Book Reviews

Ranganathan's Reprints in Library Classification

Dr.S.R.Ranganathan (1892-1972), the father of the Indian Library Movement, has been the most prolific library science author of all times. His writings, especially on classification, won him the acclaims and admiration of peers all over the world. His testament on classification forms the very rock of the current theory of library classification. His findings communicated through the medium of books, journals, reports, and lectures have pervaded and constitute our current knowledge of the subject. His books arc the librarian's lore.

The Sarada Ranganathan Endowment in Library Science, established in 1962, is a registered trust and a legal and intellectual legacy of Ranganathan to promote research in library and information studies. Inevitably, it has now shouldered the responsibility to develop and perpetuate Ranganathan's thoughts. One of its aims is to create and publish research literature. So far it has been publishing a quarterly journal *Library Science with a Slant to Documentation and Information* (1964-) and a few research booklets such as *A purview of the CC-7* (1970). Later, it took upon itself the publication of annual lectures delivered under its auspices. The first major project published by it was the 7th edition of the Colon Classification in 1987. Thereafter, the Endowment embarked on a new programme of reprinting Ranganathan's books. That is in direct fulfillment of Ranganathan's wish as he was anxious to see his books updated and always available. In Section AE9 of his *Prolegomena* of 1967 he wrote:

'It is my policy to take the assistance of my younger colleagues in preparing new editions of books. This is done in the hope that it will help them to develop into competent authors, and that there will be some competent young colleague of mine to take care of the future editions of such of my books as may continue to be of value and in demand.'

His books certainly continue to be in demand. More than a dozen books on different subjects have been published so far. All these books have been offset printed with the imprint of the Sarada Ranganathan Endowment with the sole distributor's rights remaining with M/S UBS Publishers' Distributors (UBSPD) (5, Ansari Road, Delhi-110 002), India's largest book exporters and distributors. (In Europe, these books are being distributed in an arrangement with UBSPD by the Indeks Verlag, Woogstr.36a, D-6000 Frankfurt 50, FRG). It is a common knowledge that it is the UBSPD who have financed and looked after the production of these books with professional skills. It ensures therefore a good production and a wide distribution network. Ranganathan's major books on classification are:

(1) Colon Classification. Madras: Madras Library Association 1933. (Now in its 7th edition (1987). The last edition produced by Ranganathan was the 6th ed. (1959), again issued with amendments in 1963, published by Asia Publishing House, Bombay).

(2) Prolegomena to library classification. Madras: Madras Library Association 1937. (Now in its 3rd edition of 1967, published by Asia Publishing House).

(3) Library Classification: Fundamental and Procedure, with 1008 graded examples and exercises. Madras: Madras Library Association 1944.
(This is the only book not as yet reprinted by UBSPD in 1988-1990 under their programme mentioned.)

(4) Elements of Library Classification. Poona: NK Publishing House 1945. (Now in its 3rd edition 1967, published by Asia Publishing House, Bombay).

(5) Classification and Communication. Delhi: University of Delhi 1951.

(6) Philosophy of Library Classification. Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard 1951.

(7) A descriptive account of the Colon Classification. New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Graduate School of Library Science. Rutgers State University 1965. (Published again in 1967 in India by the Asia Publishing House, Bombay).

In the *Colon Classification (CC)* first published in 1933 after eight years of thinking and practical application, Ranganathan gave to the bibliographic world a new species of library classification, now called analytico-synthetic classification. It is essentially a faceted system. It treats the entire universe of knowledge as a single whole. Nevertheless, like other classification systems, it divides the universe of knowledge, at the first instance, into manageable main classes called Basic Subjects. The number and scope of basic subjects in the CC is always changing. The CC distinguishes itself from other systems in the further division of a main class. Each basic subject is further divided into fundamental and indivisible concepts called Isolates. According to his postulates, all the isolates belonging to any basic subject can be grouped at the most into five categories called the Five Fundamental Categories (FFC), the least number of categories for any bibliographic classification. These categories exist independent of basic subjects. (Ranganathan wanted to abolish the concept of main classes but was left with no time for research in this direction). In a given basic subject within each category the isolates are subgrouped into facets. A facet is the totality of isolates belonging to one category and obtained on the basis of a single characteristic of division. Within a facet, the isolates are arranged into arrays and chains by applying the logically formulated Principles of Helpful Sequence. The order of concepts and classes was of fundamental importance to Ranganathan as was their infinite combinability. The isolates can be combined in the citation order of the five Fundamental Categories, called Personality, Matter, Energy, Space, and Time (PMEST) to construct an infinity of class numbers from a relatively brief schedule. CC formulates the necessary grammar to construct class numbers for different subjects.

Since its publication the CC has been accepted as the most useful method to cope with the turbulently advancing knowledge. Its methods have been adopted by all the major living classification systems.

