

Mini Crash-Course in Librarian- and Curatorship

January 2011

Let people know about your library and/or museum! If no one ever uses the collections, their value diminishes and your library-museum becomes only a well-catalogued storehouse. Make suggestions and otherwise offer to help the patrons navigate the collection. Smile! Actually put an item or two (if appropriate) into their hands.

Before any other explanations, there is one VERY important point of policy of which one must be aware: Next to careful documentation of acquisitions especially of donations: For one's own protection (and to keep interactions amicable), do NOT appraise.

1. If the institution should later acquire that object, it could be an "interested party" in the legal sense.
2. Most of us do not have the expertise (although it could be acquired with practice...).

However, when one does receive a donation, an appraisal is very helpful, as it sometimes can be used for (an institution's) insurance or (the donor's income) tax purposes. But, put the onus on the donor. Example: A person will say (s)he has such-and-such (e.g. very often an "old" Mackey's *History of Freemasonry* – and not even a whole set, with "old" meaning anything older than the person asking), want an appraisal of it, and have your institution buy it. "Sorry, we are not permitted to appraise. Please go to a good antique or book dealer" keeps everyone out of all kinds of trouble. Here is the more formal statement used by The Masonic Library and Museum Association, which

"... in concert with the policies of many museum and libraries, respectfully declines to provide appraisals or an assessment of the value of an object - in accordance with federal tax law and the American Association of Museums Code of Ethics. MLMA also respectfully declines to recommend one appraiser over another. To find a qualified appraiser, please check your local telephone directory, go online to find local appraisers or contact:

American Society of Appraisers: 800-272-8258, www.appraisers.org

Appraisers Association of America: 212-889-5404, www.appraisersassoc.org

International Society of Appraisers: 312.224.2567, www.isa-appraisers.org

National Institute of Appraisers: 800-676-2148, www.appraiserofflineart.com"

Library Cataloguing:

The purpose of cataloguing anything is to answer two questions: "What does the collection have about (or by) ____?" and "Will people (including the librarian!) be able to find the material -- quickly?"

Brief overview of the Boyden Library Catalog System:

The 'System' was originally invented by William Boyden near the turn of the last century. He did so, because to him, no other library cataloging system functioned well enough for the purposes of Freemasonry and Masonic libraries. His system was adopted, modified and updated by the Grand Lodge Library of Washington State to accommodate the unique requirements of today's Masonic publications.

Note: Mentions Boyden history but doesn't explain Boyden-Bish change

The simplicity of the system has been debated. Those using it are mostly satisfied. The MLMA has the directions of how to employ the Boyden System - step by step. I believe an advantage to this system, besides its simplicity, is the cross-utilization of the cataloging numbers. Communications with other Jurisdictions who use the system can make certain books available to each other, as public library systems do. However, the main reason for *any* library cataloging system is to designate a specific place for the books on the shelves so that they can be easily found and returned to their proper location ! Assume the best way to catalogue is by subject, so that similar books stay together. (Don't laugh, people used to shelve them by size, which is necessary if they are too big or small for ordinary shelves – folios and miniatures - but even then, they should be put into the same order within their other designated physical space as those in the larger collection. Books are known to have been shelved by color of the binding! What happens if they are re-bound in another color?!) These cutter numbers can help with subjects as well as authors -- or, failing an author, the title (or whatever the “main entry” -- the prime look-up words -- might be). The Boyden-Bish classification system, like most systems, will enable one to put materials together by subject. See **Appendix 1 of “Library Classification System”** for the full Boyden-Bish. Or, it might be easier to use Boyden's book, which can be seen at

http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/how_to_catalog_your_masonic_library.htm

A friendly local librarian can help with the principles of classification, or ask

Dick Bish (rbish@comcast.net) <http://grandlodgelibraryandmuseum.books.officelive.com/Library.aspx>

However, as each item must have a unique designation, some provision for subdivision must be used. In addition to a basic classification system, there is an ingenious device called a “Cutter table.” It's rather like a logarithm table. See

<http://www.davignon.qc.ca/cutter8.html>. There is a newer one at

<http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/cataloging/cutter.html>.

Sometimes even two Cutter numbers are used, each on its own line: one for the subject and one for the author's name (or editor's, or compiler's, or even publisher's, or first word of the title). “Anonymous” is a very popular “author,” and each item must have its own call number. Only periodicals and some pamphlets do not have “double Cutters.” See **Appendix 2 of “Library Classification System”** for how to use the Cutter Table.

This whole alpha-numeric agglomeration known as a “catalogue or call number” (because formerly one went to the desk and asked for a book by its number – one did not, and in many libraries, still does not, find books for oneself).

In addition each book is given an accession number, separate from the call number, based on the year and order in which it was received.

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The Library of Congress subject headings are standard – but variations are encouraged. Example: designations such as “Freemasonry – History” are avoided, because Freemasonry is too broad an area. In the Masonic Library and Museum of Pennsylvania, at the very least, the designation would be turned around to read “History - Freemasonry.”

N.B. If there are duplicate books, another copy is labeled “copy 2” (or whichever number it is). In the inventory part of the catalogue record, the distinguishing information (including location) is noted.

N.B. When one comes upon a very old book, or one that is otherwise out of the ordinary, these few guidelines will help determine if it is “Rare” (thus needing additional care and security):

1. Any book printed before 1820. (There are not many remaining).
2. A significant association or provenance (e.g. a copy owned or donated by a famous person).
3. An unusually fine binding.
4. A specially illustrated edition.
5. Special paper, printing, or unusual dimensions.
6. A very limited edition (even if brand-new).
7. Extremely odd or unique subject-matter.

