

Book Reviews

The Catalogue and the Theory, or, Is Order Almost a Philosophy?

On Jean M. Perreault's Lectures "The Idea of Order in Bibliography"¹

...if we are librarians to any purpose other than making a living, it is for and through subject cataloging and classifying, and that if not we are at the most either dusty antiquaries or public-relation smilers."

Jean M. Perreault

The Occasion

Within the framework of the Sarada Ranganathan Lectures, Jean M. Perreault gave six lectures under the summary title "The Idea of Order in Bibliography"² at the Documentation Research and Training Centre in Bangalore in December 1975. It was the ninth event of this kind. Prior to this, distinguished English, American, and Indian library scientists had given lecture series on various subjects. Other speakers followed, among them Ingetraut Dahlberg from the Federal Republic of Germany (1977) whose subject was "Ontical Structures and Universal Classification". Up to 1975, classification had been treated three times in the "Lectures". Did Perreault also take up this scheme? The quotation from the fifth lecture which serves as a motto that expresses a high regard for library subject analysis, would let us suppose so. Well, we shall see...

According to a short biography³, Jean M. Perreault was trained in the USA. For some time he worked in University Libraries where he became more and more involved in cataloguing, classification and information retrieval, especially with the aid of computers. Finally, he also taught at the Library School of the University of Maryland and at other universities. One result of his comparative study of universal classification systems was the conference paper presented at the FID Congress in 1965 ("Categories and Relators") which included a proposal which later underwent a five-year test by the FID for which VINITI, among others, showed great interest. But Perreault is not only a librarian. Music and, above all, philosophy have also claimed his interest, a fact that we should always keep in mind when looking at his lectures on "The Idea of Order". His philosophic background is neo-scholastic, but he is not limited to the school of thought. The subject of his theses was Hegel's natural philosophy, and he has devoted a great deal of his time to the existentialists.

Nevertheless, he has remained keenly interested in library sciences, the titles of two of his papers in the sixties being "The Classification of Philosophy" and "An Example of Conventional Title Cataloging". This must make us sit up and take notice! Does the latter title not point to alphabetic cataloguing? But perhaps this dualistic separation - here Subject Catalogue there Alphabetic Catalogue - is out of place. Just as Perreault is the declared opponent of a "divided catalogue", so we should try to think less "library" and less "divided"; for,

in the long run, such a well-worn, subject-oriented way of thinking can only lead to a cataloguing practice which is not particularly helpful to the user. Before we waste our breath explaining over and over again to new library users the difference between Subject Catalogue and Alphabetic Catalogue, we should at least try to offer the information in one literature retrieval instrument that does not demand mental contortions from the user. Cutter's Dictionary Catalogue, once so revered in the USA, found but few friends in German libraries; but is that a reason for not re-considering Cutter's retrieval principles? After all, the use of EDP today offers new possibilities for cataloguing!

Catalogue Function. Linear Order or Structure?

We have got a little bit away from the point. "Order" is Perreault's theme; there must be order in all types of catalogue if you want to find anything at all. Let us return to Perreault! He discusses the main functions of a library catalogue according to Cutter and defines them as follows:

- (1) It (the catalogue) must make it possible for the user to find a book, the author or the title of which is known.
(Commentary: This is the function of a pure "finding list" and, from a historical point of view, the original one. However, opinions differ as to whether this is the primary function today.)
- (2) It must show (a) what a library has of a given author, (b) which editions of a specific work it has.
(Commentary: This necessitates literary units ("works") being brought together.)

Cutter's version⁴ is slightly different, the functions of the Dictionary Catalogue being

- (1) To enable a person to find a book of which either
 - (a) the author is known
 - (b) the title is known
 - (c) the subject is known
- (2) To show what a library has
 - (d) by a given author
 - (e) in a given subject
 - (f) in a given kind of literature
- (3) To assist in the choice of a book
 - (g) as to its edition (bibliographically)
 - (h) as to its character (literary or topical)

It is interesting to see that Perreault does not mention those functions which have to do with aspects of subject retrieval (c, e, f, h). He is mainly concerned with the problems of alphabetic cataloguing.

Today, the experts, on the whole, agree that the Alphabetic Catalogue must answer three questions:

- (1) Does the library have a specific edition of a work the title of which is known?
- (2) Which works of a given author are in the library?
- (3) Which editions of a specific work does the library have?

This sequence can be conceived as a hierarchy, and in consequence of this the following formulation is to be found in the RAK § 101⁵: The primary function of the Alphabetic Catalogue should be that of a "finding list" - in accordance with Cutter if his term "book" is interpreted as "edition". Perreault has reservations: to fulfil this primary function it would seem that a "simple" sorting of the information given in the authors' names and the titles of their books and which a computer could deal with would suffice; but if a "finding list" bases solely on the "book" and not on the "works", this will lead to discrepancies in the catalogue and to loss of

information in the search. Finding answers to the questions using the Alphabetic Catalogue is made more difficult in practice due to the fact that

- a lot of works have more than one author
- a lot of authors have more than one name
- some names occur in more than one form
- some works have more than one subject title.

