admiring the efforts of the designers of the NIC, but even at those points when their views are manifest, the presentation is overall balanced and focuses on the foundational issues. The result is a work that could have been chilly and detached in a scholarly way but is, instead, engaging. In almost every chapter one has the urge to argue some fine points of whether, for instance, naming is less information-laden than are fully articulated classifications, but this is evidence of the reader's mind having been stimulated, and not a sign of flaws.

This work is not an "easy read." The authors assume a familiarity with philosophy, especially the philosophy of science. In addition they draw on the work of many social scientists from a wide range of fields, notably, anthropology, sociology of work, cognitive psychology, librarianship, information science, public policy, medical informatics, and politics. They write in an elegant, somewhat formal prose that assumes the reader has a broad, eclectic education. The style is frequently metaphorical and sometimes downright poetic. Each sentence, and even the parenthetical modifiers, are packed with complex, multilayered ideas, and the reader must be always in "parallel thinking" mode – not rushing to closure, not necessarily going from A to B in a straight line. The closing sentence is: "The only good classification is a living classification" (p. 326). Following their own ecological approach, the authors do not prescribe how to classify. Their book is not a manual. Their guidelines are guidelines for reflection. Their motto seems to be, "Think about classification deeply and understand it, but, having said that, live your life, with its ambiguities and challenges, and draw from that."

Barbara Kwasnik

Dr. Barbara Kwasnik, School of Information Studies, 4-206 CST, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, 13244 USA. E-mail: bkwasnik@mailbox.syr.edu.

GHOSH, S.B, and SATPATHY, J.N. eds. **Subject indexing systems : concepts, methods and techniques**. Calcutta : Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC), 1998. iii, 397 p.

The Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC), founded in 1955, is the Indian counterpart of ASLIB in the UK and of the SLA in the United States. Though its membership is small, it has been steadfastly active as compared to the stop-start history of other library organisations in India. Apart from organizing annual conferences and seminars, it publishes occasional monographs, brings out its quarterly *IASLIC Bulletin* and a monthly *Newsletter*, and does appreciable work for the continuing education of professionals. Regretfully, it is not active in the arena of formulating and propagating standards. The book under review, which has not been assigned an ISBN, speaks poorly of IASLIC as a professional publisher.

Since 1976, IASLIC has organised many workshops on indexing systems in order to make "professionals aware of the latest trends in the area of subject indexing." The content of this book is made up of the course materials from a workshop conducted in 1996. This volume can be considered as a new version of the book on indexing published in 1980 : T.N. Rajan, ed. *Indexing systems : concepts, models and techniques*, Calcutta : IASLIC, 1980, 270 p.

Fifteen chapters, divided into nine sections marked A through I, follow a brief introduction. Section A (the first chapter), reproduced without apparent changes from its 1980 version, is a historical account of indexing methods and systems from Cutter to the 1970s. It could be in fact a synopsis of the entire book. Section B (chapters 2-4) dwells on the nature, types, and features of indexing languages. These chapters discuss the functions and construction phases of a thesaurus and classaurus—the latter constitutes the controlled vocabulary base for POPSI, the Postulate based permuted subject index designed by Ranganathan's disciples at the Documentation Research and Training Centre in Bangalore. In Section C (chapters 5-7), three precoordinate indexing systems, namely chain procedure, Precis and POPSI, are explained in depth; the two Indian systems are presented in far more detail here than in any other comparable textbooks. COMPASS, which has replaced Precis at the British National Library, is not discussed here. Section D (chapter 8) discusses coordinate indexing, manifested mostly in the dated UNITERM method. Section E (chapter 9) covers file organisation and the creation of electronic databases, and deals with the basics of computers rather than with the basics of indexing. Section F (chapters 10-12) discusses automation of keyword indexes, cluster formation and natural language processing (NLP). Section G (chapter 13), titled "Non-conventional indexing," explains the nature and functions of Eugene's Garfield citation indexes. One wonders how long citation indexes, which are by now

https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2000-3-177 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

quite familiar to the community of researchers, will continue to be described as non-conventional! Section H (chapter 14) discusses the evaluation of indexing systems in traditional terms of measuring relevance and recall (a printing error describes both of these ratios by the same equation). Section I (the last chapter) presents a few of the major international indexing and abstracting services.

