
Rearranging the subject catalog at Trinity University

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A chronological arrangement to enhance access.

Professional conferences occasionally can be a source for innovations in libraries. A service innovation at the Trinity University Library in San Antonio is a case in point.

At the 1982 ALA Conference in Philadelphia, Jay Whaley, then head of reference at the University of California-Irvine, presented a paper on the topic of "Research on Use and Use Studies." In the course of his paper, Whaley noted that there was likely a benefit to arranging the cards in a subject catalog, or the subject cards in a dictionary catalog, by imprint date in inverse chronological order (the most recent year first). Such an arrangement, he suggested, would result in patrons' encountering, under a given subject heading, the most recent titles first, presuming that patrons searched from the front of a given subject file toward the back.

Richard Werking, then head of collection development at Trinity, was in the audience and thought he would seek implementation of Whaley's idea at the Trinity Library. Such a chronological arrangement of bibliographic entries within subject headings made a good deal of sense to him. From Werking's personal experience as a patron and observation as a librarian, he agreed with

Whaley that patrons at the subject catalog often take down only a few call numbers, ending their searches when they think they have found "enough" titles for the time being, whether or not all or even most of the entries have been examined. When patrons encounter only a fraction of the entries, he reasoned, that fraction consisting of the most recent ones is more likely to be useful than the same fraction consisting of the first portion of an alphabet. To be sure, under either filing scheme the user may miss what are regarded as the most important books on a given subject, but the bibliographies and references in the more recent books will usually include the earlier titles and probably will identify, explicitly or implicitly, the most important or useful of the earlier works.

An obstacle to implementing this filing scheme in many libraries may be the large amount of time it would take to rearrange the cards in a card catalog. Trinity, however, by 1982 had had a COM catalog for six years, and all of its bibliographic records were in machine-readable form. Ruby E. Miller, head of technical services at Trinity, took up the matter with MARCIVE, Inc., the San Antonio-based company which produces the Li-

Television broadcasting - United States

1985	Competitive implications of the seven-station-ru	United States. Congr	US DOCS	Y 4.J 89/2: S.hrg.98-1273
1984	Competition in Television Production Act : heari	United States. Congr	US DOCS	Y 4.C 73/7: S.hrg.98-583
1984	Demographic vistas : television in American cult	Marc, David		PN 1992.3 US M26 1984
1984	Misregulating television : network dominance and	Misregulating televi		KF 2840 M58 1984
1983	High tech, high stakes [videorecording]	High tech, high stak	AUD-VIS	PN 4722 I57 no. 306
1982	Sign-off : the last days of television	Diamond, Edwin		PN 4888 T4 D48 1982
1982	Television in the eighties : the total equation	Moorfoot, Rex		HE 8700.6 M67 1982
1981	Revolution in the wasteland : value and diversit	Cass, Ronald A.		KF 2840 C38
1981	Stay tuned : an inside look at the making of pri	Levinson, Richard		PN 1992.3 US L38
1980	Additions and corrections to network inquiry pre	United States. Feder	US DOCS	CC 1.2: M 38/9
1979	The networks : how they stole the show	Reel, Adolph Frank		HE 8700.8 R43
1976	Television in the corporate interest	Bunce, Richard		HE 8700.8 B85
1974	To irrigate a wasteland: the struggle to shape a	Macy, John W., 1917-		HE 8700.8 M33 1974
1972	The age of television: a study of viewing habits	Bogart, Leo		HE 8700.8 B625 1972
1972	Broadcasting in America: a survey of television	Head, Sydney W		HE 8689.8 H43 1972
1972	Turn that damned thing off: an irreverent look a	Klavan, Eugene		HE 8689.8 K5
1971	The left-leaning antenna: political bias in tele	Keeley, Joseph Charl		HE 8700.8 K4
1971	Television: the business behind the box	Brown, Les 1928-		HE 8700.8 B75
1969	A pictorial history of television	Settel, Irving		PN 1992.3 US S4
1967	Due to circumstances beyond our control ..	Friendly, Fred W.		PN 1992.3 US F7
1966	Crisis in television: a study of the private jud	Simonson, Solomon S.		PN 1992.6 S47
1964	Equal time: the private broadcaster and the publ	Minow, Newton N 1926		PN 1992.3 U5 M5
1962	The great time-killer	Mehling, Harold		PN 1992.3 US M4
1961	TV, the big picture	Opotowsky, Stan		HE 8698 065
1958	The age of television: a study of viewing habits	Bogart, Leo		HE 8698 B6 1958
1956	Television's impact on American culture	Elliott, William Yan		HE 8698 E45
1955	The book of little knowledge: more than you want	Ace, Goodman		PN 1992.5 A3
1953	Television and radio in American life	Marx, Herbert L., ed		HE 8698 M3
1952	Out of the blue: a book about radio and televisi	Crosby, John, 1912-		HE 8698 C78
Television broadcasting - United States - Addresses, essays, lectures.				
1983	American history, American television : interpre	American history, Am		PN 1992.3 US A48 1983
1982	Television : the critical view	Television : the cri		PN 1992.3 US T37 1982

[etc]

brary's COM catalog. The task was to arrange the entries in the COM subject catalog by publication date under subject. Because the COM catalog produced by MARCIVE is driven by the MARC tag ID (imprint field 260, subfield C, first date), it was not difficult to retrieve the publication date and then file it as the first filing element under the subject heading. The computer then arranged these dates in descending order, thus placing the most recent book as the first entry under each subject heading.

With relatively little trouble, this rearrangement was accomplished in 1983. A sample from the Trinity subject catalog appears on page 8.¹

Such a filing scheme should also be as simple to implement with an online catalog, and we understand that at least one online system on the market

¹In its COM catalog, Trinity uses an "index" format of one line per bibliographic entry. The smaller number of elements makes it feasible for the Library, which holds over 450,000 titles (including documents and audiovisual items), to update the catalog every other month. What is shown here is a sample of 29 of the 78 titles in the Trinity Catalog under the heading "Television Broadcasting—United States," and 2 under the subsequent heading, as they appear in the catalog.

does include this as a feature.

Like many useful ideas, this one is not brand new. For many years the John Crerar Library, established in 1894, employed the arrangement of inverse chronological filing for the cards in its classified subject catalog. That system was in place until 1984, at which time Crerar merged with the University of Chicago Library and the catalog was closed. At the Crerar, and at the Columbia College Library in the 1880s, within each section of the classification the books themselves were arranged on the shelves by date of publication.² ■■

²These earlier implementations came to the authors' attention only recently, well after the procedure was adopted at Trinity. See Herbert Kleist, "Inverse Time Order and Subject Filing," *College & Research Libraries* 6 (June 1945):228-31; William Stetson Merrill, "Order of Books by Date under Subjects," *Library Quarterly* 4 (April 1934):282-84; W. S. Biscoe, "Chronological Arrangement on Shelves," *Library Journal* 10 (September/October 1885):246-47. The authors gratefully acknowledge information about Crerar's catalog supplied to them by Patricia K. Swanson, assistant director for science libraries at the University of Chicago.

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