

BOOK REVIEWS

MILLS, J., BROUGHTON, Vanda, with the assistance of Valerie Lang: *Bliss Bibliographic Classification*. London: Butterworths, 1977. 2. Ed. Vol1: Introduction and Auxiliary Schedules. XIV, 209 p. ISBN 0-408-70821-2. Class J: Education. XVII, 21 p. ISBN 0-408-70829-8. Class P: Religion, the Occult, Morals and Ethics. XX, 43 p. ISBN 0-408-70832-8. Class Q: Social Welfare. XXIII, 36 p. ISBN 0-408-70833-6.

We have waited a long time for the revised edition of the Bliss Bibliographic Classification; now it has begun to appear – and the first four volumes indicate that it has been well worth waiting for. Here we have the first fully faceted general classification scheme since Ranganathan's *Colon Classification*, and a much more satisfactory scheme it is from many points of view (as, of course, one would hope and expect since it appears 44 years later than the first edition of Ranganathan's pioneer work and 17 years later than the sixth edition). The debt to Ranganathan and his followers is acknowledged in the compilers' preface to the second edition.

So many and fundamental are the changes in this second edition (BC2) that one might at first question whether it should still be called the *Bliss Classification*. The compilers admit in their preface that the changes are radical and explain why this had to be. However the comparative table on pages 21–27 of Volume 1 shows that the extensive alterations take place *within* classes and that Bliss's main class structure remains basically unchanged – which is indeed as it should be since this has always been accepted as the most satisfactory main class order of all the general classification schemes. And it is Bliss's portrait which appears as the frontispiece to Volume 1.

The main changes from BC1 are outlined in Section 3 of Volume 1. They include rigorous organisation of the terms in each class into their broad facets and specific arrays; use of a consistent citation order for these facets and arrays; systematic application of the inversion principle so that the facet cited first always files last; use of the retroactive principle for synthesis, whereby later elements of the notation may be qualified by earlier elements, thus obviating the need for the special auxiliary schedules of BC1; extension and restructuring of the common auxiliary schedules; revision of the alphabetical index; provision of more alternatives; extension and restructuring of a few main classes, notably Documentation and Library Science which has been moved from Class Z to Classes 7/8; and provision of a new and comprehensive general class for multi-disciplinary studies of phenomena (entities, activities and process, attributes).

Volume 1 is entitled *Introduction and Auxiliary Schedules*, but this is far too modest a title. True it contains sections on the history, publication and maintenance of BC, relations between BC1 and BC2, the structure of BC and how to use BC, but it also includes three

general sections which can be used with profit by anybody concerned with the organisation of library and information services, whether by BC or some other system: Section 4, on organising information and the role of bibliographic classification, which includes (inter alia) a useful discussion of pre-co-ordination and post-co-ordination; Section 5, on the structure of a bibliographic classification, which considers the six main features of a library classification – facets, arrays, citation order, filing order, notation and the alphabetical index; and Section 8, a glossary which defines not only terms particularly associated with BC like collocation and gradation in speciality but also "general interest" and troublesome terms like distributed relatives, literary warrant, precision and recall. There is also a short and very readable biography of Bliss by Dr. D. J. Campbell.

There are two unfortunate errors in Section 6.422, on BC's retroactive notation, which appears to have been written from an earlier draft of Class J. We are told

"For example, in Education (Class J)

Audio-visual aids is J J N

Biology (in the curriculum) is J K Q

Secondary education is J N

and from these elements compound classes may be built (synthesized):

Biology teaching – Audio-visual aids J K Q J N

Secondary education – Audio-visual aids J N J N

Secondary education – Biology teaching – Audio-visual aids J N K Q J N"

In fact Audio-visual aids is J I E and Biology (in the curriculum) is J K T E, so that the notations for the examples given should be J K T E I E, J N I E and J N K T E I E.

The remainder of Volume 1 consists of auxiliary schedules for form, common subject subdivisions, persons, places, language, ethnic groups and periods of time, and outlines of the complete classification. Apart from the changes in notation which are inevitable from the extensions and restructuring – and anybody familiar with the common auxiliaries of BC1 knows how necessary these extensions and restructuring are – the place divisions notation has changed from lower case letters to capital letters, so that a facet indicator (8) is now needed. Thus, Primary education in France is classified at J M 8 F, where J M represents Primary education and F (from Schedule 2, Places) is France. Schedule 4 (Periods of time) appears in three versions – a "standard" schedule for normal use, a simpler schedule for libraries requiring only broad subdivision by periods, and a very detailed schedule.

Each of the three classes published so far contains an outline of the complete classification, an introduction to the particular class, the schedules, and the alphabetical index to the schedules. The retroactive principle allows far more detailed classification than is possible with any other general scheme. Thus, a document on coming into being among the Australian aborigines is classified at P H Y L B E G, the notation being built up from the following elements:

P E E G Religious beliefs relating to fertility

P H Y L B Australian aborigines religions

Some may find an 8-letter notation unacceptable, but I was told at the Tavistock Joint Library, which is already reclassifying by BC2, that (a) excessively long notations are the exception rather than the rule and (b) there is no

evidence of reader resistance to long notations, while library staff find them more helpful for shelving and shelf-tidying than the short notations produced by broad classification, which have to be subdivided alphabetically by author. Libraries do not, of course, have to use the whole notation for shelving purposes — this document could be shelved at PHY LB or PHY L (Australonesian religions).