The Colon Classification of 1933 was a result of intuition without any objectively guiding principles at hand. The theory behind the CC and the principles of library classification were only published four years later in the *Prolegomena* of 1937. This book is veritably known as his magnum opus. The second edition was revised by his British colleagues and admirers and was

published by the Library Association in 1957. Now, this book is in its 3rd edition published in 1967. Its method is essentially comparative. It provides norms to evaluate any classification system, also outlines a methodology to design library classification schedules. It is a weighty work indeed.

Library Classification: Fundamental and Procedure (1944) is a book on practical classification by CC and the DDC. In fact, it is a book of seminal ideas which later sprouted into very fundamental concepts. Efforts are on the way to revise it and adapt it to the current editions of the CC and the DDC.

The *Elements* (1945) are a published form of a series of lectures on fundamentals of library classification first delivered in 1944 at the University of Bombay, and then in the UK in 1956. The second edition was edited by his intimate British friend Bernard I. Palmer (1910-1979) and was published in the UK by the Association of Assistant Librarians in 1960. The third edition was published in India in 1962. In this little book, Ranganathan - with the help of 108 subjects taken as examples - illustrates the Principles of Helpful Sequence (order) and other basics of library classification. In the epilogue, he exhorts fellow librarians to learn and use technical terminology for effective communication. Although the book aims at the uninitiated, it is full of profound thoughts, and still forms an indispensable class room teaching and learning aid.

Classification and Communication (1951) was the fruit of a post-graduate degree course in Library Science at the University of Delhi as well as of a visit to several industrial libraries in USA in the summer of 1950 by invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation. The 38 chapters examine the possibilities of classification principles in communication and where they can play a useful part or where not. The book ends with an appeal to the library profession to give up any attitude of resistance to progress and re-thinking in the sphere of classification and to Unesco and other international organizations and foundations to provide for research in classification.

In his *Philosophy of library classification* (1950) written on the invitation of Dr. Jean Anker, the librarian of the National Science Library of Denmark, he describes the history, nature and limitations of library classification. Some of the chapters deal with the relation of classification with cataloguing and give guidelines for the organization of research in library classification at every level. This book laid the seed for a dynamic theory of library classification. The latter two books are addressed to the general audience amongst librarians, linguists and philosophers.

The *Descriptive account* (1967) is an outcome of explaining the salient features of the CC in detail in a seminar on the "Intellectual organization of information" held at Rutgers University in 1964. The book is still important for its "Seminar panel discussion" (p.243-285) where Ranganathan answers many expert questions regarding the CC and library classification raised by many well-known librarians.

The philosophy enshrined in these books is in brief: Library classification should be based on dynamic postulates and principles. His own division of classification work into the three planes: the Idea Plane, the Verbal Plane, and the Notational Plane gave the paramount position to the Idea Plane. Definition, scope, and the order of the main classes/basic subjects should be based on the modes of growth of subjects in the Universe of Knowledge. Knowledge is regarded as of a social character. The scope of a basic subject is always changing and depends upon literary warrant. Ranganathan had the considered view that library classificationists must quickly respond to the changing social and intellectual world and their needs; indeed, it must hold a mirror to the changing world of knowledge and its various sources and embodiments. Although Ranganathan could not be credited to be the sole inventor of faceted classification, it can be stated that without him there would have been hardly any species of this kind of classification. He gave it the name and the concrete substance. He applied the idea of fundamental categories to library classification and focussed his thoughts intensively upon it. He was also a great apostle of technical terminology. He asserted time and again that no discipline has ever grown to maturity without its standard terminology. Many new concepts and their terms were thus created by him which even started to enrich the English language at large. Notation was for him simply a tool to implement the findings and desicions of the Idea Plane, relegating notation thus to the menial level. However, his notation comprises, at present, 74 digits of different species, indeed a high water mark of a notational system. Also he equipped his notation with many devices to make it versatile and infinitely hospitable to new subjects. No doubt, in the pursuit of a large capacity and hospitality, his notation became rather complicated to the extent of appearing frightening to the user. Ranganathan never realized the irony that it was his notation that has turned many a potential user away from his classification.

For Ranganathan, classification was a tool of subject analysis and individualization rather than a marking and parking device. For him, to classify meant to translate co-extensively (faithfully) the subject of the book (in the natural language) into an artificial language of ordinal numbers. And it was Ranganathan who raised the study of library classification to its soaring intellectual heights and who invented many abstract and sometimes even inarticulate concepts in the boundaries of its theory. From a sort of an art he developed it into a science. Now it is easy to teach the principles of library classification. When it is acquiring the ingradients of a full discipline, it is to Ranganathan, by all consensus, that the major credit ought to be given.

All the Ranganathan reprints listed above had been out of print since long. The new generation of Indian library scholars and Ranganathan admirers had great difficulty in acquiring them. Most of them had to content with reading a second-hand Ranganathan. Since he still pervades the Indian library schools curricula, the value of his books remains intact. The substance still lies in the *Prolegomena* and in the *Elements*. Their availability through these reprints will keep Ranganathan available and alive; and they will go a long way in perpetuating and advancing his thoughts.

