

7. Organising Information Resources

Introduction

It is useful for even a small service to catalogue, classify and index its document collections in a simple way, to prepare documents properly for use, to take steps to protect documents against damage, theft and disasters, and to be able to repair damaged documents. Document collections will need to be arranged differently depending on:

- the kinds of documents they contain
- how users want to make use of them

In all cases, however, the chosen method of arranging the collections should have two basic aims:

- to bring together documents in similar physical formats or having other common characteristics which call for similar kinds of storage treatment
- to make it easier for users and staff to find the documents they require

Most documents need to be:

- classified by subject or other criteria
- recorded in a catalogue or database
- physically prepared for use and protected against damage

Not all of these treatments will be needed for all kinds of documents; in most small documentation services, for example:

- newspapers and current periodicals will not need to be classified by subject, but may be arranged and recorded alphabetically by title
- documents held in purely electronic formats and stored within a computer will not need physical processing
- ephemeral materials such as publicity brochures, announcements of forthcoming events or new publications, etc. will not need to be catalogued or classified, but simply be put on display until they become out of date.

Main sections of the collections

In most cases, the documents will need to be grouped into sections according to

- their physical format – e.g. separate sections for books, newspapers, audiovisual materials, etc.
- other characteristics – e.g. document series, date of publication
- the way in which they are meant to be used – e.g. available for loan or only to be used within the service

Physical format

Ordinary books, slides, maps, flimsy reports, brochures and microfiche cannot be kept together in one sequence without causing a great deal of inconvenience to users and possibly damage to some of the items. Even small documentation services will normally find it necessary to:

- separate books and reports from current periodicals and newspapers
- separate extra large documents from those of normal size
- provide separate storage for special types of document such as maps and plans, audiovisual materials, microfiche and computer media

Other characteristics

The introduction of sections based on characteristics of the documents other than their physical format (for example, sections for conference proceedings, special series of technical reports, survey records or project documents) will be dictated by the use of the documents rather than by the documents themselves. Users should be consulted as to the need for such sections and the best way of arranging documents within them.

Arrangement within the main sections

Within each of the main sections of the collection, the documents should be arranged in a way which will make it as easy as possible for users to find the ones they are looking for. Different groups of users may prefer different arrangements for similar types of document. For example:

- users in a project office may prefer to have all documents related to one project kept together and arranged by the document numbering system used for the project
- users in a district water engineer's office may prefer to have all documents relating to a particular place brought together, even if this means separating documents produced by the same project

Typical methods of arranging the main sections of a documentation service include:

- books and general reports
 - by size
 - by subject, according to the classification scheme in use
- current periodicals
 - alphabetically by title, with the issues of each title arranged by volume and issue number
- conference proceedings
 - alphabetically by the name of the organising body or of the conference itself, then by date; or first by date and then by name
- technical reports in series
 - by the name of the issuing body, then by series title and report number

- maps
 - by type of map (e.g. geological maps, land use maps, etc.)
 - by geographical coverage
 - by scale
- audiovisual materials
 - by format (e.g. slides, videocassettes, etc.), then by subject

Using identification symbols

Each type of document should be assigned a distinguishing symbol, e.g.

- LS for Large Size volumes
- PER for current periodicals
- CON for conference proceedings
- REP for reports
- MAP for maps
- AV for audiovisual materials, etc.

Materials intended to be used only inside the service (i.e. for reference only) may additionally be assigned the symbol REF. They may be kept in a separate section or in the appropriate main section. In such cases, they will need to be allocated more than one symbol, e.g. LS REF for a large size reference book, etc.

These symbols should be used

- to label the shelves, files and other locations where the documents are kept
- to label the documents themselves
- in the catalogue or database entries relating to the documents
- in other records relating to the documents, e.g. the accessions register

The symbols make it easier

- for users and staff to find the documents they require
- make it easier to replace documents in their correct locations after use

They should be

- designed to meet local needs, using local scripts and languages where appropriate
- carefully chosen so as to avoid confusion with other sets of symbols which may be used by the service or its parent institution for other purposes

See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual

5.5 Shelving, displaying and filing materials

Flexible systems

Although the arrangement of the document collections may have been designed to be useful to most users for most of the time, there will always be occasions when users want

to locate related documents, for example, dealing with the same topic, which are kept in different sections of the collection.

