Book Reviews

KAO, Mary Liu: **Cataloguing and Classification for Library Technicians.** NewYork, London: TheHaworth Press 1995. XII,137p., ISBN 1-56024-345-7.

This is one of a few original books from the famous Haworth Press. I fell for the title from a trade catalogue and found the book to my high expectations. It is something, I have been looking for - a book badly needed by our catalogues and library science students.

There was a time when cataloguing and classification formed the wholeness of technical services, and teaching of cataloguing and classification were the central skills in library education. With the changing role of libraries and coming of automation their real place seems clouded. Nevertheless they remain important basically. If reader services are the essence of a library then technical services are the engine which run the reader services. Efficiency of all reader services depends, apart from personal skills and enthusiasm, on the accuracy and thoroughness of information processing. Of all technical services cataloguing and classification hold a primary place. Centralised cataloguing, automation and now library and information networks have relegated them to a peripheral place, if not to oblivion. Technical skills still remain important though are increasingly being performed outside the library by centralised and cooperative agencies. Still considerable amount of original cataloguing is done by individual cataloguers within the library especially in developing countries. Thus this book is important, as it has been written from a library technician's viewpoint. The book neatly confines itself to cataloguing and classification. It comprises - well organised - nine chapters in all, including the introductory first chapter. It closes with an appendix of a bare reading list of 28 items. The first chapter sets the tone and gives a broader view of the library aims and purpose. It relates the technical services with the very purpose of existence of a library. The second chapter defines the need, purpose, forms and types of a library catralogue - functions remain the same as outlined by C. A.Cutter (1837-1903) more than a hundred years ago. The third chapter briefly describes the tools used for technical processing of library documents for storage and retrieval of library documents. The tools described here are AACR 2R (1988), Library of Congress Subject Headings (17th ed., 1994), Sears List of Subject Headings (15th ed., 1994), the DDC-20 (1989), the Library of Congress Classification (6th ed.) and lastly the Cutter/Cutter-Sanborn tables for book numbers. A fourth chapter on descriptive cataloguing provides a very fine summary of AACR R2 (1988) along with simple but appropriate examples. Chapter five on subject cataloguing explains the salient features and operations of the above named two lists of subject headings. This chapter, however, does not discuss other pre-coordinated indexing procedures, e.g. PRECIS and its latest version COMPASS and other indexing systems. Chapter six explains classification as a tool for shelf arrangement. Very obviously the systems described are the ones in vogue and popular in USA, namely the DDC and the Library of Congress Classification. Along with each system their book number systems are also described briefly. The author erroneously is of the view that the Cutter author mark is added to the (DDC) Class number preceded by a dot/decimal - to indicate that Cutter numbers are decimal fractions. Indeed these are, but the DDC does not prescribe the use of a dot. Nor does it seem that there is any need to do so. The Cutter author marks are neither intrinsic to DDC nor is their use mandatory in DDC: Any book numbering system can be used with it. The Chapter seven, on copy cataloguing, names and explains some sources of readymade cataloguing, such as CIP data, the National Union Catalogue, the LC Card Distribution Service (CDS), and commercial sources such as those of Bro-Dart and Baker and Taylor, and lastly the networks - a valuable source of copy cataloguing. The chapter eight "The Cataloguing Department" is on the organisation of the technical section of a library. It itemises the processing routine in eleven steps or daily chores. The essence of the ALA filing rules of 1980 are here explained concisely. The chapter, however, hoes not presribe any norms on the quantum of work to be done by personnel in the eatloguing department. The last chapter, chapter nine, on current trends in cataloguing, lists issues with which theprefession is face to face at the moment. These include re-classification, re-cataloguing, closing the card catalogue in favour of OPACs, and retrospective conversion. The trends portend that more and more libraries are going online and are joining some cooperative information networks, so they will automatically produce union catalogues. Most cataloguing will become copy cataloguing and the CD-ROM will become its form.

This practical monograph is aiming at the bench worker and the student. It is essential for library technicians who are increasingly replacing the professionally highly qualified librarians. Every chapter begins with briefly clarifying the terminology and ends with some review questions - to examine the learner. The examples given are simple and apt - indeed a simple handbook. Clarity and practicability are its hallmarks. Therefore the book is valuable for its topicality, simplicity and its concise treatment. Its large type face and its physical format are attractive. I could not find any type error, except for 'blur' instead of 'blurb' on page 62.

No doubt the book is heavily biased toward American cataloguing procedures and terminology. Yet because of its clarity and high practical value the book may attract some translators for use in different countries. Although priced at USD 15 it is affordable in the poor countries of Africa and Asia, still cheaper reprints should be allowed for the librarians of these continents. M.P.Satija

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