



The Ideas of S.R.Ranganathan in Russia: Results and Tendencies

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Survey of studies made in Russia during the past 45 years concerning the work of S.R.Ranganathan, especially with regard to his classification terminology, the chain procedure and the categorial analysis for the application in the alphabetic subject index and the classified catalog. It is also shown how the knowledge of facetization was used in improving the UDC and the LBC tables as well as in automated information retrieval.

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0. Introduction

In 1992, Russian and other ex-Soviet librarians will mark the centenary of the birth of S.R.Ranganathan, together with scholars from all over the world. The name of Ranganathan is widely known in our country. Since 1947 his Colon Classification, along with other remarkable classic systems, is described in all our textbooks and manuals dealing with classification. We have many ways of encouraging and stimulating classification research in the field of facetization of the UDC or LBC, since our librarians have a complete Russian translation of the Colon Classification at their disposal (1). According to our data, which are based on bibliographic sources, this translation is the only one even produced outside of India. Dozens of specialists in our country can state with good reason that in their studies they rest on S.R.Ranganathan's ideas.

Here we present a short survey of the main lines of these studies.

1. Classification Terminology

Everybody who has mastered S.R.Ranganathan's language knows that it is a specific and unusual kind of English, rich in an original vocabulary. In order to draw the greatest possible number of specialists into the study of S.R.Ranganathan's works, it was necessary to make them comprehensible even in the original and help everyone to master Ranganathan's language. Professor A.J.Kushul (1907-1985)¹ of the Moscow Institute of Culture has investigated Ranganathan's heritage. Together with the Head of the chair of Foreign Language of this Institute, T.P.Elizarenkova (1900-1967), she translated the "Vocabulary of Ranganathan's Library Classification",

which was published in the supplement to the Russian edition of the "Colon Classification" (1, p.345-420).

Many terminological problems were solved during the work on the first edition of the "Dictionary of Library Terms" (2). The compilers of this dictionary decided to introduce in it the following synonymous couples of terms:

Facet classification - Analytico-synthetic classification

Facet analysis - Categorial analysis

Facet formula - Classification formula.

The first meaning in each couple of terms is correlated with the "Colon Classification", while the second is of a common-usage character. In 1980, I.E.Gendlina, in an article² concerning the definitions of some terms from classification theory, specified many concepts of facet classification. Some years later, a collective of compilers (I.E.Gendlina, G.I.Kalinina, and A.I.Smirnova) headed by N.D.Borisova, completed their work on the "Terminological aid on the theory and methodology of application of the UDC" (3), a book in which we find a sort of a set of five dictionaries in Russian, English, German, French and Spanish.

2. The Chain Procedure and Categorial Analysis

In the mid 70s, specialists of the State Lenin Library of the USSR encountered a number of difficulties when organizing an alphabetic subject index for a new classified catalog in accordance with the LBC schedules. After studying world experience in this field, the specialists took two decisions. First, they used the chain procedure as a basis for the formation of the index, since this method ensured a rapid and, at the same time, qualitative growth of its volume. Second, they made use of the categorial method in the selection of concepts reflected in the index. As it turned out, this task as applied to an index to a classified catalog was set for the first time ever here. This work continued for some years, during which, parallel with the development of the theory, experiments were also conducted. For each category of concepts, concrete principles and rules were established, subgroups were singled out and schedules of standard subdivisions were mapped out. The list of main categories (facets) is interesting, we reproduce it below:

Subjects of inanimate nature.
Subjects of animate nature.
Materials, substances, raw materials, manufactured articles.
Mechanisms, equipment. Buildings and constructions.
Phenomena (processes). Operations.
Conditions, relationships, relationships between subjects.
Properties, qualities, attributes of subjects.
Spatial and time concepts.
Regional concepts.
National, ethnic and linguistic concepts.
Personalia.
Collectives.
Groups of the population.
Fields of knowledge. Different theories. Research methods.
Complex themes and problems.

The fact that the chain procedure had been sufficiently well investigated by Soviet specialists, Ts.M. Berdichevskaya, R.A. Leonov, and A.J. Kushul (the first publications date back to 1956) had a favorable influence on the results of this work. The research and experimental work of many years standing, conducted under the guidance of T.P. Mishina, was concluded by the publication of the "Alphabetic subject index to the classified catalog" (4). Beginning with the early 80s this method became an obligatory one for Soviet libraries and is regulated by a State standard. The card alphabetic subject index has developed in the past decades into an enormous reference system, which supported the operative and multi-aspect search for information in the catalog. And now with its help the subject input into the electronic catalog of the Russian State Library, whose main information retrieval language is the LBC, will be built up.

3. Improvement of the UDC and the LBC

A profound study of the "Colon Classification" is being conducted in our country since 1967 within the framework of optimization of the UDC.

A group of researchers (H.M. Zaidberg, R.A. Leonov, P.I. Shifman) was organized in the State Public Library for Science and Technology (GPNTB of the USSR) with the aim of creating a description of the "Colon Classification" which would contain concrete details, peculiarities, and principles of the system, thus differing in this respect from the general outlines hitherto presented in textbooks and aids. This detailed analysis first of all called for a translation of the schedules themselves (which were published later). The findings of the first stage of this research were published in 1970 in the form of an article comprising five printer's sheets and also featuring a detailed bibliography on the subject. At the second stage of the study, this group of specialists examined the possibilities of optimizing the UDC with the help of categorial and functional analysis (the article concerned was published in 1971).

