrieving information required by the client. The index serves varied purposes but the most significant in this study is that index serves as information storage and retrieval device used in libraries, information centers and other information institutions.

According to Ita (1987) as cited in Nnadozie (2007), index can be a guide to the contents of a particular information center as in the case of a catalog which is also referred to as an index to the contents of available resources located in the center. It serves as a guide to the content of a publication and also serves as a guide to what literature exists in a given field or by a given author. Generally, an index serves as a pointer to the whereabouts of an item or document in an information system. The most popular function of an index according to Nnadozie (2007) is

perhaps as a guide to the intellectual content of publications or reading materials, which are presented as a list comprising the major terms, concepts, subjects, topics and names arranged in a particular order. Abstracts are very important tools of information storage, management and retrieval.

In a computer era where information overload is seen rampant, we need quality more that quantity from a list of viable information search results, and indexing is formulated to do just that. Indexing helps you to find concepts and synonyms specified by the keywords you search, aiding you to know the content and making it more likely that the whole record itself will be important and relevant. In enabling researchers to filter impertinent results and help them boil down the results to a more specific field, a subject-oriented database must be utilized.

In Kenya, most university libraries have not renewed subscriptions to indexing and abstracting journals for a long time. Some of them are indexing periodicals in-house to ensure that the subject content of periodicals held in their libraries is exposed to enhance the identification of relevant information. However, the majority do not seem to have plans of indexing because they lack policies on whether the information is relevant to the needs of library users, timeliness of the articles, number of terms to be assigned per article, terms to be used by the user to search for the article, and whether the articles are relevant to academic levels and disciplines (Matanji, 2012).

In Nigeria and most developing countries, the importance of indexes cannot be over-emphasized. Indexing helps in the timely dissemination of information and the indexer always ensures that for every document be it electronically or manually are properly indexed. Therefore, there is really a need to employ indexing services or at best regularly train some staff of the library as indexers. Most library materials are not properly indexed because librarians are not properly trained in the art of indexing and for any library particularly the law library, it must ensure that legal materials are properly indexed and abstracted (Akinwumi, 2013).

In the Philippines, one of the scopes of practice of librarianship is rendering of services involving technical expertise in indexing. Republic Act (RA) 9246 Section 5 specifies that librarians shall perform this function. Moreover, Section 16 states that one of the scopes of the librarians licensure examination is indexing and abstracting. This suggests that indexing is really a function of a librarian in any type of a library be it special, public, school or academic library.

The library identifies and acquires information sources and to make these relevant resources available and accessible to all the library users. The library devised a number of tools such as catalogues, index and abstract to make users aware of the various information carriers of both prints and non-prints resources. The importance of the index is to facilitate the access of intellectual content in a document and aid the user in deciding on the relevance of the document to his/her information needs.

Hence, the need to investigate indexing as a function and service in the library is crucial to revisit. Thus, the study generally attempts to answer the following questions: 1. What are the indexes available in the library?; 2. What types of indexes are practiced in the library?; 3. What are the functions of indexes in the library?; and 4. What are the viewpoints on indexing as a part of librarian's work?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed quantitative research design using survey questionnaire. It made use of the descriptive type of research to measure if indexing service is still a relevant function of a librarian. The total number of librarian-respondents was 34 from school, academic, and public libraries in Northern Luzon, Philippines. Questionnaire was created thru Google Form and sent thru email. This technique was chosen as the most fitting means of gathering data from the respondents. Frequency counts and percentage distribution were used. The views and opinions of librarians regarding indexing services were collated and summarized. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Profile	Frequency	%	Profile	Frequency	%
Gender			**Type of Institution**		
Male	7	20.6%	Public	3	8.8%
Female	27	79.4%	Private	31	91.2%
Age			**Position**		

25 and below	25	73.5%	Cataloger	2	5.9%
26-35	5	14.7%	Director/Chief	1	2.9%
36-45	0	0	Special Librarian	1	2.9%
46-55	4	11.8%	School Librarian	11	32.4%
			College Librarian	19	55.9%
Degree			**No. of Years as Librarian**		
Bachelor	31	91.2%	1-5	25	73.5
Masteral	3	8.8%	6-10	5	14.7
Type of Library					
Academic	21	61.8%	11-15	0	0
Special	1	2.9%	16-20	0	0
Public	12	35.3%	21-25	4	11.8

Librarianship is still a female-dominated profession in the very sense that women are deemed very suitable for the feminine duties called upon. Majority in the library profession are young librarians aged 25 and below and accustomed to technology-based library applications.

