

Dykstras's articles on the *non*-thesaural nature of LCSH⁵. Again, the surprising point that LCSH-headings are *derived* from LC classification – not wholly independent from it, as the received wisdom teaches – cannot be located in the index. Nor can be Haykin's 'positive' interpretation of 'specificity'. And a certain number of stylistic disharmonies jar against the reader's perception of the work's magisterially superior status: use of 'presently' to mean at present, of 'elemental' for elementary, of 'categorical' for categorial, of 'echelon' for chain, and of ambiguity-causing omissions of the conjunctive 'that'.

No book, despite these minor flaws in Miksa, is more necessary reading for whoever wants to understand American/Canadian alphabetical subject cataloguing and catalogues – or hopes to improve them – and who can doubt that improvement is crucially necessary?

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Notes:

- 1 Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1977. 344 pp.
- 2 Hc and his centrally typical work *Prejudices and Antipathies* are mentioned on p. 465, but are unrecorded in the bibliography or index.
- 3 For Cutter, '[t]he very definition of a subject implies that it already has a classificatory position' – an application of the 'Scottish theory of mental faculties' that Hc, along with many of his educated contemporaries, accepted (p. 61).
- 4 *Subject Catalogues: Headings and Structure*. London: Library Association, 1960. 186 pp.
- 5 "LC Subject Headings Disguised as a Thesaurus", *Library Journal* 113 (1. Mar. 1988) p. 42–46; and "Can Subject Headings be Saved?", *Library Journal* 113, (15. Sept. 1988), p. 55–58.

FÖRSCHNER, Franz: *Eine Theorie zum Schlagwortkatalog (A theory of the alphabetical subject catalogue)*. Wiesbaden: O.Harrassowitz 1987. 96p. = Buchwiss.Beiträge aus dem Deutschen Bucharchiv München, Bd.21.

The alphabetical subject catalogue, although widely used and esteemed as a user-friendly medium of subject cataloguing, still remains - in the German-speaking countries at least - the Cinderella of subject cataloguing research. In the past only the systematic catalogue and the classificatory access - surrounded by a welcome aura of earnest scholarship in search of the order of the universe - were deemed worthy of detailed research. Even today a lack of theory - sometimes deplored, more often ignored - determines both the alphabetical subject cataloguing practices in our libraries and most cataloguing rules (e.g. the "*Regeln für den Schlagwortkatalog*" RSWK). Therefore a publication, taking up the cause of the alphabetical subject catalogue and trying to seek out its "inner guiding principle" (p.1), deserves close attention.

In his study, to some extent influenced by the "Erlangen rules" (*Regeln für den Schlagwortkatalog*, "*Erlanger Regelwerk*", München 4.1977), Förschner formulates the essentials of the ideal alphabetical subject catalogue: the banishment of any deduction, a characteristic of the systematic catalogue, and thereby contra-

dictory to the nature of the alphabetical subject catalogue; the forbidding of subsets and, as a corollary to this, the principle that each subheading should introduce an entirely new subject; the banishment of the repetition of similar relationships on different levels of the entire string-of-terms (Gesamtschlagwort); an exacting demand on the tectonics of the Gesamtschlagwort: that each subheading should combine all previous terms to form a new unity; last but not least: the maxim of the definite succession of subheadings according to their degree of concreteness. In this context special mention should be made of the useful differentiation between 'concrete' and 'narrow' term: an important contribution to the idea of specific entry (cf.p.84).

Förschner offers, however, far more than a mere "theory of the alphabetical subject catalogue". To a large extent his remarkable study reads like a sensible apology of the (traditional) alphabetical subject catalogue, a catalogue which - according to Förschner - should be committed to the principle of the Gesamtschlagwort. The author never tires of praising its efficiency and reliability of access, its formal strength, logic and binding energy. Now and then these epistemological and syndetic categories are given aesthetic and stylistic values (cf. wordings such as "inner law of form", p.12, "elegant strength of form", p.13). Indeed, Förschner's concept of language cannot deny its idealistic origins: Although never explicitly expressed, (the cataloguer's language is considered as a dynamic, creative and shaping *energeia* (energy) rather than as a static and mechanical *ergon* (work).

In Förschner's study - far more sophisticated and ambitious than most previous German publications (cf.e.g., Karl Heinz Spieler's *Zur Theorie des Schlagwortkatalogs*, Berlin 1975) - the alphabetical subject catalogue is given a distinctive character as a medium of its own. In Förschner's opinion it has so many advantages that it does not run the risk of becoming obsolete with the rise of competitive subject access media such as online information retrieval, OPAC-catalogue, poly-hierarchical thesaurus. It is perhaps Förschner's essential merit to produce proof of the independence and sovereignty of the alphabetical subject catalogue: in its ideal form it is to be recommended for its sparing use of subheadings, its renunciation of too excessive permutations (cf., in this context, Förschner's criticism of PRECIS and RSWK, p.51-68), for its strict fixing of definite succession of subheadings, and its obligation to strive for the inner coherence of the *Gesamtschlagwort*.

It is much to be hoped that this interesting study, abundant in examples, rich in inspirations - most of them in sharp contrast to the dominant cataloguing philosophies and intellectual trends of our time - , will be read by a large part of the public, especially by those who are liable to doubt the value of any subject cataloguing theory and those who are too enthusiastic about the use of data processing as a means of producing 'promiscuous' chains and strings.

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