



Incorporating multilingual bibliographic records into library databases: the case of Lesotho

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Abstract

Libraries' collections have evolved with time from books which were not what we know today, but rather scrolls, mostly made of papyrus and sometimes of leather, so are the services. Information resource sharing was a well thought of service that linked libraries world wide. However, this has left out an important part; "language". Inclusion of other languages in library catalogues will denote transition of information retrieval from being at a local catalogue only to being global. Libraries and archives provide a growing proportion of their services via computers and networks. And some institutions especially those in developing countries such as Lesotho cannot afford to support all the requirements of their user communities from their own collections and services. Instead, they exchange information through sharing of resources, services, data, and metadata in cooperative arrangements locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. It has never been easy for a scholar to locate required information written in a language he/she could not read. Therefore multilingual bibliographic records will not only be a benefit to scholars, but also to libraries. Online cataloguing and catalogues have brought up fascinating changes which become more a challenge to librarians than to users. How do we learn these other languages is one issue to be discussed so as to be able to include them in our records. Mechanisms for searching and retrieving information need to be in place and also the encoding schemes. The paper will also highlight both the benefits the inclusion of multilingual bibliographic access will bring into our catalogues as well as retrieval, and also the challenges some developing countries like Lesotho will face.

1. Introduction

Although Landry was speaking in terms of Libraries in Europe, African libraries which Lesotho is inclusive, have a different perspective. We are aware that “providing subject access using several languages in library online catalogues has become an important challenge for many national libraries...” (Landry 2004). Creating bibliographic information for users is the main reason why there should be in existence the professional staff called “Cataloguers” in libraries. These are professional librarians whose focus is mainly on the clients of the library. Libraries happen to serve different types of users in regard to information needs; as such there is always a need for resource sharing in libraries. With provision of subject access using several languages in libraries, online catalogues will become an essential challenge for many libraries. Acquisition of Library materials are of the most importance in the development of the Libraries and users to consider language search methods as the priority.

However, as much as this inclusion of multilingual record in databases will enhance a better use of information and create a link between libraries, some libraries are going to be faced with the dilemma of not being able to cooperate. Some libraries like Swiss National Library in Europe; have already started and the program is already running. One would say that it could be that Europe and other countries who are already engaged into this service are those that are developed. What Cao et al say is true that “There is increasing interest in establishing a service infrastructure for searching distributed heterogeneous multilingual bibliographic sources regionally and worldwide...thus, issues in multilingual cataloguing, indexing and searching, interoperability and data exchange become more important.” (Cao et al: 1999)

2. Background information about Lesotho

Lesotho is one of the developing or less developed countries with a small number of institutes of higher learning with libraries, such as: Leretholi Polytechnic (LPT), National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lesotho College of Education (LCE), Transformation Resource Centre (TRC), National Library Services (NLS), and many others which are all independent and have no link among them. There is one consortium (LELICO) which was meant to unite libraries in Lesotho so that they are networked. This is not quite functional due to inequality of the libraries when it comes to funding and size. Therefore, it has not been possible for Lesotho libraries to work together in attempt to combat some of the problems that hinder information related development. This attempt to start a country consortium was initiated when the University library wanted to buy Millennium software which seems to be too expensive to be purchased individually, this could not work because some libraries thought they are small and they may not benefit much from this system. Lesotho as a country is struggling for economic enhancement and there is no full support from the government and each library is working independently.

3. Bibliographic information

Bibliographic information is that information which librarians provide on catalogues to assist their users to know what the library has in its collection, what it has about a particular author, and where materials are located. Therefore, library catalogues

should always be able to communicate with users in relation with any information about the library collection. This information is meant mainly for users to be able to make their decisions on materials they are looking for. This is supported by Kasparova where he indicated that:

“The bibliographic record is the main element of an information Bibliographic system, and in the electronic environment a language of bibliographic record facilitates communication between a user request and the contents of bibliographic system....” (kasparova 2003)

It is practical that when a user of a certain library could not find a document which can help him in his/her local library, the librarians provide interlibrary loans service (IL). Of late this service, like a catalogue record, has proved to have some limitations when it comes to language. For example, all the records in most libraries are written in English only. This hinders access to information to none-English speaking. Even the acquisition of materials is only in English from suppliers and vendors. Therefore, there is a need for multilingual bibliographic records in libraries.

