
Book Reviews

Eric de Grolier's "Big Book" on Classification.

That Eric de Grolier is a notable summarizer of conferences, readers will already know from Pauline Cochrane's article in the Festschrift issue of *International Classification*. He performed this task also in 1957 at the Dorking International Study Conference on Classification for Information Retrieval. During his survey, he mentioned that he had recently completed a "big book" on classification, written over a period of 20 years.

In 1958 I had the great pleasure of reviewing this book for the *Journal of Documentation*. It was entitled "Théorie et pratique des classifications documentaires", published by the Union Française des Organismes de Documentation, Paris 1956. Duplicated from typewriter script, it runs to 400 pages, with over 800 bibliographical footnotes, many containing a string of references. It still occupies an honoured place on my bookshelf.

In the 1950's (and even since then) the name of Eric de Grolier was rarely encountered in English or American texts on classification, although he had been writing on documentation since 1931. Yet at the time of its publication, his book was the most comprehensive study of documentary classification that had yet appeared. Its three divisions covered: (a) general characteristics of classification (p.1-96); (b) the evolution of systems of classification (p.97-259); and (c) possibilities for the future coordination and standardization of classifications (p.260-368); plus appendixes and index.

The historical study runs from antiquity to modern times, drawing in much new material that was not to be found in the standard histories, and it offers the reader a wealth of factual material and references. It is a great pity that the book did not receive wide distribution, for its historical content can be of much value to subsequent students of the subject.

Despite his deep knowledge of this aspect of classification, de Grolier did not write his book as an antiquary. His main interest in classification was in its future. He studied the past in order to understand the present, and to guide further development of the subject. He was as familiar with the current research on every aspect of information retrieval as with the works of Comte or Ampère. The last third of his book is devoted to a detailed analysis of current practical questions: how can documentary classification schemes be coordinated and standardized? is a rational encyclopaedic classification desirable and possible? can special classification schemes be coordinated? what symbolic representations will best serve documentary needs? what organizational methods and structures can tackle such problems? These questions are with us still, and de Grolier's opinions are

still worth examination.

The "big book" is a work of great erudition, and it has another merit: it is no dry compendium. De Grolier then (as now) has a vigorous, critical mind: he is never content to describe, he must evaluate, praise, or attack. As well as having rich factual content, his book is very readable, because it is so well organized, and because Eric is ready to argue with anyone about anything - about sociology, philosophy, logic, linguistics, notational symbols, information theory, or whatever. No narrow specialist, his knowledge of modern culture is as well integrated as it is wide. It is, in fact, classified.

At the Dorking conference, Eric said of his book: "I now have the disagreeable impression that twelve months have elapsed, and that it would better be put in the waste paper basket and an entirely new study written". A false judgement, to discard such riches - stemming only from his unceasing urge to move ahead in his thinking. (The fruits of further explorations into new methods of retrieval were incorporated into his "Study of general categories applicable to classification and coding in documentation", published by UNESCO in 1960.)

Yet it is easy to understand how the feeling of dissatisfaction had arisen. Mechanical aids to information retrieval were starting to appear (using punched and peephole cards), and de Grolier devoted a few pages of his book to selection using these tools. Computer-aided retrieval did not appear until 1957 (at first using magnetic tape storage), but discussions of the possibilities of the computer in retrieval had begun some years earlier. Change was in the air, and for some enthusiasts of the new, the old techniques of document and information management such as classification, seemed to have had their day. Of course, de Grolier did not agree with this, but perhaps he felt some loss of the certainty he had previously enjoyed, that classification was central to documentation.

Today, thirty or so years on, issues relating to the structure and representation of knowledge are again seen as central - not only to information retrieval, but to all aspects of information and language processing. How topically reads the title of section 243 of the big book: Can there be a synthesis of classification and language?

Eric concluded his conference survey at Dorking with a toast: "I lift my cup to the future classificationist who will be master of the world!" Let us lift our cups to him, to honour the contributions he has made to the organization of knowledge!