Furthermore, it is common with this age that the degree finished is basically the bachelor's degree because enrolling in such lifelong learning entails long years to pursue. Most of them are working in a college or a university of a private institution having 1-5 years experience as a librarian.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Availability of Indexes

Index brings into one place references to information that is scattered through books, periodicals, and other documents. Also, it identifies and locates specific items in the work, and provides the users with basis for screening. Its objective is to point out the location of particular items of information or a work. Hence, an effective index leads the user to all pertinent information on a given topic in the work or works indexed. Thus, the need for indexes would justify its existence in the library which is to lead the user to the information sought. Table 2 presents the indexes available in the library.

Table2. *Indexes Available in the Library*

Types of Indexes	In-House Index (Home-Made Index)		Commercial Index (Subscription)	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Newspaper Indexes	17	2	4	2
Periodical Indexes	18	1	5	1
Microform Indexes	1	5	0	0
Indexes to Literature Collection	5	4	0	0
Computerized Indexes	7	3	1	3

The most common type of indexes that are readily available in the library were periodical and newspaper indexes in both in-house and commercial indexes. Other indexes such as microform, computerized and index to literature collections were almost neglected in the library. This implies that periodical and newspaper indexes are still relevant no matter how difficult this task of a librarian.

They are favorably available in the library because periodicals are one among the learning resources containing first-hand information for study, learning and research (Cabonero, Soliven, Lanzuela, Balot & Bugaling, 2017). On the other hand, in study of Matanji (2012) revealed that the respondents had no plans of making in-house index or home-made index such as periodical index because: 1) it is unnecessary task of a librarian, 2) they lack the time and staff to create one, and 3) they lack expertise and computing facilities.

Types of Indexes Practiced

Indexing is the process of analyzing the informational content of records and expressing the informational content in the language of the indexing system. It involves: 1) selecting information contents in a document; and 2) expressing these contents in the language of the indexing system as index entries. As such, there are numerous types of indexes for library users to utilize. Table 3 shows the types of indexes being practiced in libraries.

Table3. *Types of Indexes Practiced in the Library*

Types of Indexes Commonly Available in Libraries	Frequency	Rank
Periodical Index	21	1
Newspaper Index	19	2
Computerized Index	7	3
Index to Literature Collection	1	4
Microform Index	0	5

The indexes being practiced in the library as shown in Table 3 were periodical, newspaper and computerized indexes. However, there is only one who declared on doing index to literature collections and none for the microform indexes. This implies that periodical, newspaper and computerized indexing are still part of the job of librarians. This finding corroborates the study of Musa and Dangani (2013) that newspaper index was the most practiced index in the library.

The Function of Indexes in the Library

Keenan (1980) explained that the basic function of an indexing service is to save the time of the user and further described as essential tool to provide the user with rapid and current information on documents in a particular field of interest and with a retrospective collection that allows for an exhaustive search for information over a period of time.

Table4. *Functions of Indexes in the Library*

Functions of Indexes	Frequency	Rank
Indexes facilitates document analysis	19	3
Indexes facilitates easy retrieval	31	1
Indexing is a vital component in the communication link between the originator of information and its ultimate user.	12	10
Indexes facilitates reference to the specific item or locate wanted information	22	2
Indexes disclose relationship	3	15
Indexes make the information storage and retrieval system useful to individual	18	5
Indexes serve as filters withhold irrelevant materials	10	11.5
Indexes provide a comprehensive review of the subject field	14	8
Indexes give nomenclature guidance	10	11.5
Indexes identify potentially irrelevant information in the documents or collection being indexed	9	13.5
Indexes analyse concepts treated in a document so as to produce index headings based on the terminology	9	13.5
Indexes indicate relationships among topics	18	5
Indexing group together information on the topics scattered by the arrangement of document or collection	15	7
Indexes organize headings and their modifying subheadings into index entries	13	9
Indexes direct users seeking information under terms not chosen as index headings to headings that have been chosen, by means of see references.	18	5

Table 4 revealed the following major function of indexes in the library: 1) indexes facilitate easy retrieval; 2) indexes facilitate reference to the specific item or locate wanted information; 3) indexes facilitate document analysis; 4) indexes make the information storage and retrieval system useful to individual; 5) indexes indicate relationships among topics; and 6) indexes direct users seeking information under terms not chosen as index headings to headings that have been chosen, by means of see references.

In the study of Musa and Dangani (2013), they said that the most important role of an index is that it serves as information storage and retrieval device used in libraries and other information centers.