4. Multilingual bibliographic information/records

Bibliographic information/record has been defined above. Therefore, multilingual bibliographic information is the same information on a catalogue record given in various languages. The issue of whether it is given on one record or more records are created will be discussed.

Multilingual bibliographic information/records in library databases will be of great benefit to users, looking at the scenario where a user wants a document in any other language apart from its original language. According to Cao et al “Users benefit in being able to issue a single query using a single interface and obtaining appropriate information from multiple sources instead of repeatedly search library after library each with their own idiosyncratic interface.” Apart from these, translators in internet also serve as an aid because one would make his/her query in English and he will be able to translate it into a language of interest.

However, some projects have been, and are still being carried out in different countries to come out with a strategy to incorporate multilingual access in their databases. One example is Multilingual Access to Subjects (MACS) which is one of those many that are currently exploring solutions to multilingual subject access to online catalogs. It is meant to develop a Web-based link and search interface through which equivalents between three Subject Heading Languages-SWD/RSWK (Schlagwortnormdatei/Regeln für den Schlagwortkatalog) for German, RAMEAU (Répertoire d'Autorité-Matière Encyclopédique et Alphabétique Unifié) for French, and LCSH (Library of Congress Subject Headings) for English can be created and maintained. The purpose for this is to allow users to access online databases in the language of their choice (Landry 2006).

5. Challenges

Mueller and Steinhagen give a good example of confusion that can be caused by varying standards. It makes it impossible for OPAC users to access information.

Therefore, there is a need for standardization when this is brought up into practice. (Mueller and Steinhagen 2003). They go further to support their argument by a live example of OCLC where they say: "...more complications arise when OCLC actively recruits new members from outside the English-speaking world-certainly a very worthwhile effort-and loads records contributed by libraries from non-English speaking countries cataloged according to varying standards. Thus, U.S. libraries are facing some conflicting scenarios vis-à-vis multilingual records, and the shared cataloging environment is becoming a more complex sea for all of us to navigate." Even to our situation here in Lesotho, this could happen where members recruited from other language speaking countries for rescue, could not only help, but also create yet more complex situation.

Another issue of interest is the nation whereby there is only one language used. For example Lesotho uses Sotho (as a native language) and English as official languages. Therefore, there isn't much need for other languages in the libraries in Lesotho. Again this will bring up an issue of duplication of records so that they can be read by other language speakers. As such there is a need for mechanism to be able to know as to how many languages are supposed to be in the records and which those languages are.

It is clear that in heterogeneous nations there is a need for multilingual records to cover all the languages users could prefer. Although inclusion of multilingual bibliographic records is of benefit again to native people who know how to write and read their own language but need information for development, this brings up an issue of developing new systems and duplication or extension of already existing records in some libraries. In Lesotho there are farmers for example who normally face a problem when books are written only in English.

There is no inclusion of Sotho words in online dictionaries; if they are there, they are very few. This is a challenge to lecturers at the university who are teaching Sesotho. Should they teach Sesotho in English? The answer is no because a language is a language in its own right and it should be catered for in every aspect of life.

6. Web translators

Web translators like Google translator, Yahoo Babel Fish, free translator and many more are reliable sources for translation of records into a language preferred by users. However, one may be able to translate the record but not the text of a document. This will cause a problem of access because it requires one to request that particular item through Interlibrary Loan service and undergo some other processes until the item is translated into the desired language. This will only happen in a library where relevant facilities are available.

Bellow are examples of a text and a catalogue record translated from English to Spanish using two different online translators:

6.1 Google translator

Google translator seems to be the one that translates and brings out the text in the same format with the original. In the following examples the text is an abstract and another one is a catalogue record.

6.1.1 English to Spanish

Abstract

Libraries' collection has evolved with time from books which were not what we know today, but rather scrolls, mostly made of papyrus and sometimes of leather, so are the services. Information resource sharing was a well thought of service that linked libraries world wide. However, this has left out an important part; "language".

