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BEST PRACTICES IN SERIALS MANAGEMENT: A KENNETH DIKE LIBRARY MODEL

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Abstract

Serials are described as a group of important information resources which contain primary cutting edge information, especially in an academic library like the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The various processes involved in the effective management of serials are highlighted in this paper. Automation of serials collection and electronic serials were discussed; serials workflow diagrams representing manual and automated serials management systems were also developed by the author.

Keywords: Serials, Serials Management, Automation, Electronic Serials

Background

The Kenneth Dike Library, formerly known as the Ibadan University Library was established in 1948. The same year as its parent body, University of Ibadan, was founded. The library is headed by the University Librarian who is a principal officer of the University and is divided into four (4) divisions for effective management/administration. These divisions are Readers' Services, Technical Services, Collection Development and Special Collection Divisions. The Readers' Services Division is comprised such sections as the Circulation and Reference Sections. It oversees all the Faculty and Departmental libraries. Special Collections Division is made up of the Africana, Public Ordinance, Documents sections, as well as the Arabic, Maps and Manuscripts Collections. The Collection Development Division consists of the Acquisitions and the Gift and Exchanges sections. The Serials section operates under the Technical Services Division of the library along with such sections as the Cataloguing, the Bindery and the Reprographic section.

The piece is borne out of the experience of the writer as a Serials Librarian in the Kenneth Dike Library.

What are Serials?

Serials are information resources issued in successive parts at regular or irregular intervals and in sequence with no foreseeable end. (AACR2, 1988). It is an umbrella term for all information materials which fit into this definition, and is used synonymously with journals or periodicals. It is assumed that serials generally have regular frequencies, but in practice and from experience in handling serials, it has been found that some are very irregular. For instance a journal may have just two issues in a particular year and the next year it comes out bimonthly (every two months). Also the publication of serials has no foreseeable end because the continuation is at the prerogative of the publisher or the issuing body, which may decide to cease publication or continue.

Serials are an important type of information resource because they contain up-to-date, cutting-edge information on any subject discipline. They are also referred to as primary sources of information.

This is because information published in them is mostly products of investigation or research. The information contained in them is more precise and detailed than those contained in textbooks. They are also very expensive to publish and acquire.

Types of Serials in the Serials Section

Serials are broadly categorized into General magazines, Controlled Circulation Magazines, Commercial STMs (Science, Technology and Mathematics), Learned Society Journals and Government Publications. However, in the serials section of the Kenneth Dike Library, the serials we work with, which cut across these broad categories are namely

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- Local and foreign journals
- Bulletins
- Annual reports
- Proceedings of professional/ academic societies
- Magazines
- News magazines
- Abstracts (Most abstracts are processed and sent to the Reference section for consultation by users)
- Newspapers

The most important type of serials in the above lineup are the local and foreign journals. This is so because in terms of number, patronage and acquisition by the library, they are the most visible. This might be the reason why most times when one mentions the term 'serials', what first comes to mind are journals. The local journals refer to those journals that are published in Nigeria, while the foreign journals are those published outside the Nigerian shores. The term 'local' does not mean that those journals so qualified are not of good quality or of international standing; it just signifies the location of their publishers or issuing bodies.

Newspapers are also of great importance. They enjoy high patronage from users from both within and outside the University of Ibadan. The Kenneth Dike Library, due to its age, has a rich collection of past newspapers which dates back to Nigeria's pre-independence era up till date. This collection serves as an invaluable reference source to students, faculty and researchers both locally and internationally. Magazines, especially news magazines are also very important to our library users.