Although an arrangement of project documents by project code number may be the most useful for the staff of a project office on most occasions, there may be times when a geographical approach is needed, such as when staff need to collect data on a particular locality before planning a new project.

Similarly, although a geographical arrangement may generally be most useful to the staff of a district office, there will be times when they need to identify and locate documents on a subject which may be of particular concern.

There is no way of arranging the documents which will meet all the needs of all the users all of the time. It is therefore necessary to create some other means of identifying related documents in different sections of the collection. This is achieved by creating a systematic record of the document collections in the form of a catalogue or database. The creation of such a record is dealt with in Chapter 9.

Classifying documents by subject

The purpose of classifying documents by their subjects is to help users and staff to find documents on specific subjects.

Classifying documents involves:

- analysing the subject content of documents
- representing the subject by symbols known as a classification number

The classification number assigned to a particular document is normally written:

- on the cover of the document
- inside the document
- in the accessions register
- in catalogue entries relating to the document.

Classification numbers are assigned to specific subjects by following a classification scheme.

Classification schemes

A classification scheme is a document which defines

- the meanings to be assigned to classification symbols in a particular subject field
- the rules for assigning and combining these symbols to represent the contents of documents in that subject field

The main types of classification scheme are

- general schemes aiming to cover all branches of knowledge
- specialised schemes designed to cover specific subject fields
- in-house schemes designed to cover specific document collections

General classification schemes like

- the Dewey Decimal Classification (<http://www.oclc.org/dewey/>)
- the Universal Decimal Classification (<http://www.udcc.org/>)
- the Library of Congress Classification (<http://classweb.loc.gov/>)

These have the advantage of being created and kept up to date by groups of information specialists and subject specialists working in well-established organisations. Their main disadvantage for small local documentation services dealing with water and sanitation is that they often do not cover the subjects of interest to local users in sufficient detail.

Two examples of specialised classification scheme designed for document collections in the water and sanitation sector and environmental health are the IRC Classification Scheme and the REPIDISCA Classification Scheme (see Box 7A).

In-house classification schemes are designed to reflect the unique characteristics of the collections of specific local documentation services in terms of their subject coverage, coverage of local geographical areas and administrative units, languages covered, etc. Such in-house classification scheme are designed and maintained by the staff of the service. However, the creation and maintenance of such schemes are demanding tasks which should not be undertaken lightly; it is almost always easier to use an existing scheme and, if necessary, adapt it to local conditions.

See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual

- 5.1 Classifying materials
 - 5.1.1 Choosing a classification scheme
 - 5.1.2 How to classify materials
- 5.2 Developing a classification scheme
 - 5.2.1 How to develop a classification scheme
 - 5.2.2 How to extend the classification scheme

Box 7A: Classification schemes

The IRC Classification Scheme

The IRC Classification Scheme is widely used in water and sanitation documentation services in many parts of the world, and its use in a local documentation service will make it easier for the service to exchange information and documents with these other services and make use of the catalogues, indexes and other tools which they produce. The production of a revised version of this scheme was started in 1992 and is still distributed to interested parties. The main divisions are:

- 0 REFERENCE BOOKS
- 1 GENERAL
- 2 WATER SUPPLY
- 3 SANITATION
- 5 INFORMATION SCIENCE
- 7 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
- 8 COUNTRIES

Divisions 4 and 6 were omitted in the last update.

Further information from:

Documentation Unit, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, PO Box 2869, 2601CW Delft, The Netherlands. Tel. +31-15-219 29 39. Fax: +31-15-219 09 55. E-mail: library@irc.nl. Web site: <http://www.irc.nl>.

The REPIDISCA classification scheme

The classification scheme used by the Pan American Environmental Health Information Network (Red Panamericana de Información en Salud Ambiental: (REPIDISCA) has ten main divisions:

- 0 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
- 1 ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
- 2 APPLIED SCIENCES AND ENVIRONMENT
- 3 HYDRIC RESOURCES AND WATER POLLUTION
- 4 WATER SUPPLY
- 5 WASTEWATER
- 6 SOLID AND HAZARDOUS WASTE
- 7 SOIL POLLUTION
- 8 AIR POLLUTION
- 9 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Further information from:

Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences, Los Pinos 259 Urbanización Camacho, Lima 12, Peru; Box 4337, Lima 100, Peru. Tel: +51 (1) 4371077. Fax: +51 (1) 4378289. E-mail: mbryce@cepis.ops-oms.org. Web site: <http://www.cepis.ops-oms.org>