Resumen

recogida de las bibliotecas ha evolucionado con el tiempo de los libros que no eran lo que hoy conocemos, sino que se desplaza, en su mayoría de papiro y, a veces de cuero, también lo son los servicios. El intercambio de información de recursos era una bien pensada de los servicios que las bibliotecas vinculadas en todo el mundo. Sin embargo, esto ha dejado de lado una parte importante, "lengua"

While a catalogue record at the National University of Lesotho library as an example reads:

Contents

111438 10 -- \$a0824720776 :\$bhb [vol. 1-4] :\$dR18588.50
100 -- \$a20060322d2003
101 -- \$aeng
102 -- \$aGB
200 -- \$aEncyclopedia of library and information science :\$gedited by
Miriam A. Drake
205 -- \$a2nd ed.
210 -- \$aNew York :\$cMarcel Dekker :\$d2003
215 -- \$axviii, 1-802p. :\$cfigures, tables
300 -- \$aIncludes index
364 -- \$aincludes bibliographic references
365 -- \$aA 4 volume set. vol 1 P.1-802, Abs-Dec; vol.2 P.803-1590 Des-Lib;
vol. 3 P.1591-2378 Lib-Pub
606 -- \$aLibrary science, \$xEncyclopedia
606 -- \$aInformation science, \$xEncyclopedia
676 \$a020.3 :\$v20
702 \$aDrake, \$bMeriam, \$kA.
801 -- \$aLS :\$bD002 :\$c20060322 :\$gAACR
984 -- \$aD002 :\$bN :\$cR 020.3 ENC Top of Form

Contenido

111.438 10 - \$ bhb a0824720776: \$ vol [. 1-4]: \$ dR18588.50
100 - \$ a20060322d2003
101 \$ aeng
102 \$ AGB
200 - \$ aEncyclopedia de biblioteconomía y documentación: \$ gedited
byMiriam A. Drake

205 - \$ a2nd ed.
 210 - \$ aNuevos York: \$ cMarcel Dekker: \$ D2003
 215 - \$ axviii, 1-802p. : \$ CLas cifras, tablas
 300 \$ aIncludes índice
 364 - \$ ainclues referencias bibliográficas
 365 - \$ 4 aA conjunto de volúmenes. vol 1 P.1-802, Abs-diciembre; vol.2
 P.803-1590 Des-Lib, vol. 3 P.1591-2378 Lib-Pub
 xEncyclopedia ciencia aLibrary 606 \$, \$
 xEncyclopedia ciencia aInformación 606 \$, \$
 676 \$ a020.3: \$ v20
 702 \$ aDrake, \$ bMeriam, \$ kA.
 801 - \$ ALS: \$ bD002: \$ c20060322: \$ gAACR
 984 - \$ bN aD002: \$: \$ 020,3 cR ENC

6.2 Yahoo Babel Fish

Translation by Babel fish from English into Spanish brings up a different format from the original text. It is not easy to read.

6.2.1 English to Spanish

Contents

113910 10 -- \$a0824720784 :\$bhb [vol 2] :\$dR18588.50
 100 -- \$a20060322d2003
 101 \$aeng
 102 \$aGB
 200 -- \$aEncyclopedia of Library and information Science :\$gedited by
 Miriam A.Drake
 205 -- \$a2nd ed.
 210 -- \$aNuevos York :\$cMarcel Dekke :\$d2003
 215 -- \$a803-1590p.[64p.indices] :\$cfigures, tables
 300 \$aIncludes index
 364 -- \$aIncludes bibliographic references
 365 -- \$aA four volume set: vol.1 starts from p.1-802: Abs-Dec; vol. 2:
 p.803-1590: Des-Lib; vol. 3:p.1591-2378: Lib-Pub; vol.4: p.2379-3144: Pub-
 Zoo.
 606 \$aLibrary science, \$xEncyclopedia
 606 \$aInformation science, \$xEncyclopedia
 676 \$a020.3 :\$v20
 702 \$aDrake, \$bMeriam, \$kA.
 801 -- \$aLS :\$bD002 :\$c20060322 :\$gAACR
 984 -- \$aD002 :\$bY :\$cR 020.3 ENC

