



## Chapter-7

### Categories of Reference Sources: Description and Scope

*After studying this section, students will be able:*

- ◆ To understand the purpose of reference collection;
- ◆ To gain knowledge about the development of a reference collection;
- ◆ To understand about the categories of reference sources;
- ◆ To understand the scope and features of different reference sources;
- ◆ To know about Online Reference Sources.

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## 7.0 Introduction

The quality of the reference collection of a library determines the quality of reference service it provides. Selection and acquisition of reference materials depend upon the needs of the users and the overall objectives of the reference section or the library. A reference collection development policy has many elements. The ongoing process of maintaining the collection with proper updation or strengthening of the weaker areas, keeps the collection live and dynamic. Purpose and development of the reference collection are explained here followed by a brief description of important reference sources, which are normally acquired by the library to build the collection.

### 7.1 Purpose of the Reference Collection

Michael Buckland writes that a reference collection fulfills two needs:

- i. Looking up or verifying factual data, often referred to as "ready reference"; and
- ii. Establishing an initial outline and context for any topic efficiently and effectively, especially determining the what, where, when and who aspects of whatever is of interest.

The purpose of the collection varies depending on the type and mission of the library, the needs of the clientele served, in addition to the philosophy and goals of the reference staff, library administration and the parent organization.

### 7.2 Development of a Reference Collection

The escalating cost of reference materials, growth in types of formats, emergence of new access technologies, and rigid licensing policies make the task of developing a collection of reference materials difficult. Reference resources are available in a variety of formats and now-a-days many of them are available in multi-formats (same content in print, online, e-book, audio and video forms). Primary components of a core reference collection include resources in print, microform, electronic and the resources over a network (internet).

#### 7.2.1 Reference Collection Development Principles

The basic principles of reference collection development, as mentioned by Meghan Harper are:

- i. Reflect the library's mission
- ii. Knowing the user
- iii. Develop a budget plan



- iv. Maintain a balance of electronic and print sources
- v. Develop policies
- vi. Develop staff expertise
- vii. Solicit inputs from the user
- viii. Preview/review reference materials
- ix. Evaluating the collection on a continuing and systematic basis

### 7.2.2 Reference Collection Development Policy

A collection development policy helps in streamlining the process and meeting the specific objectives. Carol A. Singer states that, "a reference collection development policy serves as the basis for decision making by those who build and maintain the reference collection because it defines the purpose of the collection, and describes the content of the reference collection, both what should be included and what should not".

Singer outlines the components of a reference collection development policy which include:

- ◆ Purpose of the collection development policy
- ◆ Responsibility for collection development
- ◆ Purpose of the reference collection
- ◆ Target audience(s)
- ◆ Budgeting and funding
- ◆ Selection criteria
- ◆ Selection aids
- ◆ Preferred format
- ◆ Duplicates
- ◆ Preferred language(s)
- ◆ Circulation
- ◆ Treatment of specific resource groups
- ◆ Resource sharing
- ◆ Collection maintenance
- ◆ Weeding and reviewing the collection
- ◆ Policy revision



### 7.2.3 Collection Analysis

This is the process of gathering an overall picture of the age, number of items by topic, and often types of materials within a collection through the use of individual item records. Collection analysis helps the library to make good selection decisions and prioritizing collection development and evaluation.

### 7.2.4 Collection Planning

This is the identification, comparison and selection of quality reference resources with the help of analyzing user feedback and selection tools (publisher catalogues, professional journal reviews, etc.). The process includes gathering information to assist in the selection of new materials and the identification of weakness in the existing collection.

## 7.3 Evaluation of Reference Sources

The quality of an individual source must be evaluated before including it into the reference collection of the library. There are many criteria that should be considered while evaluating reference sources. The general criteria devised by Bopp and Smith are:

- i. Format: print/ microform/ electronic, physical makeup, illustrations
- ii. Scope: purpose, coverage, currency
- iii. Authority: authorship, publisher/ sponsor, source of information
- iv. Treatment: accuracy, objectivity, style/ audience.
- v. Relation to similar works: uniqueness, new editions
- vi. Arrangement: sequence, indexing
- vii. Special features
- viii. Cost: price, licensing conditions

## 7.4 Classification of Reference Sources

William A. Kats categorizes reference sources into two types.