Is then Perreault not right to diverge from the opinion that it is possible simply to catalogue straight from the title page and that the information found there would then be sufficient to constitute a catalogue? Limiting information to that found on the title page, could not, in his opinion, even optimally fulfil the function of the "finding list" let alone that of bringing together the works of a given author. It would be necessary to verify the information in the book itself, seek further information in lexica, and then find headings for the bibliographic descriptions. Must we not concede that Perreault is right? Only those headings which are made according to certain rules with the principle used by the cataloguing librarian will give the catalogue order, a structure which will be of help to the user, and will make the catalogue a reliable search medium - otherwise, it will remain an amorphous mass of bibliographical title descriptions with a formal order resulting from purely descriptive entries. After all that, we surely do not need to consider any longer whether Perreault's committed and censoring conclusion is right: what we must catalogue, is not the title page, but the text. This every good subject-cataloguer knows; how, then can the descriptive cataloguers dare to think otherwise?

Relatio est fundamentum veritatis

Structure and order - let us see what Perreault understands by this. According to Perreault, order, as used in the social sphere, is not absolute or natural, but always conventional, arbitrarily determined, arranged. If there is no natural method, no normal way of making certain decisions about order (e.g. about what effect a hyphen in an order word has on its ordering), how, then is order created? By using certain principles! Perreault enumerates as fundamental principles:

- *Uniformity and Consistency* as the supreme rule in all decisions and their consequences in practice;
- *the General before the Specific* as the universally valid principle which may also serve as a guideline in library order processes, for example in classification, but also in the ordering of entries in the Alphabetic Catalogue according to the formula "nothing before something" whereby "nothing" stands for the general and "something" for the additions. For example, "German" comes before "German State Railway";
- *Part-Whole-Relationship* which is not only important for classification.

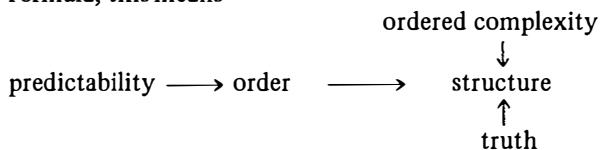
In descriptive cataloguing, the librarian concentrates on the part (the entry of the title of a book), this part is integrated in the whole (the catalogue) in such a way that the retrieval of the part is possible. What counts here is that the whole must dominate each and every part in such a way that it allocates to each part its appropriate place in the whole. In doing so, it must be taken into account that the problem of classifying the title entries in the catalogue can *not* be separated from the problem of structuring the title entry, i.e. the

way in which the entry (particularly the structuring of the heading) is made has an effect on the ordering of the entries. Perreault postulates in this connexion the following dependences: the fulfilment of the social purpose of a library depends to a large extent on the retrieval of information; Information retrieval depends on the structure of the catalogue order: this, again, depends on the structure of the headings.

Not only librarians, but e.g. philosophers, too, as Perreault believes, are inclined to think that the sequence is to be regarded as the model and the essence of order - which is a fallacy. Perreault describes order as the relation between the parts of a great variety which must lead to the structure. Structure is, however, much more than linear order: it is "ordered complexity" embodied in the whole (the catalogue) in which the single unit (the title entry) is usefully (for the search) embedded. "Philosophic insight" is the foundation of Perreault's expositions. He is convinced that "truth" lies in the structured state, and quotes in this connexion Leibniz: "Relatio est fundamentum veritatis", which leads to the conclusion: "the single unit obtains its sense only out of the idea of the whole".

Predictability

The possibility to predict where something which is being looked for can be found and used is, for Perreault, the central theme of all library control and subject retrieval. The availability of a piece of information, of a document, depends on the structure of the library stock and the catalogues (as arrangements of the document surrogate = title entry). In the principle of order lies the fulfilment of predictability. Reduced to a formula, this means



"Let us catalogue and order with one aim (telos), one purpose: -

predictability!" In this his appeal to librarians, Perreault once again points out that the best guarantee for predictability is the structure, the ordered complexity as "the harmony between headings, references and title descriptions".

The Idea

Perreault maintains that order in the library catalogue - as far as it is not a question of classification - depends on principles which have been hardly researched, let alone expounded. How far this statement was true at the time of the "Lectures" is an open question. At any rate, he investigates the principles of order in formal cataloguing, taking a critical and detailed look at the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) and the Prussian instructions. Unfortunately, Perreault obviously did not yet know the RAK; unfortunately, as during the process of setting up these rules, problems of order were discussed very thoroughly and extensively codified. Although Perreault, in his analysis, delves deeply into the details of order practice, he leaves us in no doubt that what is important for him is the investigation