The Management of serials in Kenneth Dike Library involves the following processes:

- Selection
- Acquisition
- Receiving
- Cataloguing and Classification
- Stamping, Shelving, Binding
- Claiming
- Deselection

Selection

This is the process in which we evaluate and choose which serials to acquire for the Library. Being an academic library, the main considerations involved in the process of selecting serials for the library are mainly, to make sure that the satisfaction of the users' information needs is achieved. This is because it is tempting for the librarian in charge to select just those journals that he/ she feels are suitable for acquisition without consideration for the users. Another is to ensure the fair representation of all faculties by the journals selected for acquisition within the confines of available funds. In this case the librarian makes sure that journals selected cut across all the disciplines represented by the courses being offered in the University. Another factor that comes into play in the selection of journals is the funds available to acquire the journals selected. This factor determines the final selection list that is compiled. Selection or journals to be acquired is carried out using the following tools:

- a) **Vendor's Master List:** This is a list provided by a vendor or agent who usually helps the library to procure the foreign journals. He/ She is the intermediary between the library and the publishers of these journals. The library does not have access to hard currency to purchase foreign based information resources but the vendor does. He has a list of all the journals that he has the capacity to

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supply to the library and the list is arranged by subject disciplines. It is forwarded to the serials librarian who does the selection for the approval of the University librarian. The vendor/agent sends in a pro-forma invoice based on the selection list, which now contains information on the cost implication of the selected materials. The University librarian, based on his/ her knowledge of available funds, makes additions to, subtracts from or approves the list as it is. It is worthy of note that the library also has vendors for locally based journals who help source the journals in bulk. The same process described for foreign based journals apply.

- b) **Reviews:** A review is a short article written to describe a book, a journal or articles in journals, with the intention of making potential users such as librarians or readers get interested in them. They are usually locate in the inside page of the back cover of a book or journal.
- c) **Lists of selected titles:** A Record of lists of selected titles of journals to be ordered for each year is kept for reference purposes. During the selection process, such lists can be retrieved and consulted by the librarian to help decide which titles to purchase for a particular year.
- d) **Bibliographic tools:** These refer to compiled bibliographies such as the American Book in Prints and the British National Bibliography which are lists of publications published in those countries which a librarian anywhere in the world may be interested to acquire for a library.
- e) **Publishers' catalogues:** Publishers use catalogues to advertise new publications from their stable. They come in the form of magazines or pamphlets, and contain a brief description of each information resource they wish to bring to the attention of prospective subscribers. They normally presented according to subject disciplines.
- f) **Publishers' announcements:** These are in the form of posters, banners or leaflets which are distributed or pasted in strategic places especially at conferences or other fora where there is a gathering of academics, professionals, students, teachers or policy makers.
- G) **Internet search printouts:** Search results obtained by using the internet to browse the World Wide Web (WWW), can be printed out and used as a tool to guide the librarian in the selection process
- H) **Desiderata list:** Lecturers and post graduate students are allowed to make requests or suggest titles of serials they want the library to acquire in their area of research interests. They fill out slips of paper provided for this purpose and when it is time to embark on selection of titles for another year the serials librarian compiles the list of requested and suggested titles. That list is known as the desiderata list.

Acquisition

This is the actual procurement of serials into the library. Acquisition is carried out in the following ways:

- a) **By subscription:** Annually, the library places an order in advance for the serials needed through a Vendor or agent. This is mostly the case for foreign journals. These are paid for after full delivery of the materials.
- b) **Direct purchase:** This is mostly used in the acquisition of journals that are locally based. In which case, journals published by professional bodies, learned societies or departments/faculties in universities are paid for directly in cash as they are brought to the library. This payment is made by the acquisitions section of the library from the imprest that has been provided for such a purpose.
- c) **Gifts and Exchange:** The library receives numerous serials publications as gifts. Some of them come in regularly and consistently while some are very irregular. The ones that are regular in nature are processed and incorporated into the library's serials collection while the irregular ones are displayed on a dedicated shelf for that purpose for users to have access to them.

