EDITORIAL

Why this Journal ?

This Journal is a Programme. It has long been felt by many, and in fact was already forcefully expressed by Szava-Kovats[1] two years ago, that classification has reached a "critical and paradoxical" stage in which one can even speak of a "general crisis in classification", characterised on the one hand by an "abundance of existing classification schemes" for relating the same items of knowledge to different classes, and on the other hand by an "anarchy in classification", an "unsystematicalness" manifesting itself especially in the treatment of information. This crisis seems to have developed largely from the following three causes:

(1) Among the people engaged in the application of classification methods (be it in the construction of schemes or the relating of items of knowledge to items of these schemes) there are too many who are working independently and in isolation while having *no common background*, practically *no common body of doctrine* on principles, *no common rules or practices for classing and indexing, no common terminology* and *no commonly accepted tenets on the contents of classification as a science.* And although there is at least one school of thought that deserves to be mentioned here as a commendable exception — the one of the late Professor Ranganathan in Bangalore, India, and his followers, who made very strong efforts towards building up a theory of library classification and a common terminology[2] — this school cannot be said to have found worldwide acceptance. Thus every one involved works out his own methodology and principles and has only little chance of conveying his privately gained knowledge to his equally isolated fellow-workers, who may not receive the publication media in which his knowledge is displayed.

(2) Although there are a few classification societies and committees on a national scale — e. g. in England, where since the 1950s a Classification Research Group unites people from library and information science, while a Classification Society (with a branch in the US, too) brings together scientists from different fields of knowledge[3] — and although there is furthermore one lone international group, i. e. the FID/CR Committee of the Fédération Internationale de Documentation, The Hague, Holland, comprising a very small group of documentation and information science people from all over the world, there is *no international society* devoting itself to the classification interests of librarians or of people from other application or supporting fields of classification, such as science taxonomy or production classification on the one hand, and philosophy, especially philosophy of science, and linguistics, especially terminology, on the other hand. Thus, *on an international level* there is practically *no possibility of exchanging knowledge* (particularly new knowledge) in this interdisciplinary field of classification.

(3) The methodologies of classification having been developed more or less from the several viewpoints of the fields of application concerned, they have so far been regarded as belonging to the methods specific to each such field, with *librarians* claiming that library classification has a long tradition behind it and must be regarded as a library art; *information science people* asserting that their descriptive methods of document or "information" analysis constitute the correct way of locating and storing new knowledge for retrieval purposes; *scientists* possibly considering their method of numerical taxonomy as the only one for the ordering of species; *administrators* in industry and elsewhere struggling in the determination of characteristics of objects for their "items" (commodity, etc.) classifications; *linguists* trying to build up both general and special terminologies and searching for the contents of language; and *philosophers* arguing — on a "micro-level" — about the classification of concepts into "theoretical" and "non-theoretical" ones, in "observational" and "disposition terms", etc., or evaluating — on a "macro-level" — the growth of knowledge and its science-oriented presentation as their own time-honoured domain.

And yet, all of these fields are concerned with the *ordering of knowledge*; even if one seems to be merely engaged in handling and classing objects one is using knowledge about these objects, which otherwise could never be brought into reasonable relationships with each other. However, there exists *no interdisciplinary common understanding* about the contents and methods of classification. Our PROGRAMME, therefore, calls for overcoming these shortcomings; it is only if we can spot them that we will succeed in avoiding confusion and crisis and in embarking on a more constructive period.

1 E. Szava Kovats: The present state of classification and its evaluation from the viewpoint of scientific information (in Hungarian with Engl. and German abstract). In: Tudomanyos es Müszaki Tájékoztatás 19 (1972) No. 2, p. 75–98

2 Cf. the Indian Standard: Glossary of Classification Terms. IS: 2550-1963. New Delhi: Indian Standards Institution 1964. 110 p.

3 See report on The Classification Society in this issue

This Journal has a **Programme**. It proposes, on an international scale:

1) to draw attention to the existence of a new, autonomous field of knowledge whose purpose it is to bring about order, whose objects are concepts and concept systems, and whose methods may be regarded as consisting in the construction of concept systems and the relating of concepts from such systems to elements of reality and vice versa;
2) to provide all persons interested in classification with a common platform for the presentation of their ideas and for scientific discussions;
3) to unite the specialists from the various fields involved in the study of the basics and/or application methods of classification so as to help bring about a common basis for their efforts.

It is our firm belief that all the "classification knowledge" which so far has been available only in a scattered, piecemeal state can be brought together and developed into a coherent science. It can then develop into a much better tool for those interested in and in need of applying it, while hopefully it will also become the science that helps man understand his own knowledge.

This Journal Implements a **Programme**. The practical organisation of each issue of the journal envisages the inclusion of:

1) A few original articles, both dealing with theory and with the practical aspects of classification.
2) Critical comments, which we ask our readers to kindly provide, on the original articles (for the contents of which only the respective authors are responsible) which appeared in the past few issues of the journal. These comments themselves may also be subjected in their turn to evaluation, while sometimes perhaps tutorial articles may also become necessary.
3) A "terminology corner". In order to present our cause "clearly and distinctly" we mut be careful with our own terminology. The terms and definitions used must reflect the knowledge we have of our own field. Therefore a "corner" will be provided in the journal where we collect the terms used along with their definitions, thus ensuring that they can be especially judged for correctness.

In addition we shall try to supply information on all aspects of classification by publishing reports on research completed, on institutions and activities on our field, on conferences and symposia as well as of an annotated bibliography of recent literature.

As to the **Programme of Issue No. 1** a few words of introduction seem appropriate. In this our first issue it was our intention to convey an idea of the whole range of topics to be covered as outlined in the little pamphlet sent out for information earlier; however, in this we were only partially successful.

We are very happy and grateful to be able to start No. 1 with Prof. Kedrov's article on the synthesis of the sciences which he had prepared for presentation at the Philosophers' Congress in Varna, Bulgaria, last year. With his theories he really opens eyes for developments which could be observed by everybody but which so far have never been explained in so lucid a way. With this background it will probably be much easier to handle the difficult problems of a Broad System of Ordering such as foreseen by Unesco (see Dr. Rybatchenkov's article) as well as any other attempt towards a universal classification, be it of fields alone (Mr. Wåhlin's scheme) or of an entire system (Mr. Mayne).

Another theoretical article follows — and we see no need to apologise for so much theory, since it is only by theory (to guide practice) that we will advance. "Nothing is more practical than a good theory", Kurt Lewin said, as did several others.

As a counterpart to all this theory we included the very practical suggestions on the automatic construction of classification systems contained in Chapter H of Prof. Soergel's new book[4], this by courtesy of the publisher!

Finally we received an article from President Neuenschwander briefly outlinig the very difficult situation which has now led to the tripartite (Anglo-Franco-German) declaration concerning commodity classification and coding[5], the text of which we received for publication from the German Ministry of Economics.

What else there is we leave to our readers to discover. We do hope for an echo to our efforts and also for — who knows? — the silent formation of an invisible college of all those interested in the explicit ordering of man's knowledge.

The Editors

4   D. Soergel: Indexing languages and thesauri: construction and maintenance. Los Angeles, Calif.: Melville / New York: Wiley 1974. ca. 600 p.

5   The text of this tripartite declaration is also included in this issue together with an introduction by Dr. Ostarhild, Bonn.