

SAUPERL, Alenka. **Subject determination during the cataloging process.** Lanham, MD : Scarecrow, 2002. 173 p. ISBN 0-8108-4289-0.

This most interesting contribution to the literature of subject cataloguing originates in the author's doctoral dissertation, prepared under the direction of Jerry Saye at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In seven highly readable chapters, Alenka Sauperl develops possible answers to her principal research question: How do cataloguers determine or identify the topic of a document and choose appropriate subject representations? Specific questions at the source of this research on a process which has not been a frequent object of study include: Where do cataloguers look for an overall sense of what a document is about? How do they get an overall sense of what a document is about, especially when they are not familiar with the discipline? Do they consider only one or several possible interpretations? How do they translate meanings in appropriate and valid class numbers and subject headings?

Using a strictly qualitative methodology, Dr. Sauperl's research is a study of twelve cataloguers in real-life situation. The author insists on the holistic rather than purely theoretical understanding of the process she is targeting. Participants in the study were professional cataloguers, with at least one year experience in their current job at one of three large academic libraries in the Southeastern United States. All three libraries have a large central cataloguing department, and use OCLC sources and the same automated system; the context of cataloguing tasks is thus considered to be reasonably comparable. All participants were volunteers in this study which combined two data-gathering techniques: the think-aloud method and time-line interviews. A model of the subject cataloguing process was first developed from observations of a group of six cataloguers who were asked to independently perform original cataloguing on three non-fiction, non-serial items selected from materials regularly assigned to them for processing. The model was then used for follow-up interviews. Each participant in the second group of cataloguers was invited to reflect on his/her work process for a recent challenging document they had catalogued.

Results are presented in 12 stories describing as many personal approaches to subject cataloguing. From these stories a summarization is offered and a theoretical model of subject cataloguing is developed which, according to the author, represents a realistic approach to subject cataloguing. Stories alternate

comments from the researcher and direct quotations from the observed or interviewed cataloguers.

Not surprisingly, the participants' stories reveal similarities in the sequence and accomplishment of several tasks in the process of subject cataloguing. Sauperl's proposed model, described in Chapter 5, includes as main stages: 1) Examination of the book and subject identification; 2) Search for subject headings; 3) Classification. Chapter 6 is a hypothetical case study, using the proposed model to describe the various stages of cataloguing a hypothetical resource.

If Sauperl's results do not lead to any sensational revelations, many of her observations and comments, coming as she says "from the battle lines", are worth mentioning: 1) examination of the document is a first and ongoing task; 2) subject cataloguers work for what seems like a long time with "tentative headings" that are eventually used to search for valid headings; 3) preferred sources for identifying appropriate subject headings are existing records in the local catalogue and other catalogues; 4) not all cataloguers agree that the title should be the main source of information on a document's subject content; 5) cataloguers value the possibility of using keywords to search for valid subject headings; 6) the Library of Congress databases and tools are seen as the ultimate authority in matters relating to subject headings and classification; 7) cataloguers establish their own personal guidelines to determine where and when to stop in their search for valid subject headings; 8) cataloguers express concern that they may occasionally miss the most appropriate heading; 9) emphasis is on subject heading rather than class number assignment; 10) cataloguers care deeply about what they do and about the end users of their system; 11) the lack of feedback on the quality and efficiency of their work is something cataloguers are not comfortable with; 12) all cataloguers agree that the perfect subject description does not exist; 13) evidence is mixed as to the exact role played by the controlled language, and by an individual's knowledge of the controlled language, in deciding on concepts and terms.

Dr. Sauperl's contribution to the theory of subject analysis and representation is found in Chapter 7. In this final chapter, she first compares the proposed subject cataloguing model to three other studies previously described in her literature review (Hovi (1989) with Finnish librarians, Jeng (1996) with LC cataloguers, Sauperl and Saye (1998) with public library cataloguers, a pilot study for the dissertation), to the process as it is described in textbooks (such as Langridge (1989), or Taylor (1999)), and to the similar

processes of indexing and abstracting. Findings are finally discussed in relation to Patrick Wilson's hypothesis about the four methods of subject analysis: purposive, figure-ground, objective and appeal to unity.

Professor Sauperl suggests that her thesis will stimulate subject cataloguers to make adjustments and improvements to their work, provide suggestions for improving subject searching in online catalogues, help editors of classification systems and subject headings to organize these tools in such a way that they would be easier to use, aid in the training and education of new cataloguers.

Importance of the local authority file is stressed. Suggestions for bibliographic and catalogue management software that would actually help subject cataloguers in their work are also offered.

Sauperl's text reveals its origin as a doctoral thesis in a good amount of didactic redundancy and repetition, some of which could have been edited out. The structure has remained that of the standard thesis, with distinct chapters on background, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion, and suggestions for further research. In her text, the author never expresses any critical comment on the ways things are done; this is frustrating, as it leaves the reader without arguments to judge of the efficacy and efficiency of the work done in subject cataloguing departments across North America and of the model proposed.

This document will be particularly useful to subject cataloguing teachers and trainers who could use the model to design case descriptions and exercises. We believe it is an accurate description of the reality of subject cataloguing today. But now that we know how things are done, the next interesting question may be: Is that the best way? Is there a better, more efficient, way to do things? We can only hope that Dr. Sauperl will soon provide her own view of methods and techniques that could improve the flow of work or address the cataloguers' concern as to the lack of feedback on their work. Her several excellent suggestions for further research in this area all build on bits and pieces of what is done already, and stay well away from what could be done by the various actors in the area, from the designers of controlled vocabularies and authority files to those who use these tools on a daily basis to index, classify, or search for information.

M. Hudon

Dr. Michèle Hudon, École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information, Université de Montréal, Montréal, QC H3C 3J7 Canada. E-mail: michèle.hudon@umontreal.ca

SCHROEDER, Sandi, ed. **Software for Indexing**. Medford, NJ : Information Today, in association with the American Society of Indexers, 2003. 275 p. ISBN 1-57387-166-4

This collection of articles by indexing practitioners, software designers and vendors is divided into five sections: Dedicated Software, Embedded Software, Online and Web Indexing Software, Database and Image Software, and Voice-activated, Automatic, and Machine-aided Software. This diversity is its strength.

Part 1 is introduced by two chapters on choosing dedicated software, highlighting the issues involved and providing tips on evaluating requirements. The second chapter includes a fourteen page chart that analyzes the attributes of Authex Plus, three versions of CINDEX 1.5, MACREX 7, two versions of SKY Index (5.1 and 6.0) and WINDEX. The lasting value in this chart is its utility in making the prospective user aware of the various attributes/capabilities that are possible and that should be considered. The following chapters consist of 16 testimonials for these software packages, completed by a final chapter on specialized/customized software. The point is made that if a particular software function could increase your efficiency, it can probably be created.

The chapters in Part 2, Embedded Software, go into a great deal more detail about how the programs work, and are less reviews than illustrations of functionality. Perhaps this is because they are not really stand-alones, but are functions within, or add-ons used with larger word processing or publishing programs. The software considered are Microsoft Word, FrameMaker, PageMaker, IndexTension 3.1.5 that is used with QuarkXPress, and Index Tools Professional and IXgen that are used with FrameMaker. The advantages and disadvantages of embedded indexing are made very clear, but the actual illustrations are difficult to follow if one has not worked at all with embedded software. Nonetheless, the section is valuable as it highlights issues and provides pointers on solutions to embedded indexing problems.

Part 3, Online and Web Indexing Software, opens with a chapter in which the functionalities of