Classifying: basic principles

The three main steps in classifying documents are:

1. Decide what the document is about
This is not always as easy as it sounds. The titles of documents are often vague, misleading or ambiguous, and it is often necessary to study the contents page and sometimes the preface or introduction, to determine the real subject of the work. Also, many documents deal with more than one subject, for example, with both water supply and sanitation. The basic rule is to classify the document either under the main subject, if there is one, or under the first subject in the document, if it is not obvious which is the main one.
2. Locate the chosen subject or subjects in the classification scheme
Again, this is not always as straightforward as it may seem. In the IRC scheme, for example, different aspects of the subject 'public standposts' may be found at several different locations in the scheme, depending on the approach to the subject, the main emphasis of the work, or the kind of document.
3. Assign the classification symbols
When the subjects with which the document deals have been found in the classification scheme, the classification symbols shown there are written in the document itself and in the accessions register and the catalogue entries relating to the document.

All documents on the same subject should have the same classification symbols assigned. This makes it easier to identify documents dealing with the same subject, no matter in which sections of the collection -- reference section, map collection, large size books section, etc. -- they may be located.

The documents are arranged by their classification numbers within the various sections, in order to bring documents on the same subject together in each section.

The symbols which indicate the section to which a document belongs (e.g. REF, LS, etc.), together with the classification number, comprise what is known as the 'call number' of the document. Most published classification schemes also include guidance on how to use them.

Subject indexing

Documents may deal with more than one subject but they can only be physically located in one place. Even documents which deal with one subject cannot always be kept together, because of differences in physical format and in the purposes for which they are intended. A videotape on pit latrines, for example, will probably be kept in a different place from a map showing the distribution of pit latrines in the locality.

Although classification numbers identify documents dealing with the same subject, and several numbers can be assigned to one document dealing with several subjects, users cannot be expected to know the classification numbers for every subject.

An alphabetical index to the classification numbers used in the catalogue enables users and staff to find out:

- the classification number for a particular subject
- what documents the service contains on a particular subject.

In a book or card catalogue, the index will normally refer the user to classification numbers rather than individual documents. When one document has been classified and its classification number indexed in this way, it will not be necessary to repeat the procedure for further documents on the same subject. This level of indexing should be adequate for most small local documentation services.

In a computerised catalogue, the index refers the user to entries for individual documents, and complex searches can be carried out by combining subject descriptors with other characteristics of the document such as the date of publication, author, language of the text, and so on.

As with cataloguing and classification, indexing can become a complex task which absorbs more staff time and effort than a small documentation service can afford. An index to the classification numbers used in the catalogue will usually be adequate. Only if the service is able to computerise its catalogue should more detailed subject indexing of individual documents be considered.

See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual
5.3 Assigning keywords
5.3.1 Choosing a keywords list
5.3.2 How to assign keywords
5.3.3 How to produce a keywords list
5.3.4 Sample of Healthlink Worldwide Keywords List

Subject indexing terms

The terms used in the index to describe the subjects being indexed may be:

- used in the documents themselves
- used in the classification scheme
- listed in a standardised list known as a list of subject headings or a thesaurus.

The advantage of using terms taken from the documents themselves is that relatively little intellectual effort is required on the part of the indexer, who simply has to copy the terms from the document.

The disadvantage of using such terms is that the user may not use the same terms in his or her search, and may thus not find potentially important catalogue entries.

The terms used in the classification scheme to describe the subjects to which classification numbers are assigned may also be used for indexing, but a classification scheme does not

usually show the relationships between different terms or provide guidance on making cross references from similar terms.

Lists of subject headings and thesauri

These aids to subject indexing:

- provide lists of approved or standardised terms to be used for indexing in a specific field
- indicate the relationships between terms
- provide guidance on making cross references
- make indexing easier
- help users to find all the catalogue entries for documents of interest to them
- help to ensure that the same subject is always described by the same term, and not by a different but similar term

A thesaurus is a controlled and structured list of terms used in subject analysis and retrieval of documents, publications and information in specific subject fields.

A list of subject headings is also controlled list of terms, but without the structured hierarchical, associative or equivalence relationships which are shown in a thesaurus.

