

Classification System for Linguistics and Languages

Bibliographical Classification System for Linguistics and Languages. By George L. Trager. Washington, D.C., 1946. (Reprinted from *Studies in Linguistics* 3:54-108, 1945; 4:1-50, 1946.)

Any work, whether intellectual or otherwise, must be judged on the basis of its vowed aim. If it fulfils this aim well, the work must be adjudged excellent to the extent that we are prepared to view the aim itself with favor. Mr. Trager has set himself the task of preparing a classification system for linguistics and for languages—clearly a commendable undertaking. As a practicing linguist of broad interests and wide experience, he must have long felt the need for a more up-to-date and linguistically more satisfying organization of his field than the schemes provided by Dewey and the Library of Congress. It is, therefore, not surprising at all that the present work goes back to 1930, and it is, likewise, in the best tradition of scholarship that the author did not see fit to publish it until it had been thoroughly tested by years of use.

As a classification for linguists, Trager's work is concerned with two main problems: the classification of languages and the classification of linguistic materials. The classification of languages presupposes not only the listing of all the languages known but even more so their proper interrelation and grouping within language families and classes. It is on this point that Trager's work shows the greatest departure from the prevailing library classifications. Linguistically considered, the English language with its tremendous literature is only one of several languages in the Indo-European family, just as, for instance, Livonian with only about a score of publications is a full-fledged member of the Finno-Ugrian family. The amount of available material, the quantitative aspect, counts not at all in the grouping of languages within a family, and the families themselves within the classification follow the logical sequence of their historical development. In other words, the classification takes full account of relationship, development, and origin.

A feature of the greatest interest is Trager's practice of citing authority for his

classification. The over-all grouping of linguistic families and languages follows the excellent and authoritative works of Meillet and Cohen, *Les langues du monde* (Paris, 1924) and Kieckers, *Die Sprachstamme der Erde* (Heidelberg, 1931). Nothing more comprehensive has ever appeared in print. Even more important, however, are the references to authorities to the less-well-known but equally basic studies of individual languages and language families, such as Endzelin, *Lettsische Grammatik* (Riga, 1922) and Szinnyi, *Finnisch-Ugrische Sprachwissenschaft* (Berlin, 1922). The amount of exact dialect information thus recorded in systematic order is a unique feature of this classification system.

The point on which Trager's system has most profited from existing library classifications is the classification of linguistic materials in general. We might almost say that this is very largely a workmanlike amalgamation of the most useful features of the Dewey and the Library of Congress schemes. The geographical tables, excellent and logical as they are, are not altogether satisfactory because they are too closely related to political rather than to linguistic and cultural needs. Then, too, they are in need of considerable expansion. The notation also leaves something to be desired, especially as regards the somewhat confusing use of the decimal point and the apostrophe. It may well be that a closer study of the form divisions of the Universal Decimal Classification may have suggested to the author ways and means of procedure less confusing to the uninitiated.

There is no question at all as to the usefulness of Trager's classification to the linguist. It has once and for all done away with the oversimplified "form of speech" classification (isolating, agglutinating, inflective) and substituted the much less pretentious but at the same time more scientific "genealogical" system. The librarian, however, will not be in a position to derive much profit from it. For the very point which makes it excellent for the linguist—its scientific impartiality—will make it hard to use in a library where the bulk and preponderance of material is always a major factor in

classification. On one question, however, Trager's work is bound to exert a considerable and beneficial influence: it will enable the classifier to place a little known or even an

unknown language in its proper relation to others with much more certainty and dispatch than has been possible up to this time. Arthur B. Berthold.

Guide to Business Materials

Guides to the Harvard Libraries. No. 1: Economics and Business. By Arthur H. Cole. Cambridge, Harvard University Library, 1947. x, 64p.

The size and complexity of the modern university library, with its resources scattered in many branch libraries and special collections, often embracing overlapping subject fields, has created the well-recognized problem of how to impart to the research worker knowledge essential to the location and use of his materials. The issuance by various libraries of handbooks, general descriptions of their collections, lists of bibliographical tools in subject fields, and instructions in methods of research have been attempts to meet this problem.

Arthur H. Cole, librarian of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, in *Guides to the Harvard Libraries, No. 1: Economics and Business*, has combined these four approaches to produce what should prove to be a most effective and useful manual for the graduate student in business or economics at Harvard.

The manual has four sections: I. Library Facilities; II. Library Tools; III. Practical Applications; IV. Special Fields of Economics and Business.

In Section I Cole describes briefly the Harvard library system and lists other libraries in the Cambridge and Boston area of interest to students of economics and business, together with pertinent information concerning their holdings and availability. There follows a description of the collections in Harvard libraries which contain materials in economics, business, and related fields, with particular reference to the Widener Library and the Library of the Graduate School of Business Administration. The purposes of these libraries, their fields, the special types of material they contain, and their distinctive characteristics are set down with enough detail to give the reader a good working knowledge of the resources of each one. The

second portion of the section, on "The Effective Use of the Basic Libraries," takes up in order of use, what the author calls the "several depths" or "strata" which must be penetrated to reach all the material that can be secured on a given subject—the card catalogs, the bibliographical collection, the stacks, the reference department, interlibrary loan, microfilm, and book purchase. A noteworthy feature of the descriptions of the public and union catalogs is the care with which their limitations are pointed out, by the detailing of the types of material not included at all. Too often instruction in the use of the catalog leaves the impression that everything is there if the student only knows how to find it.

In Section II Dr. Cole lists and characterizes basic bibliographical tools. Included are guides to government documents (the Library of Congress *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* is omitted), guides to theses, printed catalogs of large libraries, trade bibliography and periodical indexes. The works cited here, as well as all other titles mentioned in the guide, are listed, with full bibliographical information, at the end of the manual.

Section III, on "Locating a Particular Work" and "Preparation of a Bibliography," contains much sound, practical advice. One hopes, however, that the graduate student will not be discouraged by the example of the hard-to-find item that the author takes through all possible tools, in order to illustrate the use and extent of each. The reviewer was slightly troubled by the fact that although at the beginning "the work sought is assumed to be a printed item of substantial size, not a pamphlet or broadside or map, and not a part of a series, a magazine article, or a government document," we later find the student, having exhausted all possible tools for monographic literature, exploring the possibility that the item is a magazine article, a serial, or a government document. We