The inherent objective of the author is to provide Indian students with a well illustrated textbook on subject indexing. But unfortunately, the content is dated and it hardly addresses indexing needs and techniques in a networked information environment. The book emphasizes historical developments more than current issues. References appended to most of the chapters are old. In the selective list of thesauri (p. 61) the most recent entry dates back to 1981. Nevertheless, some of the systems described are treatises in terms of details.

At best, this book can be viewed as a record of India's contribution to the art and science of indexing. Indexing is viewed here in the narrow sense of concept formation and their arrangement rather than in the wider sense of it being instrumental to navigating a text or a collection of documents, or as a tool for organisation. There is no discussion of classification as indexing tool. Categorizing classification as "grouping" and associative is shallow and misleading. Can we group objects without identifying their inter and intra group associations? All classifications in any form are associative and correlative. There is no chapter on subject headings lists even though they are the most widely used tools for vocabulary control and subject indexing in library catalogues.

The book has been meticulously edited, notwithstanding some typos here and there (Mortimer Taube always appear as Martimer Taube for example). The text of each chapter has been divided into sections with number and feature headings, and ends with a summary or conclusion. The style of references is uniform, as per Indian standards.

For Indian students, this is a handy one-stop shop for the major traditional subject indexing systems of the world. For the readers abroad, it is handy to understand Indian subject indexing methods *sans* facet analysis and the CC.

M.P. Satija

Dr. M.P. Satija, GND University, Amritsar, 143 005 India. E-mail: dsce_gndu@yahoo.com or manmohan@myhost.gndu.ernet.in.

MANI, Inderjeet, and MAYBURY, Mark T., eds. **Advances in Automatic Text Summarization**. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 1999. 434p. ISBN 0-262-13359-8.

The 26 papers in this book capture some of the most relevant research and development in automatic text summarization, which is the process of distilling the important information from a source document to produce an abridged version. Thirteen of these articles are new while the remaining essays are reprints from books, journals, or conference proceedings. The volume is organized into an introduction providing terminological details, an overview of the content, and pointers to useful resources with related information. The introduction is followed by a position paper by Karen Spärk Jones. The rest of the volume is developed into six sections representing key areas of research and development in text summarization: "Classical Approaches," "Corpus Based Approaches," "Exploiting Discourse Structure," "Knowledge-rich Approaches," "Evaluation Methods," and "New Summarization Problem Areas." Each section starts with a rich and well organized introduction which includes a summary of each paper and references to additional bibliographic material.

In her paper, Karen Spärk Jones suggests that progress in automatic summarization demands a better, more focused research methodology. Having introduced a basic three-stage process model of text summarization, she describes the current state of affairs in the field, and concentrates on context factors that affect summarization. Spärk Jones suggests that, as we cannot expect computers to emulate humans in the production of summaries, the nearer-term strategy should be on shallow processing.

The first section, "Classical Approaches," contains three reprints of journal articles going back to the very foundations of automatic text summarization. Luhn's paper describes the first implemented sentence extraction algorithm which uses term frequencies to measure sentence relevance. Luhn's algorithm filters terms using a stop-list, and computes term frequencies by aggregating terms on the basis of orthographic similarity. These term frequencies are later used to score and select sentences for the abstract. The next paper, by Edmunson, studies how combinations of different linguistic and structural features affect the co-selection ratios between automatic abstracts and ideal abstracts. Edmunson investigates the presence of pragmatic words (cue method), title and heading words (title method), and structural indicators (loca-

https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2000-3-177 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY