



Guide No. 3 Cataloguing and arranging the meeting library

1. [Introduction](#)
 2. [The catalogue](#)
 3. [Subject arrangement and subject headings](#)
 4. [Computer systems](#)
 5. [Examples of simple catalogue entries](#)
 6. [Some subject divisions used by meeting libraries](#)
 7. [Further advice](#)
- [Appendix 1. Cataloguing standards: description elements, layout and punctuation](#)
[Appendix 2. Resources](#)

1. **Introduction**

Whatever kind of cataloguing and arrangement, in whatever format (card catalogue, computer or paper file), is chosen for your meeting library, simplicity must be the guiding principle. The system should be “user-friendly”, enabling readers to find books by author, title or subject without assistance, and it should be easy to administer both for you and for your successors.

2. **The catalogue**

Every library should have at least a basic catalogue, both as a record of what stock is held and as a finding aid for library users.

The catalogue should record at least four essential pieces of information:

- **author or editor**, or **corporate body** (organisation, e.g. QPSW)
- **title** of the book, recording or other item
- **date of publication**
- **accession number** (unique number allocated by you to identify each item).

It would also be helpful to include the **edition** of the item (unless it is the first and/or only edition) and a brief **physical description**, such as the number of volumes or pages, or the number of CDs in a set, as well as **material type**, when the library holds non-book material such as video or sound recordings. Additionally you may want to include the **publisher** and the **place of publication**, and any **series title** (e.g., Swarthmore lecture, Pendle Hill pamphlet). Once the library grows to any size (say over 200 volumes) the catalogue record will need the addition of a **shelf mark** or **class mark** to help readers locate the book on the shelves.

At the time of the last national survey of Quaker meeting libraries, in 2004, the vast majority were using a **card catalogue**. Since that time, meetings have turned in increasing numbers to computers to record their library holdings (see [section 4](#) below). In the past, some older meeting libraries produced a printed or hand-written list or register of books: these can still be a useful record of historic collections.

In the **card catalogue** the librarian makes separate catalogue entries under different headings so that the reader can choose from several different access points to find the same item. In a simple author-title card catalogue, two or more cards are written or typed out with the same catalogue description under different headings. The main card is filed by author heading (with additional cards if there is more than one significant author) and another card is filed by the first word of the title (not including any definite or indefinite articles, i.e. the first word after “The”, “A” or “An”). In a catalogue with subject entries, there will be additional cards under subject headings.

To save time, the main card sometimes gives the fullest description and the added entries an abbreviated description. It is good practice to make a note of added entry headings used (“tracings”) on the back of the main card, so you can easily find all the cards in case you need to edit the entry or withdraw the book from the catalogue.

See [section 5 below](#) for examples of card catalogue entries.

To find out more about the information elements used in standard cataloguing, see [Appendix 1, Cataloguing standards: description elements, layout and punctuation](#).

3. Subject arrangement and subject headings

Any subject arrangement should be as simple as possible in the interests of the user - and of your successors. Classification schemes used in public and academic libraries, such as the Dewey Decimal system, are almost never appropriate for meeting libraries, because they are not designed with the small subject specific library in mind. For most meeting libraries, a dozen subject divisions would be sufficient.

Subject headings can be used to make **additional entries in the catalogue**, which will improve access to separately shelved stock, such as pamphlets, audio-visual material, outsize books or older books.

Subject headings can also be used as the **basis for shelf arrangement** (instead of shelving them by author, size or accession date) to improve searching by browsing. Books are usually labelled on the spine with the subject word or code. To help guide the reader to the individual item within subject groups they are often further divided by the first few letters of the author’s surname, which can also be marked on the spine. Although shelf arrangement by subject has benefits for browsing, it is preferable to shelve material in different formats (such as pamphlets and audio-visual material) separately from the main run of books, to protect from damage and loss.

Some examples of subject headings adopted by meeting libraries are given in [section 6](#).

4. Computer systems

Increasing numbers of meeting librarians use computers to catalogue the library's holdings. The cataloguing principles remain the same – a brief catalogue description, with different access points (author and title; perhaps also publisher, series title and subject) – but clerical work is reduced (no more multiple catalogue cards). Even a simple system allows more data than can easily fit on a catalogue card – there is also the possibility of adding abstracts or short descriptions. In more elaborate systems each record can be linked to other records, and enhanced by book jacket images.

