
Book Reviews

MÜLLER-DREIER, Armin: **Einheitsklassifikation. die Geschichte einer fortwirkenden Idee.** (Unified Classification. The history of a ceaselessly fecund idea.). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1994. 225p. ISBN 3-447-03587-0 = Beiträge zum Buch- und Bibliothekswesen 35. When your reviewer started to read this book, a revised version of an earlier work published privately in Cologne in 1991, he was curious whether, availing ourselves as we do of M. Remmert's book (*Entwicklung und Probleme einer Einheitsklassifikation für deutsche Bibliotheken*): Development and problems of a unified classification for German libraries over the period from 1884 to 1974, Berlin 1976), essentially new aspects on the subject 'Unified classification' are still to be expected.

A. Müller-Dreier first of all delves deeply into questions of subject description in libraries from 1884 to 1969, in which year the Unified Classification Project was started, then outlining in the following the preparation, implementation and abortion of the project and describing with adequate thoroughness in so doing the immense problems involved, while finally, with careful consideration, giving attention to the possible causes of the failure of the project. In all of this the author also, and rightly so, calls attention to the promotion of this subject field by the public libraries (p.49), as well as to the importance of Hirschberger's work at the Bavarian State Library (e.g. at p.75, 100-103). For completeness' sake, he added here that it was only as of the early 1980's that the term 'Münchener Systematik' (Munich Classification System) employed by the author was, and still is, used for a coarse classification developed on the basis of Hirschberger's classification by the Bavarian State Library. This edition, published through normal channels, of his book is given by A. Müller-Dreier the new and sonorous subtitle "The History of a ceaselessly fecund (or: continuously effective) idea". Now this formulation well-nigh lifts the subject up into a Platonic realm of ideas and thus away from common place discussion, but it also induces us to reflect on the historical facts. Your reviewer also has the impression, however, that unified classification might represent an understandable, if not even necessary counterreaction to a decidedly excessive variety in classificatory subject description and thus a typical result of the history of German thinking as expressed in that of the German library.

For, if we do what has by now become a fixed habit: cast a glance at the Anglo-Saxon example, we will note - e.g. in the centralized classification work being done at the US Library of Congress - that one does not work there with a unified classification, but rather with the two classification systems, DDC and LCC - and this without too great a variety in the field of subject description.

And it is precisely when examining the book from this angle, that one is struck by the fact that the author seems to employ terms like: standardization of subject description, coopera-

tive subject description and unified classification - which in your reviewer's opinion constitute gradations, hence manifest differences of degree - again and again as being directly interlinked among one another, if not even as being interchangeable.

Finally the author expresses himself positively "On the topicality of a unified classification in the age of online user catalogs" (p.193-201). This despite the fact that, as developments of the past 25 years have shown, the alternative to a colorful variety of qualitatively widely varying individual library systems need not be, nor even can be, a more or less artificially created unified classification, but rather the development of a few classification systems linked together in operation as far as possible. These classification systems should then speedily be coupled among one another by indexes and thus be made usable by many users, as hinted at by the author (p.200 seqq.). The example of the Regensburg classification, used simultaneously as Bavarian compound classification (opposite p.3) and currently represented in 113 of Germany's 15 constituent states as well as abroad, may show that the borders of 'traditional particularism' are readily transcended in this process. The question of centralized classification work should be left alone, however; here, cooperative subject description has proven itself worth for a long time already. The preparedness, repeatedly cited by the author, of Die Deutsche Bibliothek (the German National Library) "to assume the tasks of managing the classification system to be developed and centrally classifying the Germanophone literature" (p.89, cf. p.124-126) has meanwhile become history.

In comparison with other works in the series "Contributions to Book and Library Science", the amazingly large letter size and a whole series of printing errors - even in the spelling of names - leap to the eye. Also, many a repetition might possibly have been avoided (e.g. it is reported at three places (p.51, 52 and 77) that the ASB has been conceived for 30.000 volumes.

Nevertheless this interesting piece of work, which the publisher, Harrassowitz, has gratifyingly included in his program, constitutes not only a valuable study on the subject of a Unified Classification, but also an important building stone for the history, still to be written, of subject description in the libraries of German-speaking countries. Bernd Lorenz

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MARCELLA, Rita, NEWTON, Robert: **A New Manual of Classification.** Aldershot, U.K.: Gower Publ. 1994. XII, 287p. ISBN 0-566-07547-4.

This is a thoroughly revised and updated edition of the classic *Manual of Classification for Librarians* by the famous UK librarian and master teacher W.C.B. Sayers (1881-1960) (1). First published in 1926, its 2nd and 3rd editions were published in 1944 and 1955 respectively. The 4th edition published in 1967 was revised by Arthur Maltby, and its copyright was held jointly by Maltby and Sayers (2). The 5th edition thoroughly revised by Arthur Maltby was published

by André Deutsch which, as a token of due debt and gratitude incorporated Sayer's name in the title (3). Though outdated in some aspects and certain facts, the *Sayer's Manual* by Maltby remained in vogue as a staple textbook for two decades. Maltby's work was lucid, gripping, highly commentative and authentic.