A general thesaurus which includes terms related to water supply and sanitation is the UNESCO Thesaurus (see Box 7B).

Box 7B: The UNESCO Thesaurus

The UNESCO Thesaurus allows subject terms to be expressed consistently, with increasing specificity, and in relation to other subjects. It can be used to facilitate subject indexing in libraries, archives and similar institutions. It contains 7,000 terms in English and 8,600 terms in both French and in Spanish.

The thesaurus covers several broad areas of knowledge within the fields of UNESCO's competence. Terms relating to water supply and sanitation are found in several parts of the thesaurus, mainly in the sections on:

- Environmental sciences and engineering
- Human settlements and land use
- Hydrology
- Meteorology.

<http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/>

Online searching

The thesaurus can be searched online at: <http://databases.unesco.org/thesaurus/>

Published versions

The second (1995) edition of the thesaurus can be downloaded as Portable Document Format (PDF) files in three language versions as follows:

- English: <http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/intro/introeng.pdf>
- French: <http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/intro/introfre.pdf>
- Spanish: <http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/intro/introspa.pdf>

It is available in print as:

UNESCO Thesaurus: A Structured List of Descriptors for Indexing and Retrieving Literature in the Fields of Education, Science, Social and Human Science, Culture, Communication and Information. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1995. ISBN 92-3-003100-3.

It is also available as part of a CD-ROM:

UNESCO Databases. (Paris: UNESCO, 2002), ISBN 92-3-003868-7. [The CD-ROM includes other UNESCO databases in addition to the UNESCO Thesaurus.]

Both can be ordered directly from:

UNESCO Publishing, UNESCO Headquarters, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 PARIS 07 SP, France. Tel. +33 1 45 68 1000. Fax: +33 1 45 67 16 90. Web site: <http://upo.unesco.org/>.

A multilingual thesaurus designed specifically for the water and sanitation sector is the InterWATER Thesaurus published by the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre. This two-volume thesaurus in English, French, and Spanish, was originally published in 1987 and is still in use. An update is in progress and should be completed in 2005. When

completed this will also allow searches to be conducted on the IRC and related websites in English, Spanish and French.

Another multilingual thesaurus also designed specifically for the water and sanitation sector is the REPIDISCA Thesaurus published by the Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS) (see Box 7C).

Box 7C: The REPIDISCA Thesaurus

REPIDISCA Thesaurus of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering. 12a. Edition, February 2003. 200 p.

Document in PDF format accessible via: <http://www.cepis.ops-oms.org/indexeng.html>

This is the English version of the thesaurus. The database thesaurus contains French, German, Portuguese and Spanish versions.

Further information from:

Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences, Los Pinos 259 Urbanizacion Camacho, Lima 12, Peru; Box 4337, Lima 100, Peru. Tel: +51 (1) 4371077. Fax: +51 (1) 4378289. E-mail: mbryce@cepis.ops-oms.org. Web site: <http://www.cepis.ops-oms.org>

Subject index entries

Whether a thesaurus is used or not, the main steps in indexing are:

1. Decide what the document is about
This first step in indexing is identical to the first step in classifying. For this reason, it is usually better for classifying and indexing to be done by the same person at the same time.
2. Identify and note key terms used in the document to describe its subject and scope - including terms which describe more specific aspects than can be indicated by the classification scheme.
3. Review the key terms in relation to the known needs and interests of users of the service
Only include terms that are likely to be used in searching for documents.

If a thesaurus is not used, the terms which remain after the third step has been completed may be used as the index terms.

If a thesaurus is being used, these remaining terms should be translated into descriptors used in the thesaurus, and then used as the index terms.

Recording documents in a catalogue or database

To help users to find documents, the record of the collection should make it possible to identify documents by authors, titles and subjects. Such a list is usually known as the

catalogue or database of the documentation service. The most common types of catalogue in use today are:

- book catalogues
- card catalogues
- computer catalogues or databases.

Book catalogues and card catalogues are suitable for documentation services which do not have a computer. If the service has a computer, it should develop a computer catalogue or database.

Catalogues are still sometimes kept on microfilm or microfiche. Special equipment is needed to produce and to consult them, and it can be difficult to keep them up to date. These have generally been replaced by computerised catalogues.

Book catalogues

In a simple catalogue, details of each document in the collection are written or typed on loose-leaf sheets or in an exercise book or ledger. They can also be produced by photocopying card catalogues or printing out computerised catalogues.