Computer catalogues are less physically limited than card catalogues – they can be copied and worked on away from the meeting house. Some meetings have made their catalogues available online, through the meeting website.

Few meeting libraries have large enough collections to warrant the purchase of mainstream library software, but a small number have used widely available software packages to create their own catalogues, whether by **word-processing** catalogue entries, or by creating a basic **database** or **spreadsheet**.

Specific cataloguing applications for small libraries and private collections are unlikely to offer good value for meeting libraries. Other drawbacks include the costs of on-going support and product development, and the risks of obsolescence or company failure.

A number of meeting libraries have signed up to social cataloguing website [LibraryThing](#), which offers access to ready-made catalogue records and sharing information about books.

Whatever choice is made, the meeting librarian should aim for a simple and user-friendly system, easily operable by his or her successors, and accessible to library users. Some meetings may not possess or have a secure place to keep a computer, but the librarian may be happy to use their own. If providing hardware or software themselves, Friends should again consider whether the catalogue will still be usable by their successors, and compatible with future systems.

If all library users are to benefit from the catalogue, it may still be helpful to provide a “hard copy” printed version. Some readers may not be confident using computers, and a solely web-based catalogue will not be available to Friends without access to the internet (whether at home or in the meeting house).

A regular **back-up** routine is absolutely essential to ensure that catalogue data is not lost, whatever may happen to the computer. It is good practice to store one up-to-date back-up copy of the computer data elsewhere, for additional security. If the catalogue is hosted by a third party provider, as in the case of web-based [LibraryThing](#), the basic catalogue data should be downloaded to a local computer as a back-up (at regular intervals depending on changes to the catalogue), in case of down-time or loss.

For an example of a simple spreadsheet catalogue, see [section 5](#) below.

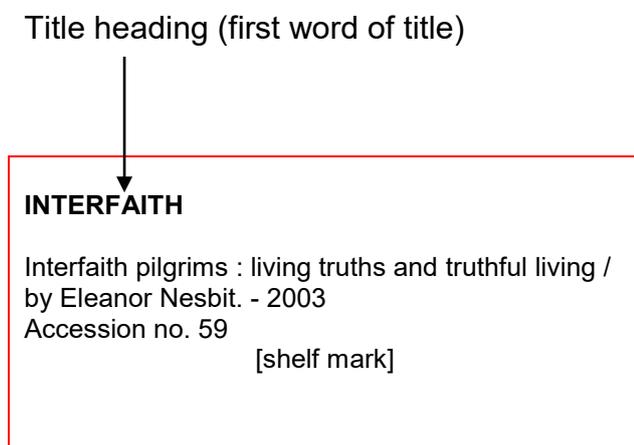
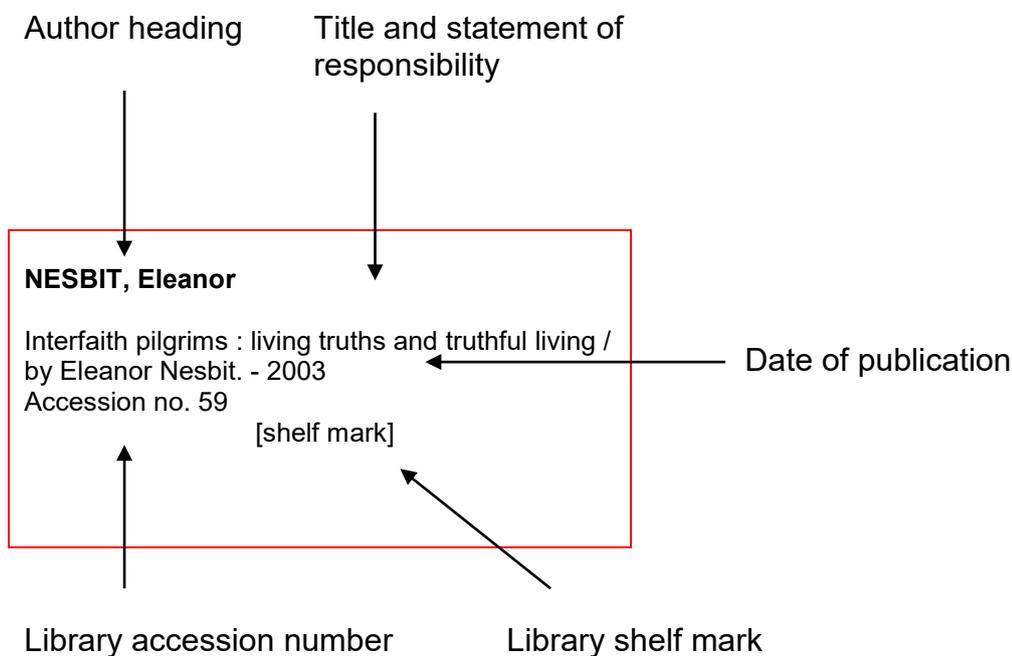
5. Examples of simple catalogue entries