Contenido 113910 10 -- \$a0824720784: \$bhb [vol. 2]: \$dR18588.50 100 -- \$a20060322d2003 101 \$aeng 102 \$aGB 200 -- \$aEncyclopedia de la biblioteca y de las ciencias de la información: \$gedited de Miriam A.Drake 205 -- ed de \$a2nd. 210 - - \$aNew York: \$cMarcel Dekke: \$d2003 215 -- \$a803-1590p. [64p.indices]: \$cfigures, tablas 300 índice de \$aIncludes 364 -- referencias bibliográficas de \$aIncludes 365 -- sistema de volumen de \$aA cuatro: vol.1 empieza con p.1-802: ABS-Diciembre; vol. 2: p.803-1590: DES-Liberación; vol. 3: p.1591-2378: Liberación-Pub; vol.4: p.2379-3144: Pub-Parque zoológico. 606 ciencia de \$aLibrary, \$xEncyclopedia 606 ciencia de \$aInformation, \$xEncyclopedia 676 \$a020.3: \$v20 702 \$aDrake, \$bMeriam, \$kA. 801 -- \$aLS: \$bD002: \$c20060322: \$gAACR 984 -- \$aD002: \$bY: \$cR 020.3 ENC

6.3 WorldLingo and Web-Lingo

WorldLingo as opposed to other web translators, is a global organization that offers a full range of online translation, localization and globalization consulting services to a variety of blue-chip clients around the world.

It is said that the power of WorldLingo's translation service has been integrated into Microsoft Office XP which is said to be multilingual, and is the latest release of the popular Office software. This allows all office customers access to its specialist online translation services, which provide various translations; for single words, phrases and also entire documents. This is done by use of a unique combination of either fast machine translation or uploaded document for professional human translation and for the rescue for Sotho speaking people there is inclusion of Sotho in WorldLingo. Web-lingo on the other hand is one that has its focus on African languages. This helps those minority groups in Africa who are normally left out

This may be of interest to some libraries in developing countries because it sounds like it does not demand much, more especially on technical know-how, and it does translate almost every language (<http://www.worldlingo.com>).

7. Constraints

As much as it is helpful for libraries to incorporate multilingual bibliographic records in their databases, some countries like Lesotho are faced with a predicament of not being able to be at par with others. Although there are smaller groups that speak other languages like Zulu, Xhosa, and Pedi, a minimal number of institutions of higher learning and one or two official languages: “Sesotho” and “English” which are used countrywide, Lesotho may not be able to update their existing records to accommodate multilingual records.

Lesotho's education is based on the foreign language which English language. It is the international language to link the nation with the outside world. Libraries buy books outside the country and the preferred language is not Sesotho. Therefore this does not make Basotho to see a need for heterogeneous languages as most of library users are pure Basotho who want to be linked with the outside world.

Some projects have already been carried out in other libraries in regard to multilingual bibliographic records and search. Most of them require a lot which Lesotho libraries

may not afford. As such some of the problems were posed by multilingual records have been raised at the IFLA 56th in Thailand where Freyre & Bourdon argued that a number of issues including among others ISBDs, are standardized; it is recommended that a given national bibliographic agency uses only one cataloguing language and/or one cataloguing script. This is not in favour with some countries that have several official languages because they do not know which language or script must be chosen by the national bibliographic agency. (Freyre and Bourdon 1999)

Although Lesotho is producing engineers in Information Technology who may help with their technical know-how, after completion of their studies they get washed away to the greener pastures leaving the country with non skilled personnel.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion one would say that inclusion of multi-language records in our databases will not only be a benefit to users of a specific library per say, but also to information professionals and users world wide, only if the libraries are networked. At present networks of libraries are more regionally than internationally, and in Lesotho such networks is not visible. This is a barrier to library users who may need information held in another library outside the local library's network. This again poses a question of how is it possible with different systems which may not be compatible to each other. There are those libraries which are stand alone in terms of networking. They are using intranet instead of internet. Which means; that other libraries may not be able to access some records while others may download records from the internet. Therefore, there is a need for standardization of systems as well as cataloguing rules. The standards which are in place now need to be revised in order to accommodate multilingual scripts.

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Weblogography

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