- i. **Control Access Directional Type:** This reference source type does not contain the required information in itself but directs the user to the documents which contain the information. Example: bibliographies, catalogue, indexes, abstracts, etc.
- ii. **Work of Sources Type:** The source itself contains the information. Example: Encyclopaedia, Dictionaries, Yearbooks, etc.



## 7.5 Types of Reference Sources

Reference sources are designed to be consulted or referred for a specific piece of information. The scope and main characteristics of important reference sources have been discussed in the following sections.

### 7.5.1 Almanacs, Yearbooks, Handbooks and Manuals

Almanacs, yearbooks and handbooks are also known as ready reference sources which provide concise factual information about current and historical events; organisations, people, places and things; and statistical trends. These sources help the user to locate concise facts quickly.

#### Scope

The following kinds of information are normally found in almanacs, yearbooks handbooks and manuals.

- i. Chronological list of the important events of the year;
  - ii. Summaries of the political, social and cultural events of the year;
  - iii. Major developments and trends in various fields (science and technology, economics, sports, etc.) during the year;
  - iv. Short biographies and obituaries;
  - v. Information about organisations and associations;
  - vi. Statistical information (population, prizes, awards, sports events, etc).
- a) **Almanacs:** According to the ALA Glossary, an almanac is "a) an annual publication containing a calendar, frequently accompanied by astronomical data and other information or b) An annual year book of statistics and other information, sometimes in a particular field. It records most of the astronomical data and various statistics, such as the times of the rising and setting of the sun and moon, eclipses, hours of full tide, religious festivals, terms of courts, etc".

William A. Kats defines an almanac as "a compendium of useful data and statistics relating to countries, personalities, events, subjects, and the like".

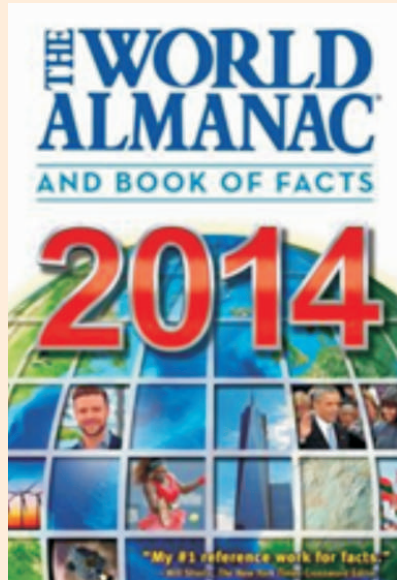
The earliest known almanac in this modern sense is the Almanac of Azarquiel written in 1088 by Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Zarqālī (Latinized as Arzachel) in Toledo, al-Andalus. The first American Almanac was published in 1639, and the most famous one was Benjamin Franklin's 'Poor Richard's Almanack'.

Almanacs are of two kinds, general and student. The general almanac is commonly used for ready reference to supply brief, current information to basic



reference queries. The font is typically small, and the index at the back of the volume is invaluable to find the information and data quickly.

**Examples:** The Old Farmer's Almanac (1792, New York), World Almanac and Book of Facts (1868, New York), Whitaker's Almanack (1869, London), Time Almanac with Information (1947-2013, New York)



The first edition of THE WORLD ALMANAC was published by *The New York World* newspaper in 1868 (the name of the publication comes from the newspaper itself, which was known as "The World"). Publication was suspended in 1876, but in 1886 famed newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer, revived THE WORLD ALMANAC with the intention of making it "a compendium of universal knowledge." THE WORLD ALMANAC has been published annually ever since.

In 1894, THE WORLD ALMANAC changed its name to THE WORLD ALMANAC AND ENCYCLOPAEDIA. This was the title it kept until 1923, when it became THE WORLD ALMANAC AND BOOK OF FACTS, the name it bears today.

Ref: <http://www.worldalmanac.com>

Figure 7.1: The World Almanac and book of facts

Students or Kids Almanac is typically an illustrated and more concise version of a general almanac.