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Krishan KUMAR: *Theory of Classification*. 4th rev.ed. New Delhi: Vikas Publ.House 1988 (1991 reprint). IX, 560p. ISBN 0-7069-54415-7 (Pbk)

Apparently under the influence of S.R.Ranganathan, theory and practice of library classification form the core

components of library science curricula in any library school in his native land, India. Classification studies have remained steadfast in India even when they suffered a setback in the West especially in the beginning days of online catalogues. To cater to the students' needs, many classification textbooks have been written in India. In the early 1970's with the growth and upcoming of many library schools the books by Srivastava (1) and Ohdeda/Sengupta (2) were the ones most popular with the students. These and other books mostly explained and simplified "Ranganathan" to the first degree course students. Having not been revised for a long time these books have now yielded place to Professor Krishan Kumar's book first published in 1979.

The book under review caters to the new syllabus and reflects the modern approach to classification studies and research, going a little beyond Ranganathan's work, though mostly restating it. It is an eclectic work written strictly according to the B.Lib.I.Sc. and M.Lib.I.Sc. curricula. The book readily answers student's needs as evident from its many editions and reprints, which keep it continuously in print.

Meeting their expectations, Professor Krishan Kumar has captured the hearts and minds of India's library science students. He has written textbooks and some research monographs on different branches of the discipline. However he is popular with the students for his books on classification, cataloguing, bibliography, reference service, and library organization. Some of his books have been translated into Indian vernaculars. To his colleagues he is famous as a gentleman professor. He was President of the Indian Library Association (ILA) from 1988-1990, served twice as President of the Indian Association of Teachers of Library and Information Science (IATLIS) (1985-1987 and 1987-1989), and has held many important portfolios at Delhi University and with the library profession at large. Thus Krishan Kumar, at present a Professor of Library and Information Science at the University of Delhi, is a household name in the Indian library profession.

The book under review has 36 chapters discussing every possible aspect of classification. Some of the chapters providing readymade answers, to some key examination questions do the spoon feeding to the students. Notwithstanding its title it is a treatise on library classification. It is difficult to find so much in one volume in any other book on the subject. The wide range of topics it discusses and the readymade answers it provides to a large number of questions are amazing. No surprise if in the process some repetition has occurred.

The language is easy and simplifies the complex subject to an extent to be easily followed by an average Indian student for whom English is a foreign language. The book is profusely illustrated, mostly drawing examples from the CC, DDC, and the UDC only. The BC and the LCC have been only described in appropriate chapters. Division of the text into sections with numbered

feature headings adds to the students' convenience. The index, however, refers to the page numbers instead of the section number.

Though this edition was published in 1988, yet there is no mention of the publication of the UDC, Medium International Edition (1985-1988) and the CC-7 (1987). Footnotes and Chapter references have been given, but there is no consolidated bibliography. Chapter 36 on 'Developments and Trends' and Chapter 37 on 'Computers and Classification' need to be entirely rewritten to depict the current state-of-the-art. However, the problem this book may face in the near future is its alarmingly growing size. Already now at 560 pages it needs considerable pruning. This can easily be done without any loss of substantial thought by extricating some of the repetitious chapters, e.g. Chapter 17 'Common and Special Isolates', Chapter 18 'Time Isolates' and many more. Anyhow, with its student friendly approach the book, it is hoped, will continue to be the favourite well into the 1990's.

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References

- (1) Srivastava, A.P.: Theory of classification in libraries. New Delhi: Laxmi Book Store 1964. 206p. (Reprinted many times till 1973)
- (2) Ohdedar, A.K., Sengupta, B.: Library Classification. 2nd ed. Calcutta: World Press 1977. 264p.

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HOHNHOLD, Ingo: *Übersetzungsorientierte Terminologiearbeit. Eine Grundlegung für Praktiker.* (Translation oriented terminology work. Laying a Foundation for Practitioners). Stuttgart: InTra. 1.Fachübersetzer-genossenschaft 1990.

It is with terminology like with golf, cricket, shares or gambling for most people: they do not see the point of investing in it. Now I.Hohnhold has much invested himself in showing what is at stake and what to get out of it. Hopefully those who should know more about it get the message. As go-betweens ought to, the twin sisters terminology and translation have but little attractiveness; however they deserve a closer look (elles gagnent à être connues). I.Hohnhold offers an interesting inside-view unravelling some of Terminology's mysteries.

In fact it is a user's manual. In addition, you get informed of the nature of ingredients, the usefulness of the product, and its market prospects, all in one. I.Hohnhold has done a remarkable job of assembling and ordering all this fundamental information in such a concise and yet explicit and concrete way.

Every author purports to argue his case in the light of a situation which he wants to change. Now this situation in respect of terminology, to judge by what is stated on p.22 regarding translator training and the