When I reviewed the second edition of *The Unesco: IBE Education Thesaurus for Education Libraries Bulletin*, I tested it against some titles taken at random from *British Education Index*. I decided to try classifying some of these titles by Class J of BC2 and the results were generally satisfactory:

- Creativity and curriculum structure JKC EID
- Raising of the school leaving age JDR O
- Teaching the understanding of developing countries
JKT BD3 EIK C
- An integrated studies course in the sciences and the humanities in a Nottinghamshire secondary school
JKT AZ3 KSC J8EM V
- Smoking amongst grammar school girls JNO LFE MG
(= Behaviour amongst grammar school girls)

I wonder how many other general classification schemes would be able to cope so well with such specific subjects?

One of the worst features of BC1 was its index, which was often inaccurate as well as being uneconomical (frequently repeating the subdivisions of the schedules) and inconsistent. BC2 being a fully faceted scheme, its indexes list only concepts and therefore are not likely to repeat BC1's lack of economy. I carried out a spot check of the indexes to Classes J, P and Q to test their accuracy and consistency and detected two errors: Examinations should be JFL, not JFD, and Temperance should be QNU ET, not QNU ESS. I should also like to see an entry under Parent-Teacher Relations as well as Teacher-Parent Relations. I could not carry out a spot check of the index to Volume 1, as there is none apart from an inadequate and hard to find index to places.

Another fault of BC1 was its presentation, with lack of pagination for the schedules and scattering of the systematic auxiliary schedules. We now have pagination, and the auxiliary schedules which remain are together in Volume 1, but otherwise I found the presentation of BC2 inferior to that of BC1. Classification schemes are not, it is true, meant to be read continuously, but there are sections of this, particularly in Volume 1, which are designed to be so read and (as I have suggested earlier in this review) deserve to be so read. Unfortunately I cannot recommend them to anybody who is as short-sighted as I am — my bifocal spectacles found them very difficult!

Was it worth doing, and would Bliss have approved of the result? To deal with the second question first, I believe the answer must be "yes". Bliss was a progressive, and he would surely have wanted to take advantage of the work of the other classification genius of the century, Ranganathan, and his followers. Dr. Campbell refers in his biographical note to the appreciative and encouraging letters which Bliss wrote to Ranganathan in 1933 when *Colon Classification* was published.

Was it worth doing? It is not likely to challenge the two giants, Dewey and Library of Congress, even though

it is going to be a much better scheme than either. But there are many libraries, especially in Britain, classified by BC1 and it is up to them to accept the challenge of the revision. At least one library, the Tavistock Joint Library in London, has begun to use BC2 and others have indicated their intention of doing so. Publication in parts means that special libraries can take advantage of the revision without having to worry about lack of provision for fringe topics, which might be the case if they compiled their own schedules. Compilers of classification schemes will be able to use the BC schedules as a source of inspiration and ideas — Jack Mills knows that my colleagues and I have been doing this in our revision of *The London Classification of Business Studies*. Yes, it was worth doing and the result is far too good to be regarded simply as an excellent teaching tool, a monument to the dedication of its three compilers, and a memorial to a great American classificationist who had to look outside his own country to find appreciation of his work.

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DOWNING, J. C., YELLAND, M. (Eds.): *Dewey International: papers given at the European Centenary Seminar on the Dewey Decimal Classification, held at Banbury, England, 26–30 September 1976*, sponsored by Forest Press and the Library Association. London: Library Association, 1977. 176 p. (Library Association Research Publication no.19)

The Dewey Centenary in 1976 spawned a number of conferences and symposia on both sides of the Atlantic, giving due honor both to the inventor and to the fact that a system conceived more than a century ago is still serving thousands of libraries and their users quite well. The present volume comes from the U.K. where paradoxically the Dewey system has found a larger following than in its homeland and where, above all, it is widely used in the form of classified subject catalogs, and not only as a mere mechanical device for shelf ordering, as is the case universally in the United States. The papers, as the title implies, are mainly devoted to the international aspects of Dewey, and provide some interesting insights into the inner workings of the editorial office, housed in and supported by the Library of Congress, and how the product of the American editors is then applied in other countries, particularly in France and in French-speaking areas of Canada, and in Spain. Other papers deal with the relationship of DDC to the UDC, the importance of the system for Universal Bibliographic Control, and its place in the automated system of subject indexing by PRECIS now used by the British National Bibliography in conjunction with Dewey numbers for a classified sequence and main listing of books. The teaching of Dewey in library schools in the U.K. is also dealt with, and it is gratifying to note that the relationship between DDC and library schools will soon no longer be a one-way street: Mr. Custer announced that the index to the forthcoming 19th edition (due in early 1979) will be tested by teams of library school students as to its effectiveness compared with the more traditional indexes of the 16th and 17th editions. This kind of feedback is urgently needed for the future healthy development of