**Examples:** The World Almanac for Kids (1996-, New York), National Geographic Kids Almanac, Time for Kids Almanac, Scholastic Almanac for Kids.

- b) **Yearbooks:** A yearbook/annual is an annual compendium of the data and statistics of a given year. The basic purpose of a yearbook is to record the years' activities by country, subject or specialized area. The essential difference between a yearbook and an almanac is that the almanac will also include considerable retrospective material, material which may not be in the average yearbook. Yearbooks regularly index personal names, while almanacs in book format, index personal names sparingly. Yearbooks contain longer descriptions



of events and more analysis and evaluation, and articles are almost always signed.

Yearbooks are of two types (i) general yearbooks, which covers the activities of the past year and (ii) newspaper indexes, which are most up to date with well-organized formats and the brief annotated stories (e.g. New York Times Index, National Newspaper Index)..

**Examples:** Europa World Yearbook (1959, London), Statesman's Yearbook, (1864, New York), India: A Reference Annual (1953, New Delhi), Manorama Yearbook (1959, Kottayam), World of Learning (1947, New York), Demographic Yearbook (1948, New York), McGraw Hill Yearbook of Science and Technology (1962, New York).

- c) **Handbooks and Manuals:** The Handbooks and Manuals (the terms often used synonymously) serve as handy guides to a particular subject. Handbooks often include examples, illustrations, or both. A handbook reviews a particular topic in a factual and comprehensive way. The emphasis is on established knowledge rather than on recent advances, although in the field of science, handbooks that are more than a few years old may be almost useless within a few years. A scientific handbook is a specialized manual, deals with a specific subject area and only experts understand the contents (tables, formulas, equations, graphs, symbols, jargon). Generally, the handbook has a limited scope which contains information on a particular field.

**Examples:** Guinness World Records (1956, New York), CRC Handbooks of Chemistry and Physics (1913, New York), Hoover's Handbook of World Business (1918, Austin), Robert's Rules of Order (1876, New York), The Merck Manual of Medical Information (1899-New Jersey), The Chicago Manual of Style (1906, Chicago), MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (1985, New York), Publication Manual of American Psychological Association (1929, New York), The Columbia Guide to Online Style (1998, Columbia).

### 7.5.2 Bibliographies

The term 'bibliography' was first used by Louis Jacob de Saint Charles in his *Bibliographia Parisiana* (1945-'50), and derived from two Greek words, "biblion", means "book" and "graphein", means "to write". A bibliography is a list of materials (information sources) used to identify sources of information on particular topics. Bibliographies may be current or be composed of past editions of published materials (retrospective).



According to D. W. Krummel, "the term bibliography can have two definitions: there is bibliography itself, an activity, and there is a bibliography, the product of this activity".

### Scope

The scope of the bibliography is related to the domain of items to be selected for inclusion.

### Features and categories

Regardless of form, a bibliography is used primarily for three basic purposes: (i) to identify and verify, (ii) to locate, and (iii) to select.

Bibliographies can be broadly divided into three parts,

- (i) **Systematic or enumerative bibliography:** It is the systematic listing of individual items with minimum details for reference and study;
- (ii) **Analytical or critical bibliography:** It deals with a physical description of the book like authorship, edition, date, place of printing and perfection of the copy, and
- (iii) **Historical bibliography:** The study of books "as objects of art", concerned with the art of writing, printing, illustration and binding.

The objective of systematic bibliography is to collect and list information about an individual book and its related materials in a logical or useful order. Such a bibliography is usually enumerative. Bibliographies are not necessarily limited to books. They provide list of other forms of information sources like images, audio, video, software, database records, websites, etc.

Some category of bibliographies are as follows:

- a) **Universal bibliography:** Universal bibliography, theoretically consists of everything published, issued, or created in the field of communications from the beginning through the present to the future. It is not limited by time, country, language, subject, or form and may be achieved by combining all online national bibliographies, which are the exhaustive listing of information sources produced in one country.

