

Different Practices in Manuscript Cataloging in Egypt:

How could they be reconciled?

By

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Abstract:

This paper aims to explain the different cataloging practices in the Egyptian institutions that have manuscripts. There are many reasons for these differences. Firstly, the different cataloging standards applied to manuscripts in all institutions; Secondly, the scarcity of qualified manuscript cataloger; thirdly, the newness of the technological solutions such as bibliographic databases and metadata applications in Egyptian libraries. Finally, although the manuscripts are found in many institutions in Egypt, there is no planning that governs their collection and cataloging.

Introduction:

Cataloging is a part of the technical services which is considered a vital process in the library work. The main goal of cataloging is to describe the library materials in order to make it available to the users.

Cataloging is "The process of creating entries for a catalog. In libraries, this usually includes **bibliographic description**, subject analysis, assignment of classification notation, and activities involved in physically preparing the item for the shelf, tasks usually performed under the supervision of a librarian trained as a cataloger." (ODLIS, 2004)

As a part of cataloging process the bibliographic description "Is the detailed description of a copy of a specific edition of a work intended to identify and

distinguish it from other works by the same author of the same title or on the same subject" (ODLIS, 2004)

Manuscripts' cataloging is still a controversial issue in Egypt, and the main discussion point is the lack of a single agreed set of cataloging rules to be used for the manuscript collection in the Egyptian libraries.

The manuscripts cataloging problems are the result of the scattered distribution of manuscripts in the Egyptian libraries. If we could establish standardized cataloging practices, we would make a major contribution to scholarship, in particular as there are thousands of manuscripts that have not been edited up till now. These hidden treasures cannot be brought to light without being identified first.

This paper presents different examples of cataloging practices at the Central Library of the Islamic Manuscripts (Maktabat Al-Sayyidah Zaynab), Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Maktabat al-Iskandariyah al-Jadidah), and al-Azhar Library (Maktabat al-Azhar), with some suggested solutions which could help to solve this problem.

Manuscripts cataloging problems

The cataloging process faces a lot of problems particularly in Egypt. These problems could be categorized into two groups; (1) General problems related to the high cost of the manuscript cataloging or the cataloger's training; (2)

cataloging practice problems, which are connected to the cataloging rules and authority references usage in Egyptian libraries.

In order to solve the previous problems, the Egyptian heritage institutions should have a qualified cataloger who has the capabilities to read, understand, and catalog the Islamic manuscripts. Second, standardized cataloging rules should be applied in these institutions. Third, working tools such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, Atlases, and authority references are very essential to complete the cataloging process.

In conclusion, the most conspicuous problem related to the Islamic manuscripts in Egypt is the distribution of this great heritage between more than three types of institutions, such as Egyptian National Library (Dar EL Kutub), Egyptian ministries, such as Culture, Endowment, and Technology, as well as the Universities.

This problem is aggravated by inconsistency of cataloging practices and neglect of bibliographic control standards. Each institution follows its own individual practice in cataloging its manuscript collection.

To solve this problem we have to establish the concept that the cataloging is not a secondary importance, but is as important as editing, translation, and preservation.

Authority control is a related process to the manuscript cataloging too, it has some problems which could be presented as follow; (1) There are various

reference sources (*Zirikli* > *Kahhālah*, -and though rarely used- Brockelmann) and methodologies used for authorizing early Arabic names, which lead to variations of the same name in many catalogs or database; (2) lack of cooperation between the heritage institutions to establish an Arabic script authority file and/or to participate in a national cooperative authority file; (3) The early Arabic names are consists of many parts, such (PATRONYMIC, 'ISM (given name), LAQAB (descriptive epithet), KUNYAH (appellation), KHITAB (honorific name), NISBAH (attribution).

Manuscript cataloging rules

Many studies on manuscript cataloging rules exist in the library literature in the Arab countries. An overview of the manuscript catalogs in Egypt will show many gaps, particularly in coverage and arrangement, in addition to the data it provides. The main reason of this phenomenon is the multiple standards applied in these catalogs.

The earliest attempt to establish manuscript cataloging practice is established by *Tawfiq 'Iskandar* in 1965. He suggested a two-sided record; the recto contains the title, author, calligrapher, and photocopy of the first & last page in the manuscript; the verso includes data about the calligraphic style, paper, lines, dimensions, colors, and any other copies of the same manuscript available in other libraries.