If Library material is printed but not a book, it can be kept in what is known as a vertical file – usually housed in a filing cabinet – though sometimes in accordion envelopes on shelves. See **Appendix 3 Library Classification System: Vertical File**.

Again, it is recommended that one get help from a friendly librarian nearby, or ask

Glenys Waldman, Librarian or
Cathy Giaimo, Assistant Librarian
The Masonic Library and Museum of Pennsylvania
(librarian@pagrandlodge.org)

Museum Cataloguing

Here follow suggestions from The Grand Lodge of Iowa for both archival and artifact collections. These items (which can include manuscripts, collections of papers – anything not printed as well as objects) are cataloged using a library data-base (Iowa uses Winnebago), using standard classification headings that are taken from *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging*. This book of nomenclature is the standard (like Library of Congress for libraries) for most museums and their cataloging programs. Some museum cataloguing softwares have it pre-configured into their data-bases. Instead of call numbers for books, artifacts are numbered using a multi-tiered numbering system that is based upon the date the item was accepted into our museum. The first part of this number is what we call an accession number and the rest is the catalog number.

Accessioning objects:

Example: John Doe of Ankeny, Iowa donates a collection of Masonic medallions (15 in number) to the Masonic museum and they are formally accepted via a **Deed of Gift** by the Grand Lodge of Iowa on January 5, 2010. This information is entered into an **Accession Book**, along with the name and address of the donor. Keep the Deed of Gift on file in a separate area. Say that this gift is the first donation made in the year 2010. **This donation is assigned the Accession Number of IML2010.1 (this is read First donation in the year 2010 for the Iowa Masonic Library/Museums).** In large museums, all the above is normally done by a person called a Registrar.

To begin the process of cataloging the medallions, each medallion, is assigned its own catalog number within that accession. The first medallion is a Grand Lodge of Iowa medallion from the 1944 centennial Grand Lodge session. I assign this medallion the catalog number of: IML2010.1.1 – Thus it becomes the first item in the first accession in the year 2010. This continues until the last medallion is numbered as IML2010.1.15.

Labeling objects:

First, writing the accession number on an object must be reversible. We write the accession number of the object in one of several ways. If the object is small, like a medallion, we will place that item into an inert plastic bag with the number of the item written on a label and placed onto the bag. If the item is larger, such as a china plate, or larger medallion, coin etc. the number will be written on the artifact itself. In order to do so we use a solvent called Acyloid B-72 (inert and reversible). We follow generally accepted guidelines, such as those in this link:

<http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conservoogram/01-04.pdf>.

If the item is a textile, we will write the accession number onto a small piece of cotton twill tape and then sew the tape onto an unobtrusive section of the textile.

Then the item is photographed using a digital camera, a location for the item within our museum collection is found, and then the item is catalogued using the Grand Lodge of Iowa's Winnebago Library catalog data-base.

Cataloguing objects

The Main Entry (the "author" of the item) is "Grand Lodge of Iowa". Under the title statement, the item is listed as: "1944 Grand Lodge of Iowa centennial medallion."

Under "publisher, place, date, etc." is entered "Grand Lodge of Iowa, [Cedar Rapids, Ia.]" (Brackets indicate that I am not sure if the item was given out in Cedar Rapids, or originated from Cedar Rapids): 1944.

Under "extent" (normally where the number of pages in a book is indicated), "1 medallion" is entered.

Under "dimensions" the size of the item in centimeters is entered.

The next area is the description. "Octagonal brass medallion attached to blue gros-grain ribbon and brass plate attached to pin on ribbon back. Engraved on plate is "Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1844-1944." Medallion has raised image of the first Masonic lodge

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building in Burlington, Iowa where the Grand Lodge of Iowa began. Beneath image are engraved words, "Centennial Session, 1844-1944."

Then a classification is assign to the item based upon what the item is and what is described in "Nomenclature." The preferred term for this type of medallion is "**Medal, Commemorative.**" It falls within the category called "**Communication Artifacts**" and more specifically "**Documentary artifact.**" So in the spaces normally used for subject headings **a topical heading, "Communication Artifacts," the sub-category "Documentary artifact," and the specific name is "Medal, Commemorative," are all entered.**

From the software of the digital camera, a copy of the photograph is pulled off the internet and the library software will allows the attachment of a copy of the photograph to the catalog entry -- using the standard URL (Uniform Resource Locator) for the photograph. This enables one to look at the item from the card catalog, rather than having to hunt for the item in the museum.

The item is given the catalog number, IML2010.1.1 and assigned its location on the catalog entry form. In this way, items can be located fairly quickly within the museum.

N.B. Sometimes there are duplicates in the collection. Similar items are distinguished from each other based upon their own unique accession number. If a collection is donated and there are several duplicate items in them that will not add anything to our overall collection, then these can be "weeded" from the collection, often at the time of acceptance. The Deed of Gift should list the items accepted into the permanent collection and contain the proviso that duplicates may be discarded. If the donor does not want those items back we will try to find another "home" for them.

The item is now cataloged and becomes part of the permanent record of the Grand Lodge of Iowa and the Iowa Masonic Library/Museums.

It is recommended that one get help from a friendly curator, or ask
Bill Kreuger
Iowa Masonic Library (Librarian@gl-iowa.org)