**Example:** Bibliotheca universalis

- b) **National bibliography:** This type of bibliography is limited to materials published within a country. The scope may be enlarged to include works written about the country or in the language of the country. A national



bibliography is often a product of the government and sets itself limits of time, form and origin.

**Examples:** Indian national bibliography, British national bibliography

- c) **Trade bibliography:** This is produced by commercial publishers and provides the information necessary to select and acquire recently published materials.

**Examples:** Books in Print (BIP), Cumulative Book Index, Indian Books in Print, American Book Publishing Record

- d) **Subject bibliography:** It is a list of materials that relates to a particular topic, intended for researchers and specialists.

**Example:** Guide to reference books, Information sources in science and technology, Bibliography of Indology

- e) **List of periodicals and newspapers:** It includes lists of current and retrospective periodicals and newspapers. Example: Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, American Newspapers, Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media

- f) **Author bibliography:** It is the list of materials limited to a particular author. Example: Chaucer: A bibliographical manual

- g) **Bibliography of bibliographies:** A listing of bibliographies. Example: Bibliographic Index: A Cumulative Bibliography of Bibliographies

- h) **Library Catalogues:** It serves the users of particular library by listing the holdings and location of materials in that library, often through the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

- i) **Union Catalogues:** It identifies the material held in the collection of more than one library, through a shared cataloguing network. Example: OCLC, RLIN.

### 7.5.3 Biographical Sources

Biographical sources contain data on people. They focus either on currently living persons or are retrospective, focusing on past historical figures.

#### Scope

Biographical sources provide information about dates of birth and death, qualifications, the positions held, the contributions made and the address of the biography. Some of these sources also provide portraits or images with an index. These are ready reference sources which provide basic facts about an individual. The scope of a biographical source shall be broad or narrow depending on the comprehensiveness of the coverage.



### Features and categories

The quality of a biographical source is determined by the accuracy and currency of the entries. There shall be a list of sources from which the information was obtained. The organisation of the entries shall be with adequate access points, i.e., indexes and cross references.

Biographical sources can be divided into two,

- i. **Direct sources:** They provide factual information themselves rather than referring the user to some other works (e.g., Who is who)
- ii. **Indirect sources:** They list bibliographic citations, referring the user to other works that may contain the information sought (e.g., biography index)

Another categorization of biographical sources can be made based on time as,

- i. **Current:** Biographical source about living persons
- ii. **Retrospective:** Biographical source about persons from the past.

We may obtain biographical information from varied sources like, biographical dictionaries, almanacs, dictionaries, directories, encyclopaedias, literary handbooks, manuals, obituaries in newspapers, periodical and newspaper indexes, etc.

Important biographical sources with examples:

- a) **Current Biographical Dictionaries:** e.g. Current biography (1940, New York), Contemporary newsmakers (1985, New York), India Who's who (1969, New Delhi)
- b) **Retrospective Biographical Dictionaries:** Webster's biographical dictionary (1972, Massachusetts), Dictionary of national biography (1972, Kolkatta), National biographical dictionary of India (1972, Delhi), The International who's who (2000, London), Dictionary of American biography (1996-, New York)
- c) **Biographical Directories:** Who's who (1849, London), Who's who in America (1899, Chicago), American men and women of science (1906, New Providence, NJ)
- d) **Professional and Subject Biographical Sources:** Directory of American Scholars (1974, New York), Directory of Libraries and Who's Who in Library Profession in Delhi (1964, Delhi), Who's who in Indian writers (1961, New Delhi)

### 7.5.4 Directories

Directories are used to locate organisations, institutions and people and to verify the details. The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science defines a directory as "a list of persons or organisations, systematically arranged, usually in alphabetic or



classed order, giving address, affiliations, etc., for individuals, and address, officers, functions, and similar data for organisations."

### Scope

Directories present information in an orderly, clear manner with a limited type of information. The coverage is extended to organisations of different kinds, learned bodies, scientific societies, professional bodies, trade associations, etc. with a variety of factual information. Directories form a rich source of biographical information.