Book catalogues may be suitable for very small documentation services, but keeping them up to date can become a big problem if the collection grows at even a modest rate. On the other hand, photocopies or additional printouts of the catalogue can be made quite easily for distribution to other locations to serve users working in widely scattered field offices or project sites. A print out of a computer catalogue can also meet most of these needs.

Card catalogues

Card catalogues, in which the details of documents are written or typed on index cards, which are then filed in drawers, are more flexible than book catalogues because new entries can easily be interfiled in their correct locations. Keeping the catalogue up-to-date is therefore much easier. Multiple copies of the cards can be produced to enable copies of the catalogue to be maintained at other locations.

The big drawback to the card catalogue is that the task of filing the cards correctly requires a certain amount of training and can become very time-consuming if new documents are added to the collection frequently or in large numbers. It is also easy to make mistakes in filing, each of which renders the catalogue progressively less useful as a guide to the contents of the collection.

Other drawbacks are that users need to visit the service to consult the catalogue, and that many users also find it difficult to learn to use a card catalogue properly.

See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual

- 5.4 Cataloguing materials
- 5.4.1 Deciding what to catalogue
- 5.4.2 How to catalogue materials
- 5.4.3 Examples of catalogue cards
- 5.4.4 Filing catalogue cards

Computerised catalogues and databases

The computerised catalogue or database has many advantages over other forms of catalogue. Only one entry has to be prepared for each document, and more sophisticated searches are possible than with other types of catalogue; for example, it is possible to quickly identify all documents published before or after a particular date and on a particular combination of subjects, and so on.

Digital copies of such catalogues can be made easily, and the entire catalogue, selected sections of it, or individual entries can easily be printed out. Computerised catalogues can be easily updated and revised, and augmented with records transferred from other computerised systems.

The main drawbacks of the computerised catalogue or database are:

- the service needs access to a computer and ancillary equipment before it can create, maintain or use a catalogue
- staff need training beyond that required to acquire basic cataloguing skills
- some users may need training to use a computerised system
- If the catalogue is only accessible on one computer, only one user or staff member can consult the catalogue at a time

Box 7D: Databases

[From: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual, Section 6.8 Databases]

A database is information stored on a computer in such a way that it can be:

- searched through to find certain details
- displayed on the computer screen or printed onto paper in various styles
- sorted so that it can be ordered in different ways, such as author, title, subject and date of publication

A database is made up of 'records', where all the information about an item such as a publication or organisation is stored. Records are equivalent to the cards in a card catalogue system. Each record is made up of 'fields', where information about different aspects of the item is stored – for example, the author or keyword, or the name of an organisation or its telephone number. Fields can be repeated to accommodate more than one author or keyword, or divided into 'subfields' to accommodate titles and subtitles, or the publisher and place of publication.

A database is faster and more flexible than a manual system. For example, searching a card catalogue is limited by the number cards that can be produced, and the way the information is presented can only be changed by re-writing or re-typing the cards. The types of database most often used in resource centres are bibliographic databases and mailing list or 'contacts' databases.

A bibliographic database is like an electronic card catalogue. Each record contains details of materials, similar to the cards in a catalogue. Each field contains information about one aspect of a material, such as the author or title.

A mailing list database is like an electronic address book. Each record contains information about individuals or organisations. Each field contains information about one aspect of the individual or organisation, such as their name, profession, organisation type, or address.

Subsections

- 6.8.1 Standard database structures
- 6.8.2 How to design a database
- 6.8.3 Data entry guidelines
- 6.8.4 Database management
- 6.8.5 How to choose database software

Further guidance on database applications and the choice of database software is provided on the ItrainOnline web site (see Box 7E).

Box 7E: ItrainOnline: databases

The resources listed in this section provide help in choosing a database system and planning a structure which meets the specific needs of an organisation.

- Introduction
- Database basics
- Choosing a database
- Building a database-driven web site
- General
- Content management systems
- Software

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/databases.shtml>

Standardisation in cataloguing

Whatever physical format is chosen for the service's catalogue, it is necessary to apply standardised rules and procedures in preparing the catalogue entries (the formalised descriptions of documents). If standardised forms of name, layout and terminology are not used, it quickly becomes very difficult to find related entries or to carry out effective searches.

