

# Book Reviews

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Book Review Editor

SUN, DAJIN D., and CARTER, RUTH C. (eds). *Education for Library Cataloging: International Perspectives*. New York: Haworth Information Press, c2006. 492 p. ISBN-13: 978-0-7890-3113-6 (pb).

This survey of cataloging education around the world offers readers a rich menu of experiences, educational offerings, and approaches to the subject of cataloging education as it is currently practiced in 24 countries of the world, excluding the United States and Canada. The exclusion does not mean that English-speaking countries are entirely absent from the book, however. Two nations outside North America, South Africa (in one chapter) and Australia (in two chapters), are covered.

The chapters are organized geographically, beginning with the African continent, and followed by several each under headings for Asia, Australia (two chapters), Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Nations whose cataloging education programs are described include (in order of presentation) Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa, China (both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan), India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Austria and Germany (described together in one chapter), Poland, Slovenia, Spain, the British Isles (England, Scotland, and Wales), Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Egypt, Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia.

As readers might expect, many chapters reflect common experiences among the countries, particularly regarding the proliferation of subjects in competition with cataloging and classification in library school curricula. There are also some common problems, such as dealing with the changes in education and training prompted by automation. Generally, computer-based cataloging is not a new issue anywhere, although in some areas of the world, catalogers still work with manual systems. Describing cataloging education in Nigeria, J. I. Iwe states: "... the card catalogue is still being used in all libraries, including the University of Calabar library where the only library school in the state exists (p. 33)." In other places, computer infrastructure has developed

to a level that supports coursework online. As Linda M. Cloete writes, "The ultimate goal of the training resource program is to develop an online, fully interactive course: an online virtual cataloging classroom (p. 66)."

The eternal debate in the teaching of cataloging over theory versus practice emerges in this volume. As Li Si suggests in describing cataloging education in the People's Republic of China, the matter might be laid at the door of the faculty, stating, "Although the majority of teaching faculty members in the library and information science programs have a solid theoretical foundation from their school education and training, they do not normally possess practical work experience in their field of specialty and they are not familiar with the application of technologies in the field. In order to enhance their practical skills, these faculty members should be given the opportunity to work in libraries... This way, they would be able to put theory into practice and gain rich, practical field experience, thus improving the relevance and quality of their teaching (p. 97)." One wonders how warmly faculty members would welcome that kind of opportunity! On the other hand, in many places, on-the-job training is weak, as Shoichi Taniguchi describes it in Japan, "on the job training and continuing education are neither encouraged nor promoted (p. 132)."

Among the most interesting and important aspects of this book are the tables of hard data it presents. Almost every chapter reports on surveys done by the authors on the state of library education in general and/or the kinds of offerings in cataloging and classification available within their countries. Some authors also include statistics on the numbers of persons receiving certificates, diplomas, and/or master's degrees, which is useful in understanding the different levels of expertise being developed over time.

While one could argue that there are gaps in coverage, with large, influential countries such as France and Italy in Europe, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile in South America, and Thailand and Myanmar in Asia,

left out of the book, for the most part there is good representation from different parts of the globe. *Education for Library Cataloging* is a good choice as a textbook for coursework in International Librarianship as well as a primer in what to expect if one's information center is affiliated with partners outside the United States and Canada. This book should be seen as an important "must read" for all library students and practitioners concerned about issues of increasing globalization in bibliographic control. It is highly recommended.

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LEVIE, FRANÇOISE. *L'Homme qui voulait classer le monde, Paul Otlet et le Mundaneum*. Bruxelles: Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2006. 352 p. (80 b&w ill.) ISBN 2-87449-022-9.

To the readers of this journal the founding founder of bibliography and information science, the Belgian Paul Otlet (1868–1944), ground-layer of the *Universal Decimal Classification*, anticipator of multimedia, virtual libraries, and the Internet, and co-inventor of the microfilm or, as it was originally called, "le *Bibliophote*" (p. 107) (an achievement he shares together with Robert Goldschmidt), scarcely needs introduction. Françoise Levie's new biography of Otlet embodies the research she has started with the production of the documentary of the same name (Sofidoc, 2002, 60 min.). It is impossible to give a chapter-by-chapter overview of this informatively dense and beautifully illustrated book, which consists of twenty chapters, a concluding piece by Benoît Peeters, a very useful list and description of the pivotal figures in Otlet's life, and a list containing the locations of the sources consulted (an index is, unfortunately, not provided). I will therefore restrict myself by pointing to Levie's innovative contributions to our knowledge of Otlet and to topics that are of genuine interest to the readers of this journal.

Levie's book is the result of a fascinating, worldwide quest into the remains of Otlet's work and his international connections. Ever since W. Boyd Rayward's monumental 1975 *The Universe of Information: The Work of Paul Otlet for Documentation and*

*International Organization* (Moscow: VINITI), this book is the second systematic survey of the Collections of the Mundaneum (now, after various peregrinations, preserved at Bergen/Mons, Belgium) (cf. pp. 339–340), which contains Otlet's private documents, the "Otletaneum". Sixty-eight unopened banana boxes were the main source of inspirations for Levie's research. Of special interest in this respect is Levie's discovery of Otlet's 1916 diary "*le Cahier Blue*". As these boxes were, at the time Levie conducted her research, not classified and as they were thereafter re-divided and re-classified, precise references to this collection are not provided and the text is simply quoted during the course of the book (p. 339). While this is perfectly understandable, I would have welcomed exact references to Otlet's main works such as, for instance, *Traité de documentation* and *Monde, Essai d'universalisme* which are also quoted without supplying further details.

Levie's focus is not exclusively on Otlet's contributions to bibliography and information science *per se*, but aims at offering a very complete, chronological overview of the life and work of Paul Otlet. Levie succeeds very well at documenting Otlet's personal and familial life, and offers ample socio-historical and political contextualisation of Otlet's activities (e.g. the interaction between Otlet's internationalist endeavours and the expansionist politics of King Leopold II (p. 59), and Otlet's ardent pacifism during World War I are relevantly highlighted (pp. 161–176)).

Levie begins by exploring Otlet's childhood days and by bringing into perspective some of the traits which are relevant to understand his later work. She shows how his father Edouard, an internationally active railway contractor, awoke a mondial awareness in the young Otlet (pp. 20–21) and how his encyclopaedic spirit for the first time found expression in a systematic inventory of the small Mediterranean isle his father bought (*L'île du Levant*, 1882) (p. 31). From the age of 16 Otlet suffered from a disorder of his literal memory (Otlet's personal testimony in the *Cahier Blue*, on p. 47), which might perhaps explain his lifelong obsession with completeness and accuracy. Of special interest to the readers of this journal are chapter 4, in which Otlet's and Henri Lafontaine's adaptation of Melvil Dewey's *Decimal Classification* and the origin of the *Universal Decimal Classification* (UDC) is discussed *in extenso* (pp. 51–70; also see chapter 6, p. 98 for Otlet's attempt at a universal iconographical index) and chapter 17, in which *Traité de documentation* (1934) is presented