William A. Kats divides directories as:

- i. **Local directories** provide list of individuals and organisations of a particular locality (e.g., Telephone and city directories)
- ii. **Governmental directories** provide list of government institutions (e.g., Worldwide Government Directory (2000, Washington D. C.)
- iii. **Institutional directories** provide lists of schools, colleges, universities, foundations, libraries, hospitals, museums and similar organisations. (e.g., World of Learning (1947, London), the American Library Directory (1923, New York), Indian Library Directory (1938, Delhi), Commonwealth universities Yearbook: A directory to the universities of the Commonwealth and the handbook of their Association (1914, London)
- iv. **Investment services** provide reports on public and private corporations and companies.
- v. **Professional directories** are lists of professional organisations (e.g., Europa World Yearbook (1959-, London), Yearbook of the United Nations (1947/47-, New York), Encyclopaedia of Associations: National Organisations of the U.S. (1964, Farmington Hills)
- vi. **Trade and Business directories** provide information about companies, industries and services.(e.g., World Chamber of Commerce directory (2000, Loveland), Million Dollar Directory (1998, New Jersey).

Directory of Directories provide listings and descriptions of various directories

### 7.5.5 Dictionaries

Dictionaries are used to define words; to verify spelling, syllabication, or pronunciation; to check usage; or to determine the etymological history of a word. Around 1225 A. D, English Grammarian John of Garland used the word '*dictionarius*' as the title of a collection of Latin words arranged by subject for the use of learners.



## Scope

A basic dictionary contains an alphabetical list of words with their meanings or definitions. This may be of a language or the terms of a subject or vocation, arranged according to some definite order, usually alphabetical. Entries may also include inflected forms, run-on or derivative entries, etymologies or word histories, synonyms and antonyms, usage or status labels, usage notes, illustrative quotations and pictorial illustrations.

## Types and features

Based on the approach of presentation, dictionaries can be of two types, (i) *descriptive*, recording how the language is actually used and (ii) *prescriptive*, advocating how it ought to be used.

The major categorisation of dictionaries based on the content is as follows.

- i. **General (Unabridged) Dictionaries** are derived or condensed from a larger work, attempt to include all words in a language that are in use at the time the dictionary is compiled.

**Examples:** The Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1997, New York), Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1961, Springfield). Hindi Shabdasagar (1967, Varanasi).

- ii. **Etymological Dictionaries** deal with origin and history of words and meanings in use. Example: Oxford English Dictionary (1928, Oxford), Oxford English Dictionary in CD ROM appeared in 1992.
- iii. **Desk Dictionaries** are abridged, or desk-sized dictionary, a selective compilation, often based on a larger dictionary and prepared for a certain level of students. Example: Marriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2010, Mass.), The American heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2000, Boston), Comprehensive English-Hindi Dictionary (1962, Varanasi), Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary (1957, Poona), Bharatiya by a baharkosha or Dictionary of sixteen Indian languages (1961, Bombay)
- iv. **Subject dictionaries**, are confined to specialized subject fields, professions or occupations. Example: McGraw Hill Dictionary of scientific and technical terms, 3rd ed. (1984, New York), ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science (1983, Chicago).
- v. **Dictionaries of quotations** are used to identify or verify a given quotation or to select a quotation on a given topic or by a given author or for a special occasion.



Examples: Barlett's Familiar Quotations (1855, Cambridge), The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations 5th ed., (1999, Oxford).

- vi. **Thesauri (Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms)** are specialized dictionaries deal with synonyms and antonyms. Example: Roget's International Thesaurus, 5th ed., (1992, New York), Webster's new Dictionary of Synonyms (1968, Springfield).
- vii. **Dictionaries of usage** contain definitions supplemented by discussions on how words should be used. Example: The New Fowler's Modern English Usage , 3rd ed., (2000, Oxford).
- viii. **Abbreviations and Acronyms Dictionaries** commonly used in every subject area. Example: Acronyms, Initialisms and Abbreviations Dictionary (1960, Farmington Hills).