Another set of rules established in 1973 by *Ṣālah}al-Dīn al-Munajjid*; he provided a set of fields which he already applied in a manuscript cataloging projects at *Library of Congress* and other libraries. The record fields were: title, author, incipit, explicit, dimensions, pages, lines, calligraphic style and color, calligrapher, notes, and the authority references for title and author.

In 1989 '*Abd al-Sattar al-Hālwajī*' provided a cataloging record based on (1) the international cataloging rules using in the libraries such AACR2 or ISBD; (2) the annotations and notes on the previous rules. The fields in record was author, title, place of transcription, calligrapher, date of transcription, pages, dimensions, type and color of calligraphic style, lines, physical description, incipit, explicit, colophon, and subjects.

Many libraries in Egypt used this record particularly when they started to build bibliographic databases for their manuscript collection.

In 1998 '*Iṣḥām al-Shintī*' published the cataloging experience of the Arabic Manuscript Institute where he used to work in cataloging. He suggests three levels of manuscript cataloging. The first level is cataloging which might be used in the manuscripts title lists; therefore, it should consist of the minimum cataloging field. The second level is the descriptive cataloging elements with some details. The third level is analytical cataloging which consists of the same elements of the two previous levels with details (author, title, incipit, explicit, colophon, pages, dimensions, lines, calligraphic styles, transcription data, and

the resources used by the cataloger to get the information) plus a summary/content of the manuscript.

In his discussion of manuscript cataloging problems in Egypt, the idea of a union catalog of Arabic manuscripts has been suggested by '*Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid*, so he presented a cataloging record that should be used in this project. This record includes (title, author, incipit, explicit, library name & manuscript no. in it, subjects, calligraphic style, materials, pages, lines, dimensions, holograph, and transcription.

The study cases

This study focuses on three libraries in Egypt; because they are the important libraries have the biggest numbers of Islamic manuscripts.

The first case is the Central Library of the Islamic Manuscripts which contains about 5000 manuscripts (8000 title). This library established in 2004 under supervision of the Ministry of Endowment. The cataloging record is too long, it consists of fourteen parts as follows; library data, binding data, title and statement of responsibility, manuscript language, physical description, incipit, explicit, notes, subject, ownership, custodian, authorized title, authorized author (Figure 1)

The second library is the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The BA undertook the administrative and technical supervision over the cataloging of the manuscripts of the Alexandria Municipal Library. They use the Anglo American Cataloging

Rules (AACR2, 1988) to catalog this collection of manuscripts and to make it available through their website (Figure 2). But there are many problems practicing this cataloging; for example the 260 field should not be used in manuscripts cataloging but they used to use it in their records.

The third library is which has about 40.000 manuscripts. This project has been done and now the manuscripts information and its images available through their website* .

Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to present the different practices in manuscript cataloging in Egypt, and how the diverse cataloging rules have brought about this situation.

In my opinion, there are several policy decisions that could contribute to a solution. First, decision to adopt international cataloging rules such *AACR2* should be used with *MARC21* in order to structure a bibliographic database of Arabic manuscripts*. Second, this paper proposes a group of *MARC* fields suitable for Arabic manuscript cataloging. (Table 1)

* The project began in April 2000 when Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashed Al- Maktoum, crown prince of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates' defense minister, was visiting Al-Azhar. He met with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, who expressed concern over the condition of many of Al- Azhar's priceless manuscripts which were in desperate need of restoration.

* In 1995, a Ph.D. study submitted in Cairo University by Shams al-Asil, and suggested many modifications on chapter 4 at AACR2 to be suitable with Islamic manuscript cataloging.

Third, to address the issue of the authority control for Arabic names, the Egyptian libraries must make a decision whether to create a national authority file for early and medieval names, or to participate in an existing cooperative authority project such as the National Authority Cooperative Project known as (NACO).