In those years I had occasion to work in one of the institutes of culture and read the course of classification and the classified catalog. I remember well what a great upheaval in our understanding of the theory and practice

of classification these publications brought about. It seemed that only yesterday we spoke of classification systems only in descriptive terms (with the traditional list of questions being: the main array, philosophic fundamentals, the designation system, etc.). But having mastered the new ideas and criteria, we suddenly saw how many inadequacies there were in every classification used in library and bibliographic practice, inadequacies, which became evident only after a categorial and functional analysis has been conducted. We were enlightened, it seemed, immediately when we became equipped with this method and with new knowledge which helped us to think differently.

The above statement will help you to understand the reason for the colossal growth of publications on classification themes in the 70s and later in the 80s. At that time a new generation of young people turned to the analysis of various problems in the field, and even librarians with rich earlier experience in working with the schedules of the UDC and the LBC began to show a new interest in "Facetization" and started to revise schedules and experiment more boldly with catalogs. Many works, particularly in the field of the LBC, were followed up by studies on the level of doctoral dissertations: L.E. Genin (Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library) restructured the schedules for folklore, L.M. Kazakova (from the same library) worked in the field of medicine, S.N. Artamonova (SLL) investigated the LBC schedules for history of literature, and N.I. Ivanova (Leningrad Institute of Culture) the schedules for technology.

E.G. Suhmaneva, a scientific worker of the Library of the USSR Academy of Sciences defended in 1969 a doctoral dissertation directly connected with the principles of Ranganathan's multi-aspect classification. Later she conducted a series of studies of the LBC, which were concluded by the preparation of a concept for the second edition of the LBC, which is a new classification wholly based on principles of the facet system. It is precisely in this direction that the LBC is developing today. New LBC schedules for biological sciences, sociology and philosophy were put out in 1990 and 1991. Meanwhile these schedules continue to be a "closed book" for many librarians, since they greatly differ from conventional and customary schedules. However, in their high scientific level and retrieval potentials these schedules are unique: they not only reflect the latest achievements of science, but also make it possible to realize multi-aspect retrieval by different categories and combinations of retrieval characteristics of a document. Today these advantages of facetization are realized through the electronic catalog. Work on the LBC in this field is being continued.

4. Indexing. Classification Formulas

Still another interesting aspect of the application of Ranganathan's classification theory in contemporary practice is connected with the realization of his idea of formalization of the indexing process. H.M. Zaidberg has worked in this field for many years and contributed many

articles on the subject. For our country, which uses the UDC schedules in the field of centralized indexing, the problems of algorithmic presentation and formalization of the classification process itself are extremely important, since they assure the quality of indexing and make it possible to prevent mistakes and subjectiveness on the part of the classifier. In 1988 a collective of authors from VINITI (N.D.Borisova, A.V.Vladimirova, T.I.Kalinina, G.A.Kriventsova, A.I.Smirnova) worked out some recommendations for the formalization of indexing according to the UDC on the basis of facet analysis (5). Similar work is being accomplished in respect to the LBC schedules. Here the effectiveness of classification formulas may be even higher because the classification numbers according to the LBC schedules (the version for public libraries) are directly printed by publishing houses in books destined for the vast library network of the country.

5. Automation of Information Retrieval

One of the first doctoral dissertations to be written on the basis of S.R.Ranganathan's ideas was defended in our country in 1969 by N.V.Bogdanova. The theme of the dissertation was "The Study of Principles of Facetization of the UDC and Facet Systems in Connection with the Problem of Automation of Information Retrieval". N.B.Bogdanova is the author of an interesting article devoted to the "Colon Classification". It were precisely Ranganathan's ideas that laid down the foundation for the principles of automation of information retrieval which were developed by the State Lenin Library of the USSR for many years. There was nothing to stop the library from taking the familiar road, that is: make use of any subject system, choosing from a wide variety of systems operating in many libraries of the world. However, in our country, classification (systematic) retrieval has always played the leading role. Moreover, in the national libraries of the country and within the entire network of public libraries the same classification system is used. Account should also be taken of the fact that the Russian language, while being the language of international communication for all citizens of the multinational (ex-) USSR did not become the sole language of communication (as has happened, for example, in the USA). The classification language is an international one, whereas any language of subject headings or key words is limited as to its usage, since not all citizens of a State know it. These circumstances were taken into account. The fact that the electronic catalog of the SLL is based on retrieval elements of the LBC number goes to the credit of researchers who were armed with Ranganathan's concepts. This "fragmentation" of the classification number into separate components for the needs of multi-aspect retrieval represents, essentially, the practical refraction of categorial analysis. Theoretical and practical research in this field of automation of retrieval according to the LBC was conducted - in different years - by L.Sanchez-Mehido and E.N.Fadicheva. Their works, divided by a decade, were concluded by doctoral dissertations. In both works, the authors rest on Ranganathan's classification theory.

Here we have touched on only the most important directions of scientific research connected with the ideas and principles of Ranganathan. This list could well be continued. In the year marking the centenary of the birth of this distinguished scholar, we aim to do our best and introduce into scientific circulation a greater number of his works, acquaint the librarians of our countries with his views and doctrine and encourage them to direct their efforts toward the study of those problems which are topical today.

Notes

- 1 A.J.Kushul was the author of a number of articles dealing with Ranganathan. She was an enthusiastic advocate of his ideas.
- 2 As our possibilities are limited, we shall not give citations on articles mentioned in this text for in this case we would have to cite over 150 sources. The author will gladly supply the full bibliographic information to those who are interested in it.

References

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- (5) Formalization of indexing by the UDC on the basis of facet analysis: Methodological recommendations. Moscow: VINITI 1988. 35p.