Several international codes of cataloguing rules have been developed to standardise cataloguing practice. These are essentially designed for use by professional cataloguers, and are too detailed and sophisticated for use in local documentation services.

In many countries, local library associations or library schools have produced national cataloguing codes, often in local languages and suitable for local conditions such as local usage, such as forms of surname, etc. These may be more suitable for use in local documentation services than the international rules.

The aim should be to apply a few basic rules which will ensure that the service's catalogue is organised on sound lines from the start and provide a firm basis for the catalogue to be expanded by professional staff if this becomes necessary in the future.

A list of the basic items which should be included in the catalogue entries for documents in a local documentation service is provided below.

How to prepare catalogue entries

It is important to remember that the catalogue is a means to an end -- locating documents in the collection -- and not an end in itself. In most local services, there is no need to catalogue documents in great detail. The basic elements to be recorded for each document are:

- the name of the author or authors
 - which may be an institution as well as an individual

- the title (and sub-title, if any)
- the edition (other than the first)
- the date of publication
- the name of the publisher
 - not necessary in the case of periodical articles
- the series or larger document to which the document belongs, if any
 - e.g. a volume of conference proceedings, an issue of a current periodical
- any identifying numbers
- e.g. the International Standard Book Number (ISBN), series number, report number, etc.
- an indication of the subject of the document
 - this may be in the form of a classification number or a set of standardised terms used to describe the subject, known as descriptors
- an indication of where the document is located in the documentation service
- the accession number
- the type of document
 - e.g. video tape, slide set, etc., if this is not clear from the rest of the description

Two elements normally included in catalogue entries may be omitted from a basic catalogue, namely the place of publication and details of the physical make-up of the document – number of pages, illustrations, tables, graphs, etc.— known as collation. The name of the series may be omitted in the case of complete works such as books and reports, but in the case of documents such as articles in current periodicals, or conference papers included in volumes of conference proceedings, details of the periodical issue or the complete volume must be included so that users will know where to find the item in the documentation service.

Many documents, particularly commercially-published books, include catalogue entries themselves, usually at the back of the title page. This information can be used as a guide for producing entries for the catalogue, saving time and effort.

Help with cataloguing

Advice and assistance on cataloguing can often be obtained from the professional staff of other libraries or documentation services in the country. When setting up the service and organising existing document collections it may be advisable to employ a qualified librarian or documentalist on contract for a few weeks to produce the first catalogue and prepare basic rules to guide staff in future.

Physical processing

After a document has been catalogued, classified and indexed, it will usually need to undergo a certain amount of physical processing to prepare it for use. The physical processing of documents may include:

- marking the document, usually with an ownership stamp, to show that it belongs to the documentation service
- marking the document with its call number to show where it should be kept
- marking the document with its accession number so that it can be accounted for, if necessary, in any stocktaking or auditing that may be required
- preparing the document for use by attaching any labels, pockets, cards, etc. -- for example, a date label on which to record the date when a loaned document is due to be returned to the service
- protecting the document against wear and tear, for example, by fitting a transparent plastic cover or reinforcing the spine with clear adhesive tape

The amount of processing will depend on what the document is to be used for and how often it is expected to be used, as well as on the amount of money available for buying materials and the amount of staff time available for the work.

There is no point in spending a lot of time and money on processing documents which have a short active life (e.g. brochures announcing forthcoming events, annual reports, current issues of newspapers and newsletters), which are not expected to be used very often, or which are meant to be used only inside the documentation service.

Repairing documents

The staff of the documentation service should know how to repair damaged documents, when they are still useful. Damaged documents which are no longer of use should be withdrawn from the collection and discarded.

Repairing and restoring rare and valuable documents is a skilled craft which requires specially trained personnel and special equipment. The staff of a local documentation service need to know only basic repair techniques for dealing with common types of damage such as torn pages and damaged covers.

Torn pages are best repaired with 'invisible' adhesive tape. Ordinary clear adhesive tape should be avoided as it tends to shrink with time and become dirty and sticky at the edges. Damaged covers can be repaired with 'invisible' tape, clear adhesive plastic film, or bookbinder's repair tape.

Documents with covers which are very badly damaged or worn out should be sent for rebinding by a trained bookbinder. National and university libraries often have their own binderies and are sometimes willing to rebind and repair documents for other institutions. Most countries have commercial bookbinding firms able to do this work.