References

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Figures

الرقم العام : 131
رس 3- نور العين في ذكرى مشهد الحسين / جلال الدين عبد الرحمن بن ابي بكر السيوطي
وزارة الأوقاف : المكتبة المركزية للمخطوطات الإسلامية
مكان الأصل : الأحمدي
رقم الأصل : 774
ضمن مجموعة
رقم الرسالة داخل المجموعة : 3
التجليد : قديم
المادة : كرتون
زخرفة التجليد : ملونة
الحاجة الى التجليد : ماسة
تاريخ النسخ : 1113 هـ
المؤلف من صفحة العنوان : أبو الفضل
عنوان صفحة العنوان : نور العين في مشهد السيد الحسين
اللغة : عربي
القياس : 16 × 23 سم
عدد الأوراق : 18
المسطرة : 22
الشكل : كتاب
المادة : ورق
لون المداد في العنوان الرئيسي : أسود
لون المداد في النص : أسود
نوع الخط : معتاد
النسخة بها أكل أرضة ، تلوث ، رطوبة ، تآكل أطراف ، تفكك
الحاجة الى الترميم : ماسة
فاتحة المخطوط : الحمد لله رب العالمين حمدا لمن جعل أهل البيت الكرام ... إما بعد فإن السبب الداعي إلى تسطير
هذه الرسالة و الباعث على تحبير هذه القحاله ... ورتب الرسالة على خمس أبواب وفصول الباب الاول في ذكر قتل
سيدنا الحسين رضى الله عنه... -
خاتمة المخطوط : ... دخل من الذنوب التي لها أثر الدعاء واعوذ بك من الذنوب التي بها يحبس عبث السماء و هو
دعاء مجرب عند الكرب والحمد لله وحده ... الخ ... -
الموضوعات : الحسين بن علي - ضريح
العنوان الموثق : نور العين في ذكرى مشهد الحسين
مراجع تحقيق العنوان : إيضاح المكنون للبغدادي ج4 ص685
اسم المؤلف: عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن أبي بكر عثمان بن محمد بن خضر بن أيوب بن محمد بن همام الدين
الخضيري
الكنية : أبو الفضل
اللقب : جلال الدين ، السيوطي
النسبة : الخضيري، الطولوني، المصري ، الشافعي
تاريخ الوفاة : 911 هـ
مراجع تحقيق المؤلف : الاعلام الزركلي ج3 ص301
معجم المؤلفين لكحالة ج5 ص128