Revision of *Maltby* was overdue in face of rapid and far reaching many sided developments in classification and indexing since the 1980s. This challenging task has voluntarily been accepted by Marcella and Newton both of whom teach librarianship and information science at the Robert Gordon University Aberdeen, the UK.

In the preface to this edition, it is claimed that "This present text builds upon the work of its predecessor, it hopes to maintain the tradition they (Sayers, Maltby) have established and fulfil the same aim..." (4). Within this ambience the book has been developed a bit independently, and the new authors have asserted their sole copyright as authors of this version. The changes and updatings are indeed substantial.

All in all the ten chapters have been divided into three parts. Part 1, "Principles and Systems" has 5 chapters on the theory of classification which includes the topics: what and why of classification, helpful sequence, citation order, notation, classification systems (both general and special), and also the use of classification principles in indexes and thesauri. Part 2 "The Management and Applications of Classification" has two chapters which dwell in detail on the functions of classification in a library; various shelf arrangements; its use in a classified catalogue or in arranging bibliographies; as an invaluable aid in reference service; and its later day uses in computerized databases. Chapter 7 on Classification Policy considers various issues, options and factors such as the size of a collection, types of documents, levels and types of users; and above all, the aim of an information retrieval system. The issues discussed here are selection and the right use of a chosen system, broad versus depth classification, local adaptation of a standard system, reclassification, cost of classification, education of classifiers, and lastly the various limits and disadvantages of classification. Part 3, "Information Technology and Classification" consists of three chapters 8 to 10. Chapter eight is a very brief prologue on the relations between classification and computers. Chapter nine enumerates the uses of classification in OPACs, and summarizes all previous efforts in this current field. The authors are of the opinion:

far from rendering classification obsolete, electronic systems are reinforcing the need for soundly based forms of classified subject retrieval (p.214).

This is the best feature of the book skilfully and arduously summarizing the state-of-the-art. The book aptly closes with a chapter on what is called "Automatic Classification" - which essentially is clustering, keyword classification and clumping. In essence, it is to discover or formulate relations based upon keywords. Giving glimpses of current research in the field, it concludes that automatic classification is not as versatile as manual classification. The book closes with a classified consolidated list of further readings, fairly recent ones. This is basically a textbook, aiming, as earlier, at the students and the practitioners of classification. As a new feature,

different from Maltby, each chapter has been divided into sub-topics labelled with apt feature headings, and invariably ending with "Issues for consideration" - the latter lists some thoughtful problems for the readers to ponder over. Each chapter has been fully documented with notes and references.

The book presents the state-of-the-art in classification and ably summarizes the work of contemporaries. It is a book endeavoring to cover currently relevant aspects of classification: nature, techniques, systems, applications, its education and training, and its role in computerized information retrieval; and lastly also the limitations of classification. No aspect has been left untouched. Consequently in some cases the treatment is shallow. For example, Chapter 5 on "Indexes, thesaurus and classification" (pp.141-156), which also includes thesaurus construction, is too cursory and brief. Less than a page has been devoted to PRECIS and its successor COMPASS at the British National Bibliography. The same is the case with Chain Indexing. To describe all the five major living classification systems along with the early history of classification in one chapter is obviously inadequate. Earlier editions justly devoted a full chapter each, to each one of these major systems, besides two chapters on the history of classification. Its account of the history of classification is only enumerative reducing it to a broad chronology, which is not patch over the narrative and highly commentative account in the precious editions. Moreover, the history has been restricted to only well known classification systems than to be an all comprehensive one of the discipline. Accordingly in the book nowhere is there any mention of the classification literature, institutionalized conferences, classification schools of thought, and organizations engaged in the promotion of classification studies and research. Even there is nowhere any mention of the basic definition of classification formulated by FID/CR. There is no mention of FID/CR, the IFLA Section and ISKO actively working in our field. It lacks the high literary richness and commentative wit of Maltby which the readers of old editions may miss. This is not to say that this book is not lucid. The new edition does not entirely supercede the previous one. This reviewer personally feels that the present authors would have gained more by retaining as much of *Sayer's-Maltby* as they could. But it is not to deny the book its merits of which it has many. It vividly portrays the current classification landscape.

The book has a few lapses, types here and there, and a few factual errors. My own name in the index is a casualty of the typos; and Ranganathan's Fourth Law of Library Science has been termed on his Fifth Law. The fairly detailed index has many inadvertent omissions. For example, Ranganathan's name and concepts appear on more pages than the index indicates. Apart from this, the physical setup is pleasing with a large page size and crisp typography.

At the moment, it is the only comprehensive and current book exclusive to the sprawling subject. Mohinder Partap Satija

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