Basic card catalogue examples

Below are two **basic card catalogue entries** for Eleanor Nesbit's book, *Interfaith pilgrims*, one under the author heading, the second under the title heading.

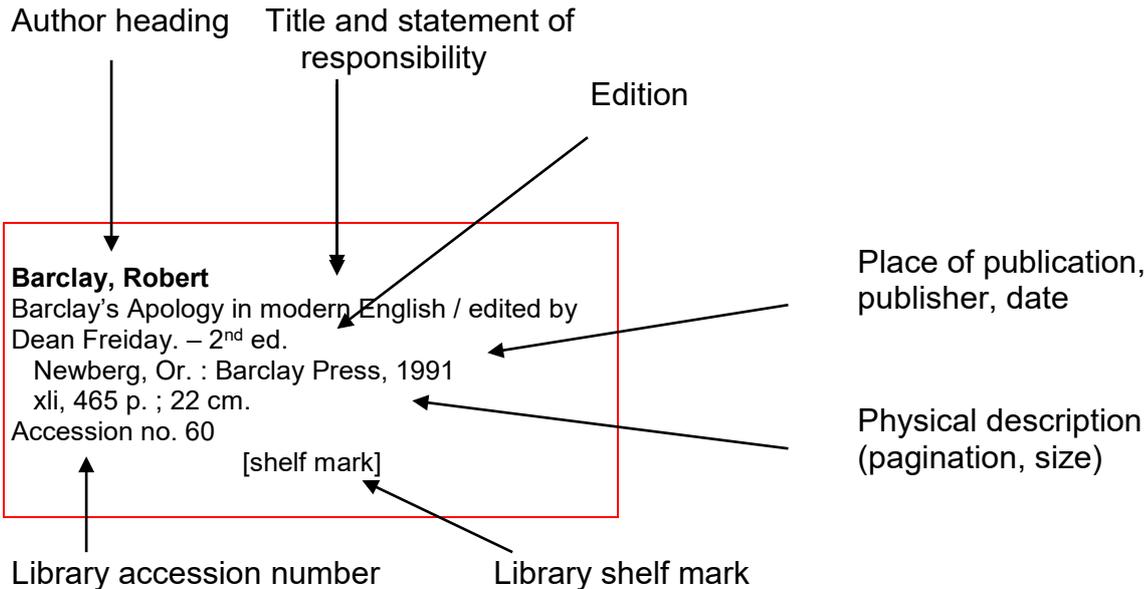
The minimum information is given – the heading at the top, the description below, including title, statement of responsibility (e.g., by X, edited by Y) and date of publication, plus, on a new line, the library's accession number (or numbers in the case of multiple copies), with the shelf mark(s) prominently below that.

Note the use of standard punctuation (in this case conforming to common professional standards - Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2nd ed.) and standard lay-out, both of which help make the information stand out.



Fuller card catalogue examples

Below are **fuller card catalogue entries** for Dean Freiday's modern English edition of Barclay's *Apology*. The basic information in the description is expanded to include edition, place of publication and publisher, and a physical description (e.g. number of pages or volumes, and dimensions for books; number of items and format for audio-visual resources such as CDs or DVDs). These elements help give the library user an idea of the item's publication, currency, or date it was published, and the size or type of item (is it a 12 page pamphlet or a 400 page book? Is it a book or a DVD?).