Figure 1
Manuscript Record from Central Library of Islamic Manuscripts

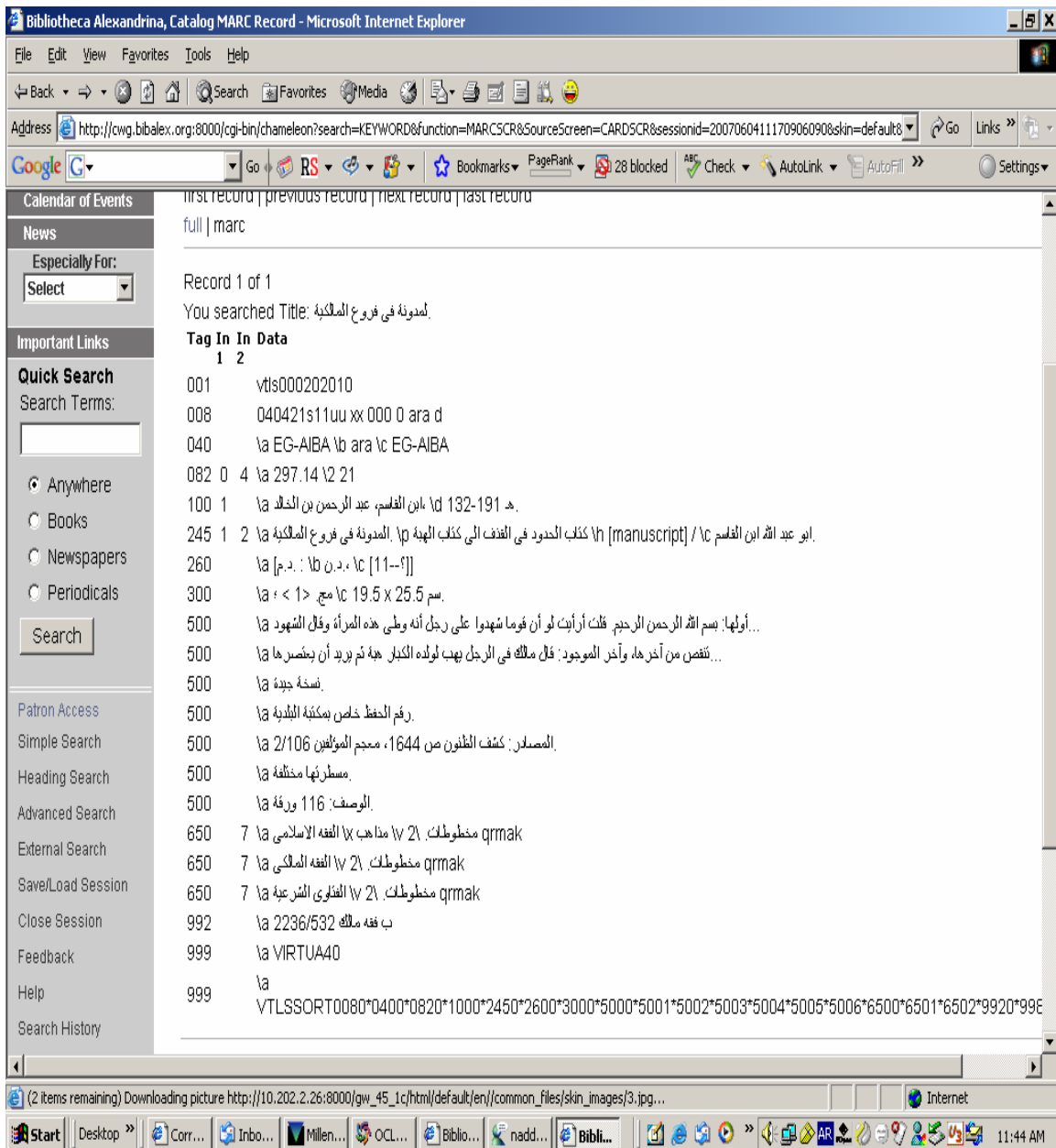


Figure 2
Manuscript Record from Bibliotheca Alexandrina OPAC

Tables

MARC Fields Could be Used With Manuscripts¹

100: Main entry (first indicator varies—see examples below)

100 1_ Personal name, surname first.

If the main entry is a person or group that didn't create the material but collected it, add \$e after the name: 100 1_ Dean, Arthur H.,\$ecollector.

245 00: Title

Use \$f for the collections dates, and \$g for bulk dates:

Note that the second indicator stands for the number of non-filing characters (including spaces) at the beginning of the title.

300: Physical extent

This is usually given in cubic ft. or number of items. This field is repeatable. If the collection includes materials in multiple formats, use a separate 300 field for each format:

300 __ 105 cubic ft.

300 __ 89 reels microfilm

351: Organization/Arrangement

\$a: Organization

\$b: Arrangement

Examples:

351 __ \$aOrganized into the following series: [...]

¹ This procedure provides details on the fields that RMC staff use in catalog records for manuscripts or archival collections. Because the initial accession record is frequently created by the curator, who knows best what the collection contains, this procedure is written for those who are unfamiliar with MARC records or do not work with MARC tags every day. (Contacts [Margaret Nichols](mailto:mnr1@cornell.edu) : mnr1@cornell.edu)

351 __ \$3Outgoing correspondence is in \$bchronological order; incoming correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Note that \$3 is used to indicate the part of the collection that the organization or the arrangement applies to. This subfield is not repeatable, though, so you can use it only once in any given 351 field.

545: Historical/Biographical Note

545 __ City planner and architect.

520: Summary

There are no indicators for the first 520; if there are two or more 520 fields, the 2nd and subsequent ones have first indicator 8.

The summary often follows this general sequence in describing the collection:

Types of materials in the collection; main subject of the collection; prominent subtopics; correspondents or other names of importance represented in the collection

Remember that subject headings and added entries in the catalog record should all be explained by the summary.

546: Language of the collection (if not English)

580: Larger collection that this collection is part of (“ Linking entry complexity note,” used with a 773 field that electronically links this catalog record to the larger collection’ s catalog record)

Example: Forms part of: French Revolution manuscript collection.

530: Additional physical form available note

Example: \$3Correspondence\$aalso on microfilm.

Here, as in some other fields, \$3 is used to indicate what part of the collection the note applies to, if it doesn’ t apply to the whole collection.

533: Reproduction note

Example: \$3Correspondence consists of\$a photocopies.

Here, as in some other fields, \$3 is used to indicate what part of the collection the note applies to, if it doesn't apply to the whole collection.

535 1_: Location of originals/duplicates note

Here, as in some other fields, \$3 is used to indicate what part of the collection the note applies to, if it doesn't apply to the whole collection.