### 7.5.6 Encyclopaedia

An encyclopaedia is a compendium of knowledge. An encyclopaedia is regarded as one of the most reliable and used reference sources in a library. Creating a modern encyclopaedia is a task involving a large team of persons including editors, consultants, contributors, etc. The Oxford English Dictionary has defined an encyclopaedia as "a literary work containing extensive information on all branches of knowledge usually arranged in alphabetical order". ALA Glossary of Library Terms defines encyclopaedia as "a work containing information articles on subject in every field of knowledge usually arranged in alphabetical order or a similar work limited to a special field of subject".

#### Scope

The types of questions answered through the use of an encyclopaedia are (i) ready reference information (e.g., Who invented radio?) (ii) general background information (e.g., How does photosynthesis work?) and (iii) 'pre-research' information, which helps to launch a research. Encyclopaedias provide a well-organized overview of selected topics of major importance written in an objective style.

#### Types and features

Basically, encyclopaedias can be divided into following categories.

- i. **Encyclopaedias for Adults**, contain informational articles/entries giving essential general information on subjects in various branches of knowledge, arranged alphabetically by subject and names. e.g., New Encyclopaedia



Britannica, 32 vols. (2010, Chicago) Encyclopaedia Americana, 30 vols. (1984, New York), Colliers' Encyclopaedia, 24 vols (1976, New York)

- ii. **Encyclopaedias for Children and Young Adults** are written for young readers and tend to place more emphasis on formats, illustrations and pedagogical tools. e.g., World Book Encyclopaedia, 22 vols. (2010, Chicago), The Oxford American Children's Encyclopedia, 9 vols. (1999, New York).
- iii. **Subject Encyclopaedias** have a broaderscope and give in-depth coverage to a specific field of knowledge. E.g., McGraw Hill Encyclopaedia of Science and Technology, 20 vols, (1992, New York), Encyclopaedia Indica (1975, New Delhi)

### 7.5.7 Geographical Sources

The primary purpose of geographical sources is to help one to locate places, tell something about a location, or show how to get there. These sources basically consist graphic representations and concerned with information about places such as cities, towns, mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, etc.,

Geographical sources can be divided into following categories.

- i. **Gazetteer:** Gazetteer is a geographical dictionary of places arranged alphabetically. In one sense, the index in any atlas is a gazetteer, for finding lists of cities, mountains, rivers, population, etc. A gazetteer provides officially standardised form of spelling of place-names along with cross reference to variant spellings. Most of the gazetteers provide latitude and longitude.

There are two types of gazetteers, (i) *locational gazetteer*, which provides information precisely locating either by atlas page and grid index or by even more precise latitude and longitude. (ii) *descriptive gazetteer*, which provide some or all of the above information and then describe the place.

e.g., The Columbia-Lippincott Gazetteer of the World (1952, New York), Gazetteer of India: Indian Union (1965-1978, New Delhi).

- ii. **Maps, Atlases and Globes:** A map is a representation of the outer boundaries of a part or the whole of the earth or moon or planets on a plane surface. A map may be of a city or village or of a smaller area irrespective of the scale or extent of area. e.g., Maps of America: cartographic products of the US Geological Survey and others, 3rd ed, (1988, Washington).

An atlas is a volume consisting of a collection of maps. They can be divided into three groups, (i) Current atlases are needed for up-to-date information on geographical and political changes in the world, e.g., The Times Atlas of the



World. 10th ed., (1999, New York). (ii) Historical atlases depicts changes in boundaries, military campaigns, early exploration and similar topics, e.g., The Times Atlas of World History. 4th ed 1999, London) and (iii) Thematic or subject atlases, emphasize a specific subject or region. e.g., National Atlas of Canada. 5th ed (1997, Ottawa). A globe is a spherical representation of the earth. It is considered as the only relatively accurate representation of the earth.

- iii. **Travel Guides:** A travel guide is defined as "a handbook for travellers, that gives information about city, region/country or a similar handbook about a building, museum, etc. It contains enough local information about countries, places, routes, accommodation, exchange rates, etc."

e.g., Fodor's India (1978, London), Tourist Guide-India

### 7.5.8 Indexes and Abstracts

Indexes such as periodical indexes usually list the authors, titles or subjects of publication without comment, whereas abstracts present a brief summary of content.