Same catalogue description, under another heading (**editor**):

Freiday, Dean
Barclay's Apology in modern English / edited by Dean Freiday. – 2nd ed.
Newberg, Or. : Barclay Press, 1991
xli, 465 p. ; 22 cm.
Accession no. 60
[shelf mark]

Same catalogue description, under another heading (**title**):

Barclay's
Barclay's Apology in modern English / edited by Dean Freiday. – 2nd ed.
Newberg, Or. : Barclay Press, 1991
xli, 465 p. ; 22 cm.
Accession no. 60
[shelf mark]

Same catalogue description, under another heading (**subject heading**):

Quaker theology

Barclay's Apology in modern English / edited by
Dean Freiday. – 2nd ed.

Newberg, Or. : Barclay Press, 1991

xli, 465 p. ; 22 cm.

Accession no. 60

[shelf mark]

Tracings on back of the main entry card for same item:

TITLE

FREIDAY, DEAN

QUAKER THEOLOGY

The name and subject headings used for catalogue entries need to be consistent, so that the library user can find all related items together. If an author's works are sometimes entered in the catalogue under one name and sometimes another, then the entries may be filed far apart. Similarly if one librarian uses the heading QUAKER THEOLOGY and another uses THEOLOGY, QUAKER, entries will be dotted about in different places. Readers will be helped by cross-references from other headings to the preferred heading, and so will the cataloguer:

Theology, Quaker

SEE **Quaker theology**

Barclay, R.

SEE **Barclay, Robert**

Spreadsheet catalogue examples

Below are catalogue entries that might be entered on a very simple spreadsheet, using only the minimum elements of the catalogue description. More elements (such as editor, publisher, subject, or physical description) could be included and columns hidden from view when not wanted. Spreadsheets can easily be sorted in different ways (e.g. author, date), but can be hard for the less experienced user to navigate, and difficult to print.

author	title	year	accession number	shelfmark
Barclay, Robert	Barclay's Apology in modern English	1991	60	QUA/BAR
Nesbit, Eleanor	Interfaith pilgrims : living truths and truthful living	2003	59	INT/NES
Wallis, Tim	The truth about Trident	2016	61	PEA/WAL

6. Some subject divisions used by meeting libraries

Horfield Meeting (Bristol) used eleven subject categories:

Arts, music, poetry	Quaker journals
Biblical studies	Quaker religious thought
Biography	Quaker business (Yearly Meeting, etc.)
Fiction	Religious thought
Peace	Swarthmore Lectures
Quakerism	Social issues
Quaker history	

Northampton Meeting gave each subject a letter, which was put on the spine with the first three letters of the author's name (or the title if there was no single author):

A	Quaker faith and practice	H	Sustainability & economic justice
B	Quaker history	J	World history, politics & society
C	Quaker biographies	K	Science, arts & education
D	Bible & Bible commentaries	L	Fiction & poetry
E	Christian thought	M	Relationships
F	World religions and secular thought	P	Non-print media
G	Peace	Q	New to Quakers?

Amersham Meeting library adopted a mnemonic subject code:

A Anthologies (prose and poetry)	M The arts
B Biography	N The healing arts
C Material for Children	O Outreach
D Self-Development; spiritual growth	P Practical Quakerism; faith & practice
E Material for Enquirers	Q Quakerism
F Fiction and poetry (not anthologised)	R Religious thought, Quaker
G General theology; General ethics	S Social concerns including education
H History, Quaker	T Testimonies, Quaker, including peace
I Interfaith dialogue	U History, Universal
J Jesus; the Bible	V Scriptural writings; the Bible
K Archaeology, biblical and Holy Land	W World conservation; environment
L Legal matters and penal system	X Swarthmore lectures

7. Further advice

For further advice please contact the Library at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Phone 020 7663 1135. Email library@quaker.org.uk.

Join the Quaker Meeting Librarians Cluster for email discussion with other meeting librarians. Email library@quaker.org.uk to register.

