EDITORIAL

We are happy to report that the IFLA Steering Committee of its International Office for UBC has agreed to co-sponsor INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION thus ensuring that IFLA who in the past has not been directly involved in projects concerning library classification is "in touch with what is going on and at the same time prevent any duplication of effort" (D. Anderson). At this occasion we should like to publish the following text although not without some reluctance since it presents a very personal opinion and since the first paragraph contains also a misunderstanding of what UBC is meant to be (cf. the letter of B. Anderson, p. 72 and her book: Universal Bibliographic Control. Miinchen: Verl. Dokumentation 1974. 87 p.) I. D.

UBC and UDC

The imminent adoption by several countries of the International Standard Bibliographic Decription (ISBD) points to the possibility of Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC). The ISBD will standardize only the descriptive part of each catalog entry, however; it is not intended to affect the author/title or subject headings or the classification-code.

At present, with Shared Cataloging, United States librarians receive MARC data from non-English-speaking countries; this data includes LC subject headings and LC classification-codes. Were UBC to supervene in a manner that obviated the need for Shared Cataloging offices in these countries, it could hardly be expected that the native catalogers in these countries would furnish LCSH or LC data – – any more than it could be expected that catalogers at the Library of Congress could furnish BBK data for items going to Russia, BC data for items going to Australia, etc. This most of all because each item could go to *all* such countries, and would thus need data for each library in each country that might acquire the work referred to by each catalog entry.

What is clearly called for in such a system of interchange of catalog data is a single system of subject data that can either be automatically transformed, or at least easily interpreted, into any other system of subject data in local use. The cataloger in the U.S. with a book in hand in Polish or Danish or Thai is far more in need of Polish-, Danish-, or Thailand-generated subject data than of the respectively-generated descriptive data: it is far easier, especially with a book in a language not fully understood, to generate decriptive data for oneself than subject data – – what the title page says is easier to determine than what the book is about.

The problem involved in the solution of this situation is basically that of concordance between systems of subject data. It can be taken as axiomatic of concordancing (which is a process of translation between artifical languages) that transformation is possible from a system with more discriminations into one with fewer, whereas the reverse transformation is not possible without access to data outside the less-discriminating system. Thus a code in a system dividing coronations of Holy Roman emperors into dynasties can easily be transformed into a code in a system allowing a single code for all such coronations; but the reverse is not true: the book itself must be consulted to see if it covers the topic in general or only as restricted to one dynasty – – not too difficult a problem since dates and names (which usually do not need to be translated) in the book can assist the cataloger in the determination of less-than-general coverage. But other instances would easily show that such transformation is difficult for the cataloger not skilled in a large number of languages. The point is analogous to the ease of translation from any of the several Eskimo words for snow-types into the English "snow", and the difficulty of the reverse operation.

I have shown in the appendix to my paper "The Universal Decimal Classification as candidate for Reclassification either on the Shelf or in the Catalog" (*Reclassification – – Rationale and Poblems* (College Park, School of Library and Information Services, University of Maryland, 1968), pp. 79–95) that a reasonable UDC code can be generated from summarization of nearly all the conceptual notes displayed in LC + DC + LCSH as assigned to particular books. This may seem to demonstrate the opposite of the axiom of discriminateness enunciated above, in that since UDC is taken as the more discriminating system it should not be transformable-into from less discriminating systems; but in fact it shows that none of the three less discriminating systems are capable of displaying all the conceptual notes displayable by UDC – – that one needs to use codes from several systems, summarized, to give the same or even nearly as good a discrimination as is possible with UDC.

Perhaps a UDC code can be automatically transformed (even though only partially – – this by definition, indeed – –) into a DC, LC, or LCSH code; but this automaticity can only be demonstrated by an algorithm that I do not propose to develop here. But it can easily be shown that a UDC code (or, for that matter, a CC code) can be easily interpreted into one or several DC, LC, or LCSH codes, and therefore, in principle, into any other system less discriminating than UDC.

The advent of UBC would be rendered far more beneficial to librarians around the world, and thus far more beneficial to library users around the world, if in addition to descriptive data the catalog records included subject data in terms of a system which can neutrally reveal to the local cataloger the subject of the book in a code easily interpreted into the system of subject access in use at that particular library. There exists no system of discriminativeness great enough to challenge UDC. It is therefore imperative (a) that planning for such subject-data inclusion begin before ISBD-use progresses to the point of making UBC a reality, and (b) that UDC's parent organization (FID) assure uniformity in the application of UDC by appropriate revision and issuance of use-control guidelines. Jean Perreault

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