Guidelines for the Preparation of a Bibliography

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Prepared by the Bibliography Committee, Collection Development and Evaluation Section, Reference and User Services Division, American Library Association, 1992. Revised by the RUSA Standards Committee and approved by the RUSA Board of Directors, June, 2001. Reviewed and updated in June, 2008, by Collection Development Policies and Assessment Committee and approved by RUSA's Standards and Guidelines Committee, July, 2009. Approved by the RUSA Board of Directors, March 2010.

Introduction

These guidelines originated as the "Criteria for Evaluating a Bibliography," adopted by the Reference Services Division Board in 1971. A revision of those guidelines under the current name, "Guidelines for the Preparation of a Bibliography" was approved by the RASD board of directors in 1982 and can be found in RQ22 (Fall 1982): 31-32. The RASD Bibliography Committee based many parts of the 1982 revision on the "Criteria for the Evaluation of Enumerative Bibliographies" prepared by the Committee on Bibliographical Services for Canada in 1979."

"The 1992 committee has proposed less extensive revisions than were adopted in 1982 but wants to strengthen wording regarding annotations and multiple points of access and to make clearer what is meant by standard bibliographic form."

The 2007-09 RUSA/CODES Collection Development Policies and Assessment Committee has proposed minor changes to the document to include electronic bibliographies, author information, timeliness and history.

The original Guidelines were adopted in 1971 by the Reference Services Division Board and revised and updated in 1982 and in 1992 by the Bibliography Committee of the Collection Development and Evaluation Section of the Reference and User Services Association. The 2001 revision was prepared by RUSA's Standards and Guidelines Committee to reflect technological developments since the wide dissemination of print or electronic bibliographies and to make more explicit sound principles involved in the preparation of a bibliography, regardless of its format. They are intended for use by all in the library community.

For purposes of these Guidelines, a 'bibliography' is a systematic list of bibliographic units within a subject (see 3.2). Bibliographies may exist as stand alone works or may appear at the end of research documents. As appropriate to the audience, the author(s) may elect to use a more common term to describe the final bibliography, such as "pathfinder," "finding aid," or "research guide."

1.0 Purpose

1.1   Ensure that the bibliography fills a significant need in order to justify its compilation.

1.2   Fit the subject into the general scheme of available bibliographical sources without unnecessary duplication. If similar bibliographies exist, review them and then explicitly state the unique contribution of this new one.

1.3   Clearly state the subject in the title and define the subject in a preliminary statement.

2.0 Scope

2.1   Clearly define the scope.

2.2   Strive for completeness within the stated limitations (period, geographical area, medium, language, library holdings, quality, intended audience, etc.).

2.3   Identify and describe each different format appropriately.

3.0 Methodology

3.1   Provide sources consulted and information on the method of compilation.

3.2   Include all available bibliographic units within the subject. A bibliographic unit is an entity in a bibliography: books, journal articles, reports, manuscripts, sound and video recordings, individual web pages and/or entire web sites, computer programs or printouts, films, charts, etc. Identify all items not personally examined by the author(s).

4.0   Organization

4.1   Principles of organization

4.11   Organize the material suitably for both the subject and the targeted users.

4.12   Arrange the material so it is possible to use the bibliography from at least one organizational approach without consulting supporting documentation such as an index.

4.13   Provide multiple means of access as appropriate. Means of access include both the useful arrangement of materials and the available methods to search those materials.

4.14   Develop the scheme for a classified bibliography so that it is logical and easy for users to understand.

4.15   Utilize recognized navigation features and other sound principles relating to layout and file size for bibliographies published on the World Wide Web.

4.2   Necessary components

4.21   Provide a statement of scope and purpose for every bibliography.

4.22   Provide an explanation of how to use the bibliography.

4.23   Provide a key to all abbreviations used in the bibliography.

4.24   Provide both a table of contents and an index or indexes. For an electronic version, include search engine or keyword searching capability.

4.25   Describe indexes with sufficient detail to provide acceptable levels of recall and precision. Utilize terminology of the indexes appropriate to both subject and intended users.

4.251   Provide cross-references adequate for normal reference purposes.

4.252   Provide multiple indexes if required for complete access to the materials.

4.3   Desirable features

4.31   Consider utilizing entry numbers for bibliographic units.

4.32   Consider including location of copies of bibliographical units, if not readily available.

4.33   Include links to available full text in electronic bibliographies if there are no copyright issues.

5.0   Annotations/Notes

5.1   Provide annotations or notes at one of the following three levels:

5.11   Informative- Use informative notes chiefly when the nature or reason for inclusion of a title is not clear. Limit use of this minimal level of description to those bibliographies that approach comprehensiveness for the area they are covering.

5.12   Annotated- For descriptive annotations include enough of the contents to enable users to decide whether or not they want to view the original. Provide annotations at least at this level for any bibliography designated "annotated."

5.13   Critical or Evaluative- Have a knowledgeable person in the field write discriminating critical evaluations and ensure that the value of each item is assessed in relationship to other works in the area. Provide annotations at this level for any bibliography designated "critical" or "evaluative."

5.2   In each case, provide succinct and informative annotations or notes written on a level suitable for the intended users. If another source is drawn upon for the annotation, acknowledge the source appropriately.

6.0   Bibliographic Form

6.1   Provide sufficient information to identify the bibliographic unit easily for the purpose of the bibliography and needs of the intended user.

6.2   Consistently follow a recognized standard bibliographic form. Examples of these standards include, but are not limited to, those described in *The Chicago Manual of Style, The MLA Style Manual,* and the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.*

7.0   Timeliness

7.1   Minimize the time lag between completion of bibliographies and its publication. In the introductory material clearly state when the bibliography was completed.

7.2   Issue bibliographies intended to be current as closely as possible after the publication of the bibliographical units listed.

7.3   Periodically review the bibliography's life cycle and evaluate its current relevance.

8.0   Accuracy

8.1   Ensure that citations are correct and free from typographical errors.

8.2   Ensure that information provided in annotations and elsewhere is factually accurate and grammatically correct.

8.3   Consider provision for corrections after publication.

9.0 Format of the Work

9.1   Produce the bibliography with clear and appropriate format and typeface.

9.2   Produce printed volumes sturdy enough to withstand anticipated use.

9.3   Design the bibliography to keep its price within the means of potential users without sacrificing important features that facilitate its use.

10.0 Cumulation

10.1   Cumulate ongoing bibliographies whenever possible.

11.0 Distribution

11.1   Properly advertise and distribute published bibliographies in either print or electronic format as appropriate to the format, including notice to whatever standard national bibliography exists.