Editorial

Interest in Classification

Sometimes I ask myself, why it is that some people seem to have a great interest in the organization of knowledge, or in short, in classification and others none at all? Is it not a general inborn feature of mankind to love, seek and create order? Or is it rather a special feature which only a few people can possess, maybe those who come from a certain star where order plays a most important role?

To judge by my experience, I find that the distribution of people interested in classification is rather thin. I am even asking myself whether we should continue to publish this journal as the subscribers never exceeded 550 and we are struggling very hard indeed to keep it going.

But why am I asking these questions? In my opinion, nothing happens by chance, everything has a meaning. And the fact in this issue two articles were submitted by two Indians from the same city and institution and two other articles by two Danes also from the same city and institution is probably not without some reason and significance.

We all know S.R.Ranganathan and his world-wide influence in our field of knowledge. The school of thought in classification which he created in India has brought many an excellent fruit visible in the teachers still active at his foundation, the Documentation Research and Training Center (DRTC) in Bangalore, visible also in the many dissertations having been produced at Indian universities. A first account of all of them is now available through the article by D.R.Sharma in (1). Among 54 on all subjects of library science (from 10 universities in India with respective PhD programs) there are 12 in the field of classification and indexing! Their list is included in the Section FID/CR News of this issue.

The two youngest PhDs in our field, Dr.S.Seetharama ("Compatibility among Medical Classification Systems") and Dr.F. Devadason ("Computerization of Deep Structure Based Indexes") are presenting the findings of their research in this issue and any comments from you on their work would surely be very welcome.

What Ranganathan had found, written, and built up in the thirties and forties of this century in different places in India (such as Madras, Delhi, Varanasi) was brought to England by Mr.B.I.Palmer who had met Ranganathan during his war service in India and who was "fired with enthusiasm for Ranganathan's ideas" – as Douglas Foskett recently put it in the 12th Bulletin of the Classification Research Group (2). Palmer became the founder chairman of the CRG in 1949 in London and on the basis of the work of this group it was possible to organize the first Classification Conference in Dorking, England, 1957.

It is not appropriate here to go deeper into the historical development and sketch out also the influence of Eric de Grolier in the establishment of a Classification Research Committee of the FID (FID/CR) after World War II,.since all of this can be read in (3). What matters in this context is the fact that after the Ranganathan Era of Chairmanship of FID/CR (1951–1960) it happened at the FID Conference in London 1961 that Rasmus Mölgaard-Hansen from Denmark became its chairman. Here we encounter again a strong interest which a representative from a comparatively small country took in classification which led to the most remarkable Elsinore Classification Conference 1964 and another very fruitful time for FID/CR. Therefore it may well be that the articles by J.B.Friis-Hansen who reports on the development of classification in Denmark from 1975–1985 and T. Johansen ("An outline of a non-linguistic approach to subject relationships") can also be regarded as expressions of a strong interest from the part of their country.

It is somehow also most inspiring to note that the British CRG has already had its 250th meeting and that this group has met regularly 6 times a year for over 35 years! The list of its 35 members reveals that 8 are from abroad: from Denmark 3 (!), from USA 2, from Germany 2, and from India 1.

Where are all of these reflections leading us to? Naturally much more sincere interest in classification exists than what is visible through the work of the few representatives in these centers and groups. Organization of knowledge is the most important activity of all our scientific and information activities, as nobody can succeed without having established order beforehand - and the better he knows the ordering methods and applies them, the easier becomes his work.

If this is not commonly accepted, I would like to challenge all recipients of this journal in all of the almost 60 countries to which it goes and all colleagues deeply interested in our field to work towards promoting the knowledge of our discipline.

An expression of such an interest may be manifested at the forthcoming 5th International Study Conference on Classification Research foreseen for 1987. Two regional conferences of FID/CR will precede this event, the first one, on Nov. 15, 1985 will take place in New Delhi and the second one on Sept. 12–13, 1986 in Montréal. Both conferences will deal with questions of communication and classification, more or less directed towards application of classification methods to the capabilities of the new technological devices and media.

This Editorial was of course not meant to replace a Call for Papers, however, I think I can already now turn to interested readers with the following questions: What should be the topic of the 5th Study Conference on Classification Research in 1987? Where and when should it take place? Everything is still open, however, we have thought that "the coming of age" which Eric de Grolier mentioned about FID/CR in 1982 (something like "From Classification Research to Classification Science") might find its expression at least in one section of this conference which could be devoted to the reflection on the contents of our field in order to be able to establish model teaching programs for the different purposes of classification application in the different schools and universities.

May I ask those with a really strong interest in our emerging scientific discipline to send us their proposals for a good topic for this forthcoming international event, for a nice place (it need not be in the Federal Republic of Germany) and for the most fitting time and, last but not least, for the paper which each of you might like to contribute to the 5th International Study Conference!

Ingetraut Dahlberg

(1) Sharma, D.R.: Doctoral Theses in Library Science. Herald of Library Science 24 (1985) No. 1–2, p. 62–67
(2) Foskett, D.J.: Classification Research Group. Bulletin No.12. J. Doc. 4 (1985) No. 2, p. 75–99
(3) Dahlberg, I.: 35 Years of FID/CR. Int. Forum Inform. Doc. 6 (1981) No. 3, p. 20–26

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