561: Provenance (beginning before the immediate source of the collection)

Example: Purchased by George Lincoln Burr for A.D. White in 1876. White gave the manuscript to Cornell University Library in 1904.

506: Restrictions on access

540: Terms governing use or reproduction

555 0_: Finding aids

510 3_: Citation for a published description of the collection

524: Preferred form of citation for this collection

The words "Cite as" are system supplied.

Example: 524 John Nolen Papers, #2903. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

581: Citation for a publication based on research in the collection

544: Related collection(s)

Note that a label for this field is not supplied in the public catalog, so you need to begin the text of the field with the words "Related collections: ..."

500: General note

Examples:

500 Collecting program: Human Sexuality Collection.

500 Books in this collection are cataloged individually.

541 0_: Immediate source of acquisition (this field is repeatable; first indicator 0 ensures that it will not display to the public)

In RLIN21, if you double-click on this field, a box will open up with the subfields labeled, ready for you to fill in whichever ones are applicable. You will also be prompted to fill in fields 590 (for the shelf location) and 583 (for actions taken, or to be taken—see below).

\$8 Field link and sequence number—system supplied

\$a Source

\$b Address

\$c Method of acquisition, e.g. gift or purchase

\$d Accession date

\$e Accession no.

\$f Owner

\$g Purchase price

\$n Extent

\$o Extent units of measurement

\$5 Institution

590: Physical location (i.e. shelf location—leave this blank, since we use Voyager to record this information)

583 0_: Actions taken, or to be taken (this field is repeatable; coded not to display to the public)

\$8 Field link and sequence number—system supplied

\$a Act

\$c Date of action taken, or of future action to be taken

\$i Method

\$j Site of action

\$k Agent

\$l Status—physical condition, or processing status, etc.

\$n Extent

\$o Extent units of measurement

\$5NIC

\$b Action identification, e.g. a project code

\$d Action interval

\$e Contingency for action, e.g. Upon death of donor

\$x Non-public note

600, 630, 650, 651: Subject headings (indicators vary; see below)

600 10 Personal name, surname first

For a work by a particular author, use a 600 10 with \$t for the title.

Example: 600 10 Taylor, Valerie,\$1913- \$tWhisper their love.

Only authorized Library of Congress subject headings can be used in a 650 field with 2nd indicator 0. Subdivisions can be added to a topical subject heading: \$x (subtopics), \$z (places), \$y (time periods), \$v (forms).

650 _4 locally devised topical subject heading

Don' t create one of these unless there really is no Library of Congress heading that fits.

651 _0 Geographic subject heading (for places or geographic features)

Note that only authorized Library of Congress geographic subject headings can be used in a 651 field with 2nd indicator 0. Subdivisions can be added: \$x (subtopics), \$z (places), \$y (time periods), \$v (forms).

Example: 651 _0 Germany \$x History \$y 1789-1900 \$v Pictorial works.

700, 730: Added entries

Added entries are for people or organizations that are partly responsible for creating the collection or creating some of its material—for instance, an interviewer for a collection of oral histories, correspondents for a group of letters, etc.

700 1_ Personal name, surname first

730 0_ Related periodical title, or related other work entered by title

773 0_ : Linking entry

This field electronically links this catalog record to the record for the larger entity that this collection is part of. The field consists of:

\$7[four-letter code, nnpc for a manuscript/archival collection]\$t[title of larger collection].\$w[RLIN ID of larger collection, written as (CStRLIN)NYCV[record ID]

Example: 773 0_ \$7nnpc\$tFrench Revolution manuscript collection.\$w(CStRLIN)NYCV91-A480

852 8_: Collection number

Use this field to record our MARC Organization Code (NIC) and the collection number: \$aNIC \$j[number]

Example: 852 8_ \$aNIC \$j 4956

856 4x: URL for an electronic resource (http)

The second indicator is 0 if the electronic resource *is* the collection being described (in other words, if the collection itself is the e-resource); 1 if the URL is for an electronic version of the collection; and 2 if the URL is for a related electronic resource, such as an online finding aid.

Example: 856 42 \$3Finding aid\$uhttp: resolver.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/EADresolver?id=RMM07627

This will show up in the public online catalog as the phrase “ Finding aid,” hot linked to the collection’ s finding aid.