Notwithstanding the utility of these bare reprints, the revised and updated editions (as Ranganathan had hoped and wished) were most desirable. Even these

reprints would have multiplied their value and utility had these been printed with some editor's introduction explaining their relevance, limitations and the purpose of reprinting his books without revising them. Even the opportunity has not been availed of to correct the earlier misprints, something mentioned as advanced information in context of those times still remains as such thus confusing the readers. Even the Colon Class Numbers printed on the verso of the title pages are according to old editions. The *Prolegomena* has been mentioned as Volume 1; what the other volume(s) will comprise of is not told. The second edition (1960) of the *Elements* has been reprinted, while in 1962 its 3rd revisions edition was brought out and used widely in India. Ignoring these venial omissions, the Ranganathan scholars will gratefully appreciate the bonanza of his books. Thanks to the Endowment for such a thoughtful initiative which is a part of Ranganathan's birth centenary celebration on a large scale with a variety of programmes throughout the year from August 1991 to August 1992.

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MEISS, Brigitte: **Thesaurus, integriert, online, dynamisch - Neues Arbeiten mit DOMESTIC.** (Thesaurus, integrated, online, dynamic - A new way of working with DOMESTIC). München: KTS Informationssysteme 1989. 103p.

An "integrated thesaurus" as described in this book is installed into the literature documentation program in such a way that one may have interactive access to it at all times without having to leave the program. Even while literature analysis is going on, such a thesaurus may be expanded, reorganized, reduced as well as amended, and after any such operation it is immediately available again in its modified form for continued work. All this is shown by means of examples and with the aid of DOMESTIC, a PC-assisted literature documentation program.

For any subject from the field covered by the documentation concerned the indexer or querier can display the relevant parts of the thesaurus on his or her screen and thus readily make an optimal selection, which is facilitated furthermore by the alphabetic and systematic access provided to the thesaurus. These improvements thus have the effect of increasing indexing and retrieval quality.

They positively affect indexing also insofar as the integrated thesaurus offers improved possibilities of revising the indexing of documents. This is desirable when the framework of interests of the system users has changed or when a special field needs to be indexed more specifically. A further important, but rarely discussed problem can likewise be tackled in this connection: it is often particularly important, and not only in patent documentation, to retrieve the earliest documents on a given subject. However, in such an early developmental stage of a subject, no keyword suitable for thesaurus use has usually been developed yet in the technical language for the given subject, which of necessity was expressed at the time concerned by paraphrasing, definition-type linguistic constructions.

This precluded its proper indexing at the time concerned. In such cases one may attempt, through full-text searching in the texts stored, to round up the relevant documents by using as search criteria the expressions presumably occurring in the paraphrasings. The texts thus found may then, in a single step, be re-indexed using a suitable new descriptor.

Nor is one obliged, in indexing with the aid of an integrated thesaurus, to use one simple specific word as a descriptor. Other words with identical meaning occurring in linguistic usage may likewise be used after having been admitted to the vocabulary in a suitable function. Machine-internally they will then be converted into the corresponding descriptors. Moreover, an interactively maintained thesaurus - unlike a printed one - is always fully up to date, an advantage of great importance particularly in joint indexing operations, such as are possible when working in a network. It is not in the last place due to these advances that, as the author correctly notes, the thesaurus is currently experiencing a renaissance as a tool of information science and practice.

No major progress does the author expect for the increased employment of integrated thesaurus in commercial online databanks and for improved indexing. Where she does perceive possible advances owing to integrated thesauri is the field of the designing and operation of a *user's own, internal documentation*. (This is not surprising, for in the online data banks the procedure shun the costs of any careful indexing. The costs for such omissions are then left to the user, who initially, however, usually underestimates these costs as well as the magnitude of the information loss inherent in working without a thesaurus. In a self-managed project, however, *both* types of costs make themselves felt, and one is responsible oneself for the information loss occurring).

Access to the contents of the book is provided by an index, albeit rather a succinct one; however, it is supported by a well-arranged table of contents. The printing is outstandingly clear and overseeable and free of errors. Some flaws noted are the facts that at many points in the book the distinction between "concept" and "descriptor" is blurred and that among the few existing rival products of DOMESTIC named in the book the possibly most serious competitor, at least in Germany, is not mentioned.

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MEINL, Franz: **Sachmerkmale, Schlüssel zur technischen Gestaltung, Beschreibung und Information.** (Subject characteristics. Key to their technical formation, description and information). Ehningen: Expert Verlag 1990. 374p. ISBN 3-8169-0051-8

Although written by a technician mainly for technicians, this book also outlines the incorporation of the "Subject Characteristics Classification System" into the economic process and the technical-organizational functions of a given enterprise. In his former function in