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- d) **Journal Donation Project (JDP):** The JDP is a project facilitated by a MacArthur Foundation grant to New school University, New Jersey. The project was carried out in conjunction with publishers of journals to come to the aid of academic libraries in Africa in order to enable them to effectively meet the information needs of their users. Journals are very expensive; therefore this intervention by the New school University, which started in the year 2001, has been of immense value to the Kenneth Dike Library and the University of Ibadan as a whole. Journals have been sent over the years free of charge to the library; in 2008 and 2009 the library paid 20% and 40% of the handling charges. Other universities in Nigeria which benefited from the JDP include the University of Port Harcourt, Bayero University, Kano, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and University of Maiduguri. The initiators of the JDP allotted different subject disciplines to each of the universities with a view to encourage resource sharing amongst them, which would also serve as a foundation to the establishment of a consortium. For example University of Ibadan was assigned Arts, Humanities and the Social sciences. The idea was that if any journal was needed in another discipline for example, Medicine which is not stocked by Kenneth Dike Library, another library such as Bayero University Library will be contacted by email and the scanned copy of the article needed will be emailed back to Kenneth Dike Library. The project finally terminated in 2010 but till date some publishers are still sending journals to the library free of charge.

Receiving

Serials which have been acquired and are coming into the library are received by entering some of their bibliographic information into the Kardex. Information such as the publication title, classification number and the source of the publication for claiming purposes is entered. Other information that is entered as the resources arrive are the volume number, year of publication, issue number and the date on which the information is being entered into the Kardex. The process that has just been described is known as receiving. The date on which these information about issues that have arrived the library are being recorded, is day they are received into the library. Not the day they were delivered to the library or serials section. The Kardex is a metal cabinet with several drawers, which comes with special cards on which information about our serials are entered. The cards are arranged alphabetically according to the serials titles.

Cataloguing and Classification

Cataloguing of serials is a once and for all thing. Cataloguing entails taking note of the bibliographic details of individual titles, assigning classification numbers to them and recording the information on catalogue cards. The classification number denotes the subject discipline to which the information resources belong. Catalogue cards contain bibliographic information different from books such as Title, Publisher and or issuing body, Date of inception, ISSN (International Standard Serials Number), the volume and issue number of the first issue acquired by the library and the classification number of the publication.

The Serials section manages two serials catalogues, namely the Serials Main Catalogue and the Serials Shelf List Catalogue, therefore two catalogue cards are produce for each serial title. The main catalogue is an alphabetical listing of the library's serials holding according to titles. This catalogue is the one that is accessible to users for consultation. The shelf list catalogue is also alphabetical in nature but the cards are arranged according to their classification numbers. Classification is carried out using the Library of Congress classification scheme (LC) and the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). Before classifying a title, the Ulrich's Periodicals Directory is checked to know if a particular title is listed and if it already has a classification number assigned to it. Usually, both the Dewey and the LC classification

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numbers can be found in Ulrich's directory. In the case where the LC classification number for a title is there, that number is chosen to ensure uniformity with other libraries in the world.

Stamping, Shelving and Binding

Ownership stamp is applied to the journals, after which they are shelved according to their classification numbers. Some journals, especially the Journal Donation Project (JDP) are forwarded to the bindery before they are shelved. This is to ensure that all the issues of one year are bound together to discourage theft.

Claiming

This is a process in which the list of issues of serials which have been acquired by the library and have not arrived is compiled by consulting the Kardex. The list is forwarded to the vendor or agent to ensure the arrival of the journals where possible as some issues which come through post may have been lost in transit.

Other activities of the serials section include the taking of statistics in the following areas:

Each morning, statistics of information materials consulted the day before by users is taken. Statistics help in keeping track of the various activities of the section. They make it possible to study the usage patterns of library materials, identify how weak or strong the serials collection is in a particular discipline, and determine the trend of library patronage by users. The materials are categorized as either bound or unbound. Statistics of the number of photocopy requests received in the section so also a record of materials going for photocopying is recorded in a logbook. The number of books brought by users from other sections of the library and left in the serials section is recorded and the statistics of JDP journals consulted by users is taken.

