
Book Reviews

MÜLLER-DREIER, Armin: **Einheitsklassifikation. die Geschichte einer fortwirkenden Idee.** (Unified Classification. The history of a ceaselessly fecund idea.). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1994. 225p. ISBN 3-447-03587-0 = Beiträge zum Buch- und Bibliothekswesen 35. When your reviewer started to read this book, a revised version of an earlier work published privately in Cologne in 1991, he was curious whether, availing ourselves as we do of M. Remmert's book (*Entwicklung und Probleme einer Einheitsklassifikation für deutsche Bibliotheken*): Development and problems of a unified classification for German libraries over the period from 1884 to 1974, Berlin 1976), essentially new aspects on the subject 'Unified classification' are still to be expected.

A. Müller-Dreier first of all delves deeply into questions of subject description in libraries from 1884 to 1969, in which year the Unified Classification Project was started, then outlining in the following the preparation, implementation and abortion of the project and describing with adequate thoroughness in so doing the immense problems involved, while finally, with careful consideration, giving attention to the possible causes of the failure of the project. In all of this the author also, and rightly so, calls attention to the promotion of this subject field by the public libraries (p.49), as well as to the importance of Hirschberger's work at the Bavarian State Library (e.g. at p.75, 100-103). For completeness' sake, he added here that it was only as of the early 1980's that the term 'Münchener Systematik' (Munich Classification System) employed by the author was, and still is, used for a coarse classification developed on the basis of Hirschberger's classification by the Bavarian State Library. This edition, published through normal channels, of his book is given by A. Müller-Dreier the new and sonorous subtitle "The History of a ceaselessly fecund (or: continuously effective) idea". Now this formulation well-nigh lifts the subject up into a Platonic realm of ideas and thus away from common place discussion, but it also induces us to reflect on the historical facts. Your reviewer also has the impression, however, that unified classification might represent an understandable, if not even necessary counterreaction to a decidedly excessive variety in classificatory subject description and thus a typical result of the history of German thinking as expressed in that of the German library.

For, if we do what has by now become a fixed habit: cast a glance at the Anglo-Saxon example, we will note - e.g. in the centralized classification work being done at the US Library of Congress - that one does not work there with a unified classification, but rather with the two classification systems, DDC and LCC - and this without too great a variety in the field of subject description.

And it is precisely when examining the book from this angle, that one is struck by the fact that the author seems to employ terms like: standardization of subject description, coopera-

tive subject description and unified classification - which in your reviewer's opinion constitute gradations, hence manifest differences of degree - again and again as being directly interlinked among one another, if not even as being interchangeable.

Finally the author expresses himself positively "On the topicality of a unified classification in the age of online user catalogs" (p.193-201). This despite the fact that, as developments of the past 25 years have shown, the alternative to a colorful variety of qualitatively widely varying individual library systems need not be, nor even can be, a more or less artificially created unified classification, but rather the development of a few classification systems linked together in operation as far as possible. These classification systems should then speedily be coupled among one another by indexes and thus be made usable by many users, as hinted at by the author (p.200 seqq.). The example of the Regensburg classification, used simultaneously as Bavarian compound classification (opposite p.3) and currently represented in 113 of Germany's 15 constituent states as well as abroad, may show that the borders of 'traditional particularism' are readily transcended in this process. The question of centralized classification work should be left alone, however; here, cooperative subject description has proven itself worth for a long time already. The preparedness, repeatedly cited by the author, of Die Deutsche Bibliothek (the German National Library) "to assume the tasks of managing the classification system to be developed and centrally classifying the Germanophone literature" (p.89, cf. p.124-126) has meanwhile become history.

In comparison with other works in the series "Contributions to Book and Library Science", the amazingly large letter size and a whole series of printing errors - even in the spelling of names - leap to the eye. Also, many a repetition might possibly have been avoided (e.g. it is reported at three places (p.51, 52 and 77) that the ASB has been conceived for 30.000 volumes.

Nevertheless this interesting piece of work, which the publisher, Harrassowitz, has gratifyingly included in his program, constitutes not only a valuable study on the subject of a Unified Classification, but also an important building stone for the history, still to be written, of subject description in the libraries of German-speaking countries. Bernd Lorenz

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MARCELLA, Rita, NEWTON, Robert: **A New Manual of Classification.** Aldershot, U.K.: Gower Publ. 1994. XII, 287p. ISBN 0-566-07547-4.

This is a thoroughly revised and updated edition of the classic *Manual of Classification for Librarians* by the famous UK librarian and master teacher W.C.B. Sayers (1881-1960) (1). First published in 1926, its 2nd and 3rd editions were published in 1944 and 1955 respectively. The 4th edition published in 1967 was revised by Arthur Maltby, and its copyright was held jointly by Maltby and Sayers (2). The 5th edition thoroughly revised by Arthur Maltby was published