Other leaflets in this series to download from <https://www.quaker.org.uk/meeting-librarians>

1. The Role of the Meeting Librarian
2. Selection and acquisition of stock
3. Cataloguing and arranging the meeting library
4. Equipment for a meeting library
5. Disposing of unwanted books
6. Caring for your books
7. Promoting the meeting library
8. Online resources for meeting librarians

Disaster preparedness: guidance for meeting librarians, clerks and custodians of records
(Guides for custodians of records, no. 10)

September 2023

Appendix 1 Cataloguing standards: description elements, layout and punctuation

ISBD International Standard Bibliographic Description

Elements of the bibliographic description are presented in 8 areas and laid out with standard punctuation:

- 1 Title & statement of responsibility area
- 2 Edition
- 3 Details specific to some formats (used for maps & serials, e.g. scale)
- 4 Publication & distribution
- 5 Physical description
- 6 Series
- 7 Notes
- 8 ISBN or other standard number

For an outline of prescribed punctuation and lay-out as seen in the examples in this guide, see *International standard bibliographic description (ISBD)*, 2007.

https://archive.ifla.org/VII/s13/pubs/ISBD_consolidated_2007.pdf

AACR2 Cataloguing

AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition, 2005) was the cataloguing convention used most widely in the English-speaking world for the last few decades.

Level 1 description is a cut-down minimum version of the full range of information that could be included in a catalogue entry.

Level 1 **requires** the following elements of the description:

- Title proper
- First statement of responsibility
- Edition statement
- First publisher, date of publication
- Extent of item
- Note
- Standard number (usually ISBN)

Level 1 **omits** the following elements, used in more detailed cataloguing:

- Other title information (e.g. sub-title - often a highly useful indicator of content)
- Other statements of responsibility (addition authors, editors, translators, etc)
- Format specific details for maps and serials
- Place of publication
- Other publishers
- Other physical description (e.g. illustrations)
- Dimensions of item (e.g. how tall)
- Series

Appendix 2 Resources

1. [Shared web based cataloguing](#)
2. [Library catalogues and other sources of bibliographic information](#)
3. [Discussion lists](#)

1. Shared web based cataloguing

LibraryThing <https://www.librarything.com/> shared online cataloguing application. Free for individuals and organisations (organisations with over 20,000 books will need to request permission).

LibraryThing has developed TinyCat <https://www.librarycat.org/>, a web-based cataloguing and circulation application for very small libraries that works with LibraryThing catalogue data. Current price is \$3-£15 per month, depending on size.

2. Library catalogues and other sources of bibliographic information

Catalogue of the Library of the Religious Society of Friends, Friends House, London
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/cat>

TRIPOD, joint catalogue of Haverford and Swarthmore Colleges (including Quaker Collection and Friends Historical Library) and Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania
<https://tripod.brynmawr.edu/>

British Library, the national library of the UK
<https://www.bl.uk/>

Library of Congress, USA, including Library of Congress subject and name headings
<https://www.loc.gov/>

Library Hub Discover: British union catalogue of national, academic & specialist libraries
<https://discover.libraryhub.jisc.ac.uk/>

World Cat: OCLC's on-line freely available on-line union catalogue, giving library holdings near any specified location
<https://www.worldcat.org/>

English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC) for records of English books published before 1801, searchable through British Library website
<https://estc.bl.uk>

Amazon, on-line bookseller
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/> (British site)

3. Discussion lists

Quaker Meeting Librarians Cluster. Email discussion group for Quaker meeting librarians in Britain Yearly Meeting. To sign up, contact library@quaker.org.uk.

LibraryThing Quaker meeting libraries group for LibraryThing members (users of LibraryThing social cataloguing software, see [section 1](#) above)
<https://www.librarything.com/groups/quakermeetinglibrari>

LibraryThing church libraries group for LibraryThing members (users of LibraryThing social cataloguing software, see [section 1](#) above)
<https://www.librarything.com/groups/churchlibraries>

Church Librarians Network, a community of church librarians for exchange of ideas and information on church library ministry (mainly US)
<https://churchlibrarians.ning.com/>