The factors which decide the scope of indexes and abstracts are time period, types of materials covered, depth and specificity of the indexing. General periodical indexes tend to index all substantive articles from the periodical selected for indexing, whereas subject specific indexes and abstracts are more likely to index selective material from a much larger list of periodicals.

#### Types

Indexes can be categorized as:

- i. Book Index
- ii. Indexes of collections of poems, fiction, plays, songs, essays, stories, biographies, etc. e.g., Essay and general literature index (1900-33, New York)
- iii. Periodical Indexes, which are of three types:
  - a) General indexes cover many periodicals in a wide field of knowledge. E.g., Applied Science and Technology Index (193, New York), Guide to Indian Periodical Literature: Social Sciences and Humanities, Vol.1 (1964, Gurgaon)
  - b) Subject Indexes cover several periodicals but the scope is restricted to a specific subject area. E.g., International Bibliography of Sociology (951, London)
  - c) Indexes to individual periodicals



- iv. Newspaper Indexes are of two types:
  - a) Indexing many newspapers. e.g., Indian News index.
  - b) Indexing a single newspaper. e. g., Index to Times of India.

Abstracts are of two major kinds,

- i. Indicative abstracts tell about the document briefly. They summarise the content in brief.
- ii. Informative abstracts are longer and present the essential data and conclusions so that the reader has fair idea of original document.

Another classification of abstracts is given below.

- i. Discipline-oriented: They are concerned with a particular branch of knowledge, e.g., chemical abstracts
- ii. Slanted abstracts: The emphasise on the subject-oriented part or portion of the concerned document
- iii. Mission-oriented abstract: They are prepared for an abstracting service concerned with the application of a specific branch of knowledge.(e.g., Engineering abstracts)

Abstracts appear in different formats and the best known one is the periodicals. An abstracting periodical "is a regularly issued compilation of concise summaries of (i) significant articles (often in a very limited subject field) that appear in current primary source journals, and (ii) important new research monographs, reports, patents, and other primary source publications in the field."

### Examples

- a) General abstracting services: e.g., Bulletin signalitique (1940, Paris)
- b) Library & Information Science: e.g., Indian library Science Abstracts (1967, Kolkatta)
- c) Science and Technology: e.g., Biological abstracts (1926, Philadelphia)
- d) Social science: e.g., Economic abstracts (1953, Hague)
- e) Humanities. E.g., language teaching and linguistics abstracts (1968, London)

## 7.6 Online Reference Sources

Due to the proliferation of digital information, now-a-days, thousands of reference sources are available online. Most of the well-reputed print reference sources are now available in digital form also and can be accessed through the internet or on other digital online networks.



Historically, an electronic resource is a piece of information stored in the form of electrical signals and is usually found in a computer. This includes information available on the internet. Libraries offer many types of electronic resources, including subject research guides, indexes, electronic books and texts, electronic journals, library catalogues, reference sources, statistical sources, sound recordings and image databases.

The immensity of technological advancements happening in the domain of information generation, processing and retrieval has opened up limitless options before today's information seeker. The role of a reference librarian becomes more challenging and to accomplish the task he/she should be equipped with new tools and technologies regularly. The availability of reference sources in multiple electronic/digital formats along with their print counterparts and accessing it online led to the concept of online referencing services.

The term 'online' may be defined as "a terminal attached to or connected with a computer" or "(of an activity or service) available on or performed using the Internet or other computer network".

There are a number of online reference services which are available on the web. While some are free, others need payment. *Chowdhury and Chowdhury*, categorised online reference services into three broad groups:

- i. Reference and information services from publishers, database search services and specialised institutions;
- ii. Reference services provided by libraries and/or experts through the internet; and
- iii. Reference and information services where users need to conduct a search and find information on the web.

Based on this service model, online reference sources on the web and those which are available over a network can be divided as follows. Examples given are representative only and you may find many other.