Indexing Practices

According to Ward (1996) as cited by Matanji (2012), "indexing is a point on which the life and culture of the institution converge. The indexer has an important gate-keeping role in the institution, as it is sometimes not until indexing commences that the significance of articles can be appreciated, directing relevant ones to an awareness service for researchers and teaching staff and so forth".

Table5. *Views on Indexing As Librarians' Job*

Views on Indexing	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
It is a challenges to develop or enhance your knowledge and mastery in indexing	22	64.71%	1
It is needed for fast and easy access of information	20	58.82%	2
It is a regular task of a librarian	16	47.06%	3
It is an additional work of a librarian	10	29.41%	4
It is a burden on your part as a librarian	9	26.47%	5
It is already irrelevant	7	20.59%	6

Indexing requires technicality in producing and it requires time, money and effort to create an output. As seen on Table 5, the librarians viewed that indexing: 1) is a challenge to develop or enhance your knowledge and mastery; 2) is needed for fast and easy access of information; and 3) is a regular task of a librarian. On the other hand, only few librarians viewed indexing: 1) as an additional work of a librarian; 2) as a burden on the part of the librarian; and the least 3) as an irrelevant work in the library. This implies that indexing is still a relevant task of a librarian in order to provide fast and easy access

of information and content. The finding of Akinwumi (2013) agreed that indexing helps in the timely dissemination of information and the indexer always ensures that for every document be it electronically or manually are properly indexed. Therefore, there is really a need to employ indexing services or at best regularly train some staff of the library as indexers. Most library materials are not properly indexed because librarians are not properly trained in the art of indexing and for any library particularly the law library, it must ensure that legal materials are properly indexed and abstracted.

Table6. *Librarians' View on the Practice of Indexing in the Library*

Do you wish to continue practice indexing in the library?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	58.82%
No	14	41.18%

Table 7 revealed that indexing is not a dying practice in the library based from the perceptions of librarian-respondents. Majority of them believed that indexing has a function to fulfill in the library. Their identified reasons for saying that it is not a dying practice were: 1) It is still useful even in this computer age; 2) It is useful for compliance to the different accreditation bodies; 3) It gives quality service by providing users tools that can aid them in easy access and

retrieval of information; and 4) It is continuously evolving with the help and use of technology. Meanwhile, the respondents who stated that it is a dying practice specified the following reasons: 1) technological advancement already took over indexing; 2) lack of knowledge and skills on practicing indexing; 3) time-consuming task especially for a one-man librarian; and 4) users relied mainly on the internet as their easy source of information.

Table7. *Recommendation on Indexing as a Function in the Library*

Recommendation on Indexing as a Function in the Library	Frequency	Percentage
Continue	24	70.6%
Discontinue	9	26.5%
Did not answer	1	2.9%

Table 8 revealed that majority of the respondents actually wanted to continue indexing as a function in the library. In the interview, the respondents wanted to continue the practice of indexing in the library for it can really help clientele locate information faster and easy. Furthermore, they conveyed that indexing is still a very vital function of the library for it is still being used as an aid to information retrieval. They pointed out that with the emerging technology, information

can now be easily gotten from the internet but still indexing has a vital role. They also prompted that indexing was discontinued at some time because they had limited time to work on, inadequate knowledge, and lack of indexer.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Periodical index is deemed important for it can provide a source of notable information for learning, study, and research. This type of index

is necessary especially in an academic library wherein it supports lifelong learning and provides scholarly materials for personal and professional development.

The traditional way of indexing may be dying due to the fact that computer has taken over the task of librarians to make indexes. A lot of information source has been offered freely and easily with just a click of a hand. Almost everything is found on the internet and more often than not, it has now been the first to come into mind when searching for an answer or information. The main concept of indexing is really to facilitate the retrieval of information through the use of new technology.

The continuation of indexing as a function in the library is very vital to information provision. This helps users find pertinent information that can suffice their information needs. Indexing is not exempted when it comes to change and development. It challenged librarians to develop or enhance their knowledge and mastery of the practice. Indexing has been improving when it comes to terminologies and other factors. This pushes indexers or librarians to be well-abreast of these certain changes in order to make the best possible index that can be made; be they a one-man librarian or not.

Indexing as a function in the library should be continued because it is a very useful tool in facilitating information retrieval and it is a means to lessen the burdens of users when it comes to locating pertinent information that is needed. Librarians should enhance and develop their skills when it comes to practicing indexing in order to become well-faceted with the currents trends and developments in indexing.

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