In the serials section, attention is also given to users' queries. The section also takes charge of subscription to newspapers and magazines and also keeps a record of such. Newspapers that the library presently subscribes to are, namely:

- The Nigerian Tribune
- The Guardian (Two copies on Tuesdays; one goes to Faculty of Law library)
- The Vanguard
- The Nation
- Daily Punch
- This Day
- Business (3 copies)
- Daily Independent
- Next

The library also subscribes to news magazines such as *Tell magazine*, *Newswatch* and *The News*. Their records are kept in the Kardex and they are forwarded to the Reference Section of the library for consultation by users and storage for future use. The collection of past newspapers and magazines has proven to be a useful and unique resource which users of Kenneth Dike Library, both within and outside the shores of Nigeria have benefitted from over the years.

Automation of KDL Serials Collection

All along, the processes of serials management that have been described constitute the manual system of serials control. The future of the serials management in Kenneth Dike Library and indeed Nigeria as a whole is centred on automation. The term automation implies that a chain of activities, processes or events had been carried out manually at some given time, before applying a machine to facilitate those processes. I would define automation in this context as the application of computer technology or more precisely Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to the processes of managing serials collections in

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academic libraries.

For an automation project to be effectively implemented, there needs to be proper planning and the library must have acquired a software or library management system (LMS) which must preferably be an integrated system. Automation of the management of serials collections has one major aim to make information retrieval easy and speedy for the information user. The automated system can also handle such tasks as receiving or check-in, recording of bibliographic details and claiming of serials titles at greater speed, accuracy and efficiency. The system also makes it possible to have the bibliographic and holding details of the serials collection available to users through the online public access catalogue (OPAC). It is to further ensure that the information seeker gets all or virtually all information available in the library in his/her area of research interest.

Until recently major library automation projects focused on cataloguing and circulation activities in the library, which were in turn focused on monographs (books) and not serials. An ILS uses a single database to perform the basic library functions of acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation and serials control. Most integrated library management systems (ILS) however have their acquisition, cataloguing and circulation modules activated well before the serials module is, that is if it is even activated at all. This can be corroborated by the experience in the Kenneth Dike Library. When the TINLIB integrated system was being deployed for automation, only the cataloguing and the circulation modules were in active usage. The Serials module and the Acquisitions module were not being used. Interestingly, though, the history of computerization started with the generation of serials list in 1983, when KDL, in collaboration with the University Computing Centre, started the automation project of the library. This was eventually discontinued. Over the years, from the Kenneth Dike Library experience the serials workflow is represented as illustrated. (Figure 1)