#### **i. General Online Reference Sources**

##### **a) Encyclopaedias**

e.g., Encyclopaedia Britannica Online <http://www.britannica.com/>

Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org>,

Refdesk <http://www.refdesk.com/>



- b) Dictionaries  
e.g., Visual Dictionary <http://visual.merriam-webster.com/>  
Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/>
- c) Thesauri  
e.g., Thesaurus.com <http://thesaurus.com/>
- d) Almanac  
e.g., InfoPlease <http://www.infoplease.com/>
- e) Atlases  
e.g., The CIA World Fact Book <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>  
National Geographic Maps <http://maps.nationalgeographic.com/maps>
- f) Directories, Government  
e.g., Govt. of India Web Directory <http://goidirectory.gov.in>
- g) Web Portals  
e.g., Internet Public Library <http://ipl.org/>  
Internet Library for Librarians <http://www.itcompany.com/info retriever/>
- h) Question Answer Service  
e.g., AllExperts <http://www.allexperts.com/>  
Ask <http://ask.com/>
- i) Patents and Standards  
e.g., World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/reference/en/>
- ii. **Current Awareness and SDI Resources**  
e.g., Dialog Alerts <http://www.dialog.com/products/alerts/Current>  
Contents Connect <http://thomsonreuters.com/current-contents-connect/>
- iii. **Bibliographic Databases**  
e.g., PubMed <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/IndMed><http://indmed.nic.in>, Agricola <http://agricola.nal.usda.gov/>
- iv. **Full Text Databases**  
e.g., Scientific Electronic Library Online <http://www.scielo.org>



Economic History Encyclopaedia Index <http://eh.net/>

**v. Statistical Databases**

e.g., Database on Indian Economy <http://dbie.rbi.org.in>

Global Population Statistics <http://www.geohive.com/>

**vi. Indexing and Abstracting Databases**

e.g., PsycINFO (American Psychological Association)

<http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycinfo/index.aspx>,

Anthropological Index Online <http://aio.anthropology.org.uk/aio/>

**vii. E-Journals**

e.g., Directory of Open Access Journals <http://www.doaj.org/>

**viii. E-Books**

e.g., World Public Library <http://www.netlibrary.net/Public.htm>

**ix. Image Databases**

e.g., American Memory <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

**Virtual Reference**

The Reference and User Service Association defines Virtual Reference as "a reference service initiated electronically where patrons employ computers or other technology to communicate with public services staff without being physically present. Communication channels used frequently in virtual reference include chat, videoconferencing, Voice-over IP, co-browsing, e-mail, and instant messaging. While online sources are often utilized in provision of virtual reference, use of electronic sources in seeking answers is not itself virtual reference. Virtual reference queries are sometimes followed-up with telephone, fax, in-person and regular mail interactions, even though these modes of communication are not considered virtual".

## 7.7 Summary

A quality reference collection developed by adhering standard policies and principles, and supported by a planned reference service, is considered the strength of any library. A detailed study of classification and types of reference sources was presented in the chapter with examples. Online reference sources and virtual referencing were also mentioned in the chapter.



## 7.8 Glossary

**Collection Development Policy:** The primary purpose of the policy is to lay down guidelines for selecting materials for the collection of the library. The American Library Association defines collection development policies (CDP) as 'documents which define the scope of a library's existing collections, plan for the continuing development of resources, identify collection strengths, and outline the relationship between selection philosophy and the institution's goals, general selection criteria, and intellectual freedom'.

**OCLC:** Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC) is "a nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing information costs." Founded in 1967 as the Ohio College Library Center, OCLC and its member libraries cooperatively produce and maintain WorldCat, the largest online public access catalogue (OPAC) in the world.

## 7.9 Exercise

### Short Answer Questions

1. What is the purpose of developing a reference collection?
2. How is a reference collection developed in the library?
3. What are the main categories of reference sources?
4. How is a reference source evaluated?
5. Write short notes on (i) bibliographies (ii) dictionaries (iii) encyclopaedias (iv) biographical sources.
6. How are online reference services classified?
7. What are the different types of online reference sources?
8. Write a short note on 'virtual reference'.

### Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the types of reference sources essential in the collection of (i) a college library (ii) a school library (iii) a university library.
2. Discuss the importance of online reference sources in the context of developments in the field of technology.