of fundamental questions and that philosophy is the perspective from which he approaches his subject, a fact which is clearly discernible in the title of his lectures: "The Idea of Order...". In consequence of this, he constantly draws on statements made by prominent philosophers through the ages, from antiquity, through the Church Fathers of the Middle Ages, up to the existentialists and other philosophers of our times, but excluding Marxists. It is certainly no accident that Perreault often refers to Henri Bergson whose philosophy places intuition above the intellect and teaches that it is through intuition that knowledge of all life may be achieved, a philosophy which forges a link with Ranganathan in whose classification theory intuitive insights in many respects also play a role. But Perreault goes much further as the following two examples demonstrate. Turning to St. Augustine's "De civitate Dei", Perreault gives us what he terms, the peace of all things, a distribution in which every element has been given its allocated place in harmony. In another context, Perreault turns to Leibniz's philosophy of "pre-established harmony", seeing the "teleological" monads as in some way analogous to the elements of a catalogue with their interrelations. To put it mildly, this is taking things a bit too far!

The Result

A philosophy of catalogue order? Perhaps Perreault was the victim of a subconscious compulsion! Impressed by Ranganathan's work which has its "hidden roots" (as Ranganathan himself once put it) in Hindu philosophy and which in many respects is coloured - in the theoretical aspects - by philosophic ambition, even though some of these (e.g. concerning the formula PMEST) had to be retracted, and impressed by the occasion of a series of lectures in revered commemoration of Ranganathan, Perreault made the attempt to create a kind of philosophic theory of the Alphabetic Catalogue, to a certain extent as a counterpart to Ranganathan's Theory of the Systematic Catalogue (a comment in the short biography points this way!). In the course of this attempt, Perreault the Philosopher got the upperhand over Perreault the Librarian. A good catalogue theory does not need to be justified or substantiated in philosophy as the excellent work of the Hungarian AC expert A. Domanovsky, proves. It does, however remain Perreault's credit to be the first to make the problem of library order the main subject of an investigation.

Herbert H. Hoffmann⁶ and, in particular, Klaus Haller⁷, who has gone into the whole complex of formal catalogues and formal ordering methods more intensively and extensively, are but two who have followed in Perreault's footsteps. Perreault has set new impulses in motion for the principles of ordering, and that not only from a library-empiric point of view.

As yet, the RAK has not come up with an optimal solution to all problems of order, and with the increased use of EDP in routine order processes we are forced to think again about many of the items which were valid up to now. This, once again, is reason enough to turn to Perreault, whose discourses are still worth reading today.

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Notes and References:

- 1 Translated from the German with kind permission of the publishers of the *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, DDR, where the review appeared in Vol.I'00(1986)No.11, p.504-508
- 2 Perreault, J.M.: *The Idea of Order in Bibliography*. Bangalore: Sarada Ranganathan Endowment of Library Science 1978. 135p. = Sarada Ranganathan Lectures 9, 1975.
- 3 See (2), p.XIII
- 4 Cutter, Charles A.: *Rules for a printed Dictionary Catalog*. 4th ed. Boston 1904.
- 5 RAK = Regeln für den Alphabetischen Katalog (Rules for the alphabetic catalogue)
- 6 Hoffmann, Herbert H.: *What happens in library filing?* Hamden, Conn. 1976. 176p.
- 7 Haller, Klaus: *Katalogkunde: Formalkataloge und formale Ordnungsmethoden*. 2.Aufl. München u.a. 1983.

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SOERGEL, Dagobert: *Organizing Information: Principles of Data Base and Retrieval Systems*. Orlando, Florida: Academic Press 1985, 450 p., ISBN 0-12-654260-0.

Dagobert Soergel developed *Organizing Information: Principles of Data Base and Retrieval Systems* over 10 years. During this time he was teaching the subject matter of the book in classes at the University of Maryland College of Library and Information Services. Soergel is well-known for his classes which focus on careful analysis of the foundations of Information Storage And Retrieval (ISAR). More particularly, he is famous for his work on building and maintaining thesauri. His earlier book, entitled *Indexing Languages and Thesauri: Construction and Maintenance* (1), is one of the best books on the subject of building thesauri. Soergel's new book reflects his talent for thoughtful abstraction on the complex field of information science from a librarian's perspective. Furthermore, his special interest in thesauri is evident in the theme and content of the book which focuses on ISAR systems where thesauri are the key to the organization of the information in the system. The book has five major sections: 1) The Systems Approach to Information Transfer, 2) Objectives of ISAR Systems, 3) Data Schemas and Data Structures, 4) Index Language Functions and Structure, and 5) ISAR Systems Operation and Design.

The first major section of the book describes the nature and structure of information, with distinctions being made between data, information, and knowledge. That same section provides definitions for the major entities to be elaborated throughout the book, including the entities of "thesaurus", "query", and "indexing". The second section of the book emphasizes the importance of recognizing a goal in the course of designing and evaluating an ISAR system. The multi-dimensional characteristics of an ISAR system are delineated and related to user satisfaction. For instance, the selection of documents to include in the system certainly effects the user satisfaction with the retrieval that the system provides. On the other hand, the ease of interacting with the ISAR may at times be as important to the user as the documents which the ISAR returns. Precision and re-