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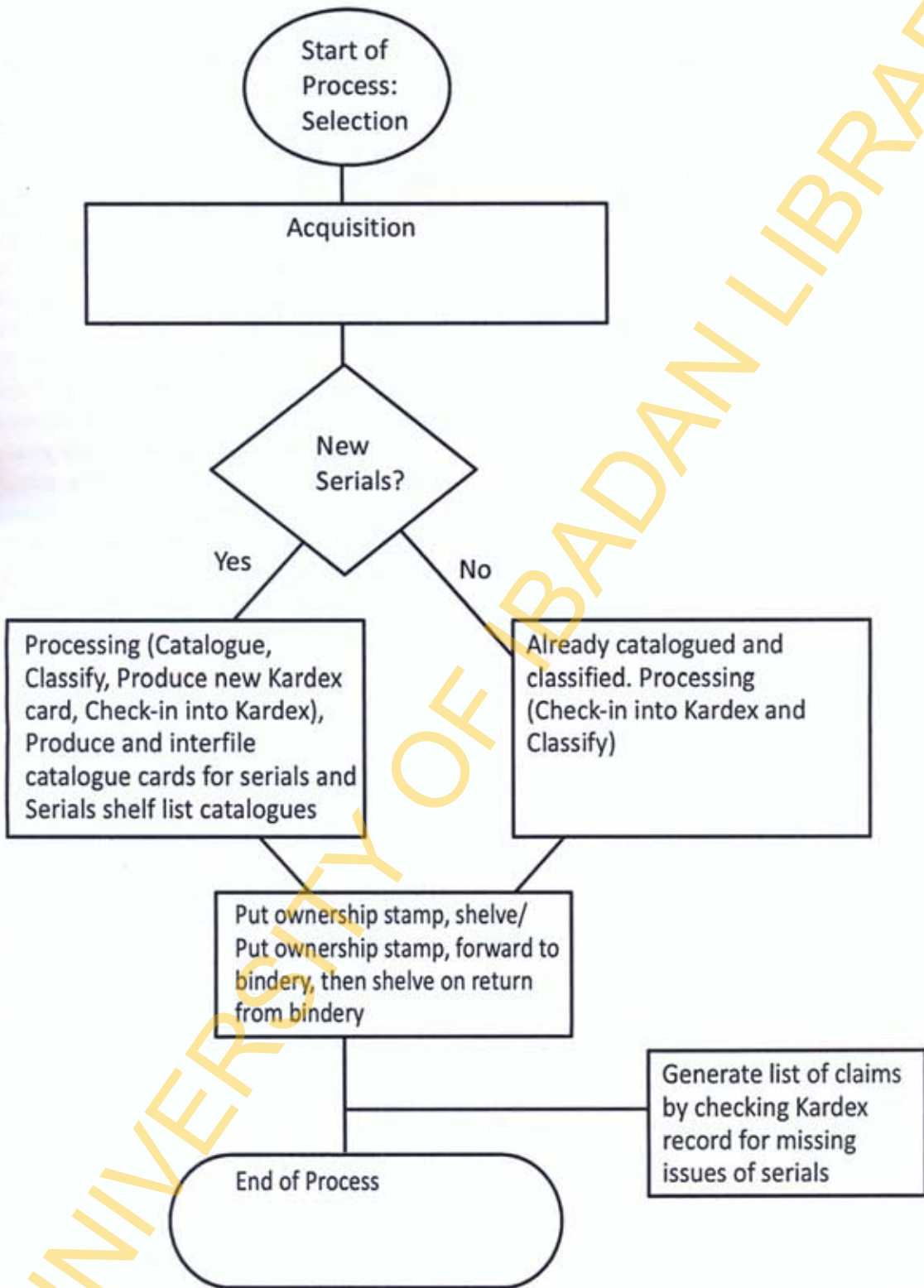


Figure1 Self-constructed Flow Chart representing the manual processes of Serials Management in Kenneth Dike Library

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The next attempt at automating serials management in KDL was in the year 2004, when the ALICE for Windows library management system was acquired for deployment in the library. It was decided that the process would start with journals acquired that year and not retrospectively. With that system, it was possible to input information in the following fields:

Title	Previous title
Publisher	Place of publication
Publication type (i.e. whether journal, newspaper, proceeding)	
Date of publication	ISSN
Frequency	Volume, Issue number
Date of arrival	Number of copies, Cost
Barcode	Classification mark

Also with that system, it was possible to input the abstracts of individual articles and their subject headings. This was important to ensure that library users performing subject searches through the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) will be able to access journal articles relevant to their information needs easily. Sadly, the system crashed due to low quality of technical support to maintain it.

Another attempt at serials automation is being embarked upon currently with a new Library Management System being deployed in cooperation with five other university libraries in Nigeria, VIRTUA, which also has the potentials to enable the library achieve its goal of making its serials collection user-friendly. It also has a serials module and the serials work form into which information will be entered. It is MARC 21 compliant and the Online Public Access Catalogue is web-based. The workflow for the automated serials management system is diagrammatically presented. (Figure 2).

