

# Editorial

## Ranganathan and the Organization of Knowledge

Once, in June 1936, it happened that Ranganathan, after having lectured until late in the evening and discussed the problem of "hospitality" with a student at the beach of Madras until 10PM, came home and could not find sleep. Recalling later, how his first edition of "*Prolegomena to Library Classification*" has come into being, he wrote (1, p.23):

"Seeing my restlessness, and probably disturbed by it, a relative sleeping in my room gave an innocent piece of advice: 'Why don't you take up a book and read for a while?' he said. 'That will bring you sleep'. No doubt he was not aware of Schopenhauer's observation 'To put away one's own original thoughts in order to take up a book is to sin against the Holy Ghost'. However, this suggestion recalled two books which I had set aside for later study as they were found unmanageable at the first attempt. They were the two books of Bliss on Classification: 'The Organization of knowledge and the system of the sciences' (1929) and 'The Organization of knowledge in libraries' (1933). My mind was by this time so saturated with the theory of classification that, far from these two books proving difficult and causing sleep, in a single movement I had raced through their entire range of 740 pages before midnight. My mind was pressed through these pages in so intimate and critical a way that Edition 1 of my own book emerged clear-cut as from a mould. All that remained was to fill in details and provide illustrations."

Thus, Ranganathan encountered already then the term "organization of knowledge" but to him it was a synonym for the term "classification" as it still is for many of us today. Later he defined 'knowledge' as "the totality of ideas conserved by the humans. In this sense, Knowledge = Universe of ideas". And in the context of 'information' he added: "knowledge and information are sometimes treated as synonyms" (1, p.81).

Well, although today we try to distinguish more succinctly, we still have not fully considered and digested the wealth of ideas in classification which Ranganathan left us. We welcome therefore the possibility which his students (and by now all professors themselves), viz. A.Neelamegham, G.Bhattacharyya, S.Seetharama, M.A.Gopinath, and I.K.Ravichandra Rao from the DRTC, Bangalore, in forming a committee for the "Ranganathan Centenary Celebrations Aug.1991-Aug.1992", have provided for everybody interested through a voluminous program of activities. It includes:

- (1) The creation of a Ranganathan Database with a collection of data pertaining to the publications by and on Dr.S.R. Ranganathan and including a Vocabulary Control Device for the organization of the collected data.
- (2) A series of lectures to be held in all institutions of library and information science from Aug.91 to Aug.92.
- (3) Preparation of a biography of Ranganathan to be finished by Aug.1992.
- (4) Organization of an International Seminar on Bibliometrics from Aug.9-12, 1991, at Bangalore.
- (5) Combination of the IFLA Conference of 1992 in New Delhi with the 2nd International ISKO Conference, Madras, 26-28 Aug.1992.
- (6) Holding of seminars by library associations and departments of library and information science throughout the year on different themes, such as: Ranganathan's contributions to Philosophy of Librarianship, Classification, Cataloguing, Management, Library and Information Services, etc. DRTC itself will devote its Annual Seminar in 1992 to a critical assessment of Ranganathan's Contributions and their Impact.

- (7) Broadcasting of programs on Ranganathan.
- (8) Preparation of 5-10 cassettes/tapes of Ranganathan speeches by Aug.1992.
- (9) Organization of an exhibition of Ranganathan's works and artefacts at several associations and departments.
- (10) Production of a documentary film on Ranganathan.
- (11) Printing of a commemoration stamp.
- (12) Publication of special issues of Library and Information Science Periodicals on Ranganathan and his contributions.

In this latter connection, the Editor of *International Classification* invites articles on an evaluation of Ranganathan's contributions to the organization of knowledge/classification for issue 92-1, to be handed in preferably before Oct.1, 1991.

The present issue is, however, devoted to the possibilities which computerization can and will open up for knowledge organization. Thus, the issue starts with the thoughtful and thought-provoking article by Kim VELTMAN "Computers and a New Philosophy of Knowledge", continues with Roy RADA's "Focus on Links: A Holistic View of Hypertext" which introduces Hypertext as the complementing possibility of the 'disciplines' of human-computer interaction, computer-supported collaborative work, information storage and retrieval, and artificial intelligence. Then, Gerda RUGE and Christoph SCHWARZ provide a new approach on the basis of a linguistic analysis for "Term associations and computational linguistics", and the fourth article by Wolfgang KOLLEWE, from the Darmstadt Concept Analysis Group of Rudolf WILLE, illustrates the application of "Nested line diagrams" to the special case of a survey of pensioners which is able to handle very large amounts of concepts, here totalling 12,960, but still easy to read in the resulting concept lattices. Finally, we should like to congratulate Jean PERREAULT on his fine book review of "Classification in the computer age", which complements in a superb way the earlier report by Nancy WILLIAMSON on this 1988 Albany conference in IC 89-2.

However, there are also already some items relating to Ranganathan, as e.g. the very impressive abstract of a dissertation on "Ranganathan's research methodology and his style of writing" by M.P.SATIJA as well as a book review by E.SVENONIUS on Satija's "Introduction to the Colon Classification, ed.7" and another one by Shabaha HUSAIN on "Book numbers. Some Indian Methods", a review including and presenting also the system devised by Ranganathan. We would like to refer our readers also to the book review on the Ranganathan reprints in IC90-3/4 and to the titles listed on the back cover page of this issue, available from INDEKS Verlag and including also the Ranganathan reprints.

In experiencing the damage being inflicted at present on our world by one man's terror, we should like to express our hope that the peace-radiating, positive forces lying in mankind and being given to it through its relation to GOD and His good spirits, as exemplified so well in the very pious and devoted person of S.R.Ranganathan, will soon become everybody's guiding powers, thus making for a peaceful future which will carry mankind to its real destination!

I.Dahlberg

- (1) Ranganathan, S.R. (assisted by M.A.Gopinath): *Prolegomena to Library Classification*. Ed.3. Bangalore: Sarada Ranganathan Endowment for Library Science 1989. 640 p. (reprint, available from UBSPD, New Delhi and Indeks Verlag, Frankfurt).