

TAYLOR, Arlene G. *The Organization of Information*. Englewood, Colorado : Libraries Unlimited, 1999. xx, 280 p. ISBN 1-56308-493-7.

According to Professor Taylor, this publication is meant to address the history, theory, and practice of the organization of recorded information as taught in many core courses in North American schools of Library and Information Science. Such courses typically precede courses in cataloguing and classification, and deal with the broader issues of controlled vocabularies, metadata, classification theory, and the like.

This text is divided into ten chapters, each of which can act as a discrete unit in an introductory course in the organization of information. Chapter 1 provides an overview of organization as a human endeavour, and identifies six functions of bibliographic control. Herein lies one of the strengths of this publication: Taylor addresses how information is organized in a variety of settings (such as libraries, museums, archives, etc.), but brings together principles of organization that are generic to any environment. On the other hand, this chapter highlights a problem that is pervasive throughout the text, the assumption of too much prior knowledge on the part of the reader. In the first chapter, for example, Taylor uses concepts such as "authority control" and "Cutter numbers" without explaining what they mean. These concepts are explained eventually in other chapters, but, without further explanation at this early point in the textbook, this could cause confusion in novice students.

Chapter 2 looks at a variety of retrieval tools used to organize information; useful examples illustrate different types of tools. Taylor does a good job of discussing the importance, use and functions of these retrieval tools. On a cautionary note, however, the discussion of these tools tends to be uneven at times, since emphasis is placed principally upon catalogues and bibliographies; discussion of the remaining five tools (indexes, finding aids, databases, registers, and bibliographic utilities) is brief.

Chapter 3 provides a historical survey of the ways in which information has been organized in the Western world. Given the richness of this history, such a survey must of necessity be broad, but Taylor does an excellent job of capturing the key developments in the organization of information. Taylor is to be commended also for discussing the development of documentation and information science, since it is regrettable that these two areas are so often divorced from "traditional cataloguing," even though they share the same principles when it comes to organizing information. This reviewer was particularly pleased to see a section devoted to Paul Otlet and Henri La

Fontaine, whose contributions to this field are too often minimized or ignored.

Chapter 4 discusses a variety of encoding standards used to organize information, such as MARC, SGML, and XML. Another strength of this publication is its ability to demonstrate how bibliographic control is not restricted to the print environment, and that principles and standards established in AACR2, for example, can be applied to a variety of environments and to recorded information in diverse formats. The problem with this chapter is the fact that much of its discussion is predicated upon an understanding of ISBD and AACR2, standards which have not been explained as of yet; without this context, it could be difficult for students to understand how these encoding standards function. This chapter might therefore be better placed later in the book.

Chapters 5 and 6 are concerned with metadata: once again, Taylor does an excellent job of showing how bibliographic control is valid in any environment. The term "metadata" tends to be associated with the digital environment but, as the author so rightly points out, since metadata includes descriptive information about recorded information, this term can be applied to any type of surrogate record in any environment. Once again, therefore, Taylor brings together principles of the organization of information and shows their continued validity in an increasingly digital world. Taylor provides an excellent overview of a variety of surrogate record creation tools such as ISBD, AACR2, Dublin Core, Encoded Archival Description (EAD), and so forth. Because it is in Chapter 5 that standards for bibliographic control are discussed, it might have been better for this chapter to precede the discussion of encoding standards, as suggested above. Chapter 6 addresses the issue of authority control, with emphasis placed upon the choice and creation of access points. Taylor provides a good overview of this rather complicated topic; the only possible caveat is her use of the concepts of "added entry" and "uniform title" in illustrative examples of surrogate records, since these two concepts are not defined and explained.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus upon the principles of, and tools used for, subject analysis. The introduction to Chapter 7 could be rather overwhelming, since Taylor uses terms such as "controlled vocabulary" and "natural language processing" without explaining their meaning. These terms are explained later in the chapter, but the use of these technical terms could be intimidating and confusing at this early stage. Similarly, Taylor uses LCSH as an example of a tool used in subject analysis, but does not explain at this point what LCSH actually is. Chapter 7 provides very useful information about the process of subject analysis,

including the concepts of aboutness and exhaustivity. Perhaps too much time is spent upon these two concepts, at the expense of the subject analysis of non-textual information: pre-iconology, iconology, and iconography are discussed only very briefly in this chapter.

Chapter 8 introduces the principles of classification and their use in the design of bibliographic classification systems. Some of the assumptions made by Taylor could be a little problematic. Taylor suggests that the principles of Aristotelian categories, family resemblance, and fuzzy set theory constitute the "classical theory of categories," and that they are the foundation upon which were built systems such as DDC and LCC. It is not clear, however, how these three "classical theories" apply, in fact, to DDC and LCC, since both systems preceded both family resemblance and fuzzy set theory. In fact, Taylor herself states that hierarchical systems such as DDC and LCC, creating categories from general to specific, follow the classical theory based essentially upon Aristotelian logic, and not the other two areas of "classical theory." Secondly, Taylor suggests that LCC was "firmly based in hierarchical arrangements," but this might not actually bear close scrutiny, since LCC is primarily an enumerative, rather than a hierarchical system. Thirdly, Taylor fails to discuss principles that are basic to virtually all bibliographic classification systems, such as homogeneity and mutual exclusivity. The chapter gives a fair bit of space to such issues as broad vs. specific classification systems, and closed vs. open stacks; these issues are valid, but they detract from the more important discussion of the principles of classification.

Chapter 9 looks at the ways in which surrogate records are arranged and displayed in libraries, archives, and the digital environment. Topics include Cutter numbers, notation, filing order, and the archival concepts of provenance and original order. Chapter 10 discusses how the organization of information relates and contributes to system design. The term "system" is rather broad, and given the orientation of this chapter, perhaps the more specific term "information retrieval system" would provide more context for this topic. This reviewer applauds Professor Taylor for suggesting that the way in which information is organized is crucial to the design and operation of information retrieval systems, because this helps consolidate her position that the principles of bibliographic control are appropriate in a variety of environments. Taylor's position might have been strengthened, perhaps, by establishing a clearer connection between bibliographic control and system design. The chapter provides useful suggestions pertaining to specific system design issues that could be

changed to improve retrieval, such as creating help menus and incorporating Boolean operators. While these suggestions are perfectly valid, they appear to fall more under the purview of human-computer interaction, and their relationship to bibliographic control is not established clearly. The final part of the chapter provides a highly useful discussion of how bibliographic control tools (e.g., MARC fields and browsable classification systems) could be used to improve information retrieval in online systems.

The broad scope of this work is both its strength and its weakness. Taylor succeeds in presenting the principles underlying the organization of information, and in showing how these principles work in a variety of settings. Explaining these principles is no mean feat, but the author succeeds in making this topic accessible to the novice student and, perhaps more importantly, in demonstrating that these principles continue to be valid in the digital world. The weakness of this scope is that on occasion, important concepts are glossed over or are not explained at all (for example that of "uniform titles"). It is important to remember, however, that this text is not meant to stand alone; it provides the proverbial „tip of the iceberg“ to a fascinating and complicated subject matter. With the exception of Chapter 8 perhaps, this text is a welcome tool for instructors in LIS schools, and the reviewer lauds its long-awaited arrival.

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WEINBERG, Bella Hass. **Can you recommend a good book on indexing?** Medford, NJ : Information Today, 1998. xiii, 161 p. ISBN 1-57387-041-2 (soft-cover).

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