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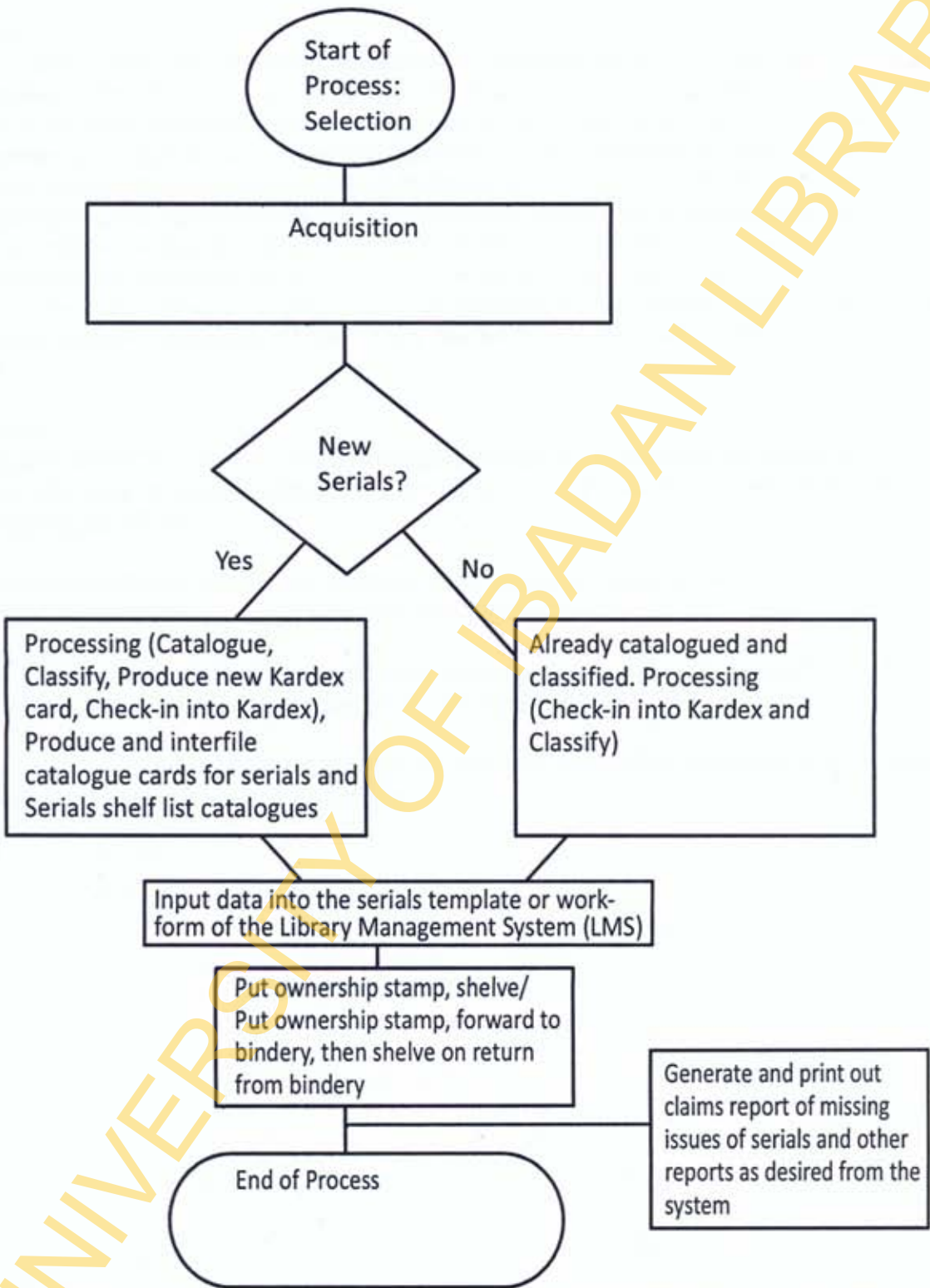


Figure 2 Self-constructed Flow Chart representing the automated processes of Serials Management

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Conclusion

Best practices imply that the processes involved in managing serials in Kenneth Dike Library are fashioned after the laid down principles in librarianship. These practices have been able to evolve over the years due to the age of the library and they were brought about by the vision of the founding fathers and also the present crop of professionals who strive to do things in as most excellent a way as possible. Most libraries can implement these principles without having to make the same mistakes that have been made in past by other libraries. Of note is the adoption of modern techniques for managing serials in the library. VTLs' (Visionary Technology for Library Solutions) VIRTUA software offers great opportunities in all dimensions of serials management. Thus, the future of serials control and usage in KDL will surely be electronic-driven for better user patronage and satisfaction. The Kenneth Dike Library serials management model is continually evolving. Many lessons have been learnt but the learning process continues.

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