

## The Vatican Cataloging Rules

*The Vatican Library: Rules for the Catalog of Printed Books.* Translated from the 2nd Italian edition by the Very Rev. Thomas J. Shanahan, Victor A. Schaefer, Constantin T. Vesselowsky. Edited by Wyllis E. Wright. Chicago, American Library Association, 1948, xii, 426p. (Reproduced by offset from typewritten copy.) \$18.00.

Eighteen years have gone by since the first edition of the Vatican Library's *Norme* reached these shores and received an enthusiastic welcome: "Perhaps the best of modern cataloging codes" (W. W. Bishop); "The world's best code of rules" (C. J. Farrell); "When this code is translated into English it will no doubt be very much used in American libraries" (H. D. MacPherson) were among the printed encomiums. Now at long last here is the eagerly awaited translation. What does it look like? How does it read? Is it as good as we had thought it was?

Before an attempt is made to answer these questions something should be said as to the reason for the delay in the publication of this volume. Since the *Norme* more nearly codified American practice than any of our own books available at that time, one would have thought the much needed translation would have appeared at once. In the editor's "Foreword" it is thus explained:

"After some years of discussion and postponement a translation representing the joint work of the Very Rev. Thomas J. Shanahan, Mr. Victor A. Schaefer, and Mr. Constantin T. Vesselowsky was accepted for publication by the American Library Association. The Editor was requested to review these three parts, and to harmonize the methods followed in preparing them. A survey of the work done disclosed that it had been in part an adaptation of the Vatican rules to American usage. It was agreed that a literal translation was more advisable, since the early publication of the revised Anglo-American rules, which would cover the same ground with equal thoroughness, was expected. No sooner was the revision along these lines begun than the second edition of the Vatican rules appeared (1939), and the entire translation was reworked to conform to the new edition. Although the translation was com-

pleted in 1940, publication at that time proved impossible because of the war."

But here it is—a large but manageable volume, handsomely and strongly bound in gold-lettered red buckram. Produced by offset, a method of reproduction that often results in letters too small for eye comfort and in page layout too compressed for clarity, neither fault is here found. In fact, quite the contrary. Neatly set forth in pica size type the page is as well spaced and attractive as the usual typeset book. Insofar as a reproduction from typewritten copy can be made into a luxurious appearing volume, this one is. Unfortunately inking is uneven (at least in the reviewer's copy) with some pages very black and others so lightly impressed that occasionally letters do not appear at all. On the whole, however, it is an excellent piece of bookmaking.

The translation itself is accurate and so smoothly and tersely expressed that sometimes the wording is clearer and more concise than in comparable rules of the A.L.A. code. There are a few trifling inconsistencies, such as inability to distinguish always between an original footnote and an editorial one. A little more annoying is the failure in some cases to translate examples. While the reader is told that "2.ed.di" means "2.ed. of" he is left to wonder as to the meaning of such expressions as, "*Titolo dell' occhietto.*" These are minor defects. In general the text reads so smoothly that one is scarcely aware of its being a translation. It might well be an original English work but for the preponderance of examples in Italian.

The *Rules* are divided into four main sections: "Entry Word" (mainly translated by Father Shanahan); "Description of the Book" (translated by Mr. Schaefer); "Subject Entry" (Mr. Vesselowsky's contribution); "Filing" (also by Father Shanahan). Translation of definitions and material in the various appendices was the work of the editor and Father Shanahan.

In 1931, when the first edition of the *Norme* appeared, about the only American publication to which it could be compared was our *Rules* of 1908. Nor had this situation changed eight years later when the Vatican Library issued its second edition. Therefore reviewers of the two original editions

were concerned mainly with comparing their rules of entry with those in the 1908 code, not only to point out the expansion and clarification of types of entries included in the Vatican code but also to list a long line of subjects fully treated therein and not even mentioned in our own. No wonder we felt bound to attempt to master the Italian language! American catalogers have not stood still during this long period and now there is an imposing array of publications against which the Vatican *Rules* can be measured and evaluated. At the head of the list both in time and importance stands the second edition of the *A.L.A. Catalog Rules* (preliminary ed., 1941; final edition, 1949). So detailed and comprehensive is it that even in one of the fields in which the Vatican *Rules* is fullest the American code can hold its own. Father Farrell, writing in the *Catholic Library World* (February 1942) comments: "Offhand, it appears to the reviewer that the revised A.L.A. rules now offer greater assistance in the cataloging of Catholic materials than do the Vatican rules." Thus have the tables been turned. One might also compare the seven pages devoted to music in the new A.L.A. code with the scant single page in the Vatican; or the few lines devoted to maps and atlases in the latter to the two and one-half pages of the other; or even to the American treatment of manuscripts—five and one-half pages against the Vatican's two. On the other hand, the Vatican *Rules* offers such aids as a long list of religious orders and congregations, together with their English equivalents and the key to the abbreviations by which they are so frequently cited. Helpful, too, is the list of apocryphal books of the Bible. But this is not the place for a rule-by-rule comparison. Nor does it seem necessary to more than mention that parts two and four of the Vatican *Rules* are now paralleled in American publications by the Library of Congress *Rules for Descriptive Cataloging* and the *A.L.A. Rules for Filing Catalog Cards*.

When we come to part III, "Subject Entry," the situation is quite different. Not since the days of Cutter's *Rules* (4th ed., 1904) has there been any attempt to codify this important and difficult part of cataloging. Valuable as is Cutter's code, especially in his careful explanations, much of his reasoning harks back to practices followed in the classified catalog. Many of the principles he enun-

ciates, with the Cutter charm and clarity, have long been abandoned in our huge dictionary catalogs. It is astonishing to find codified and systematized by European scholars much of the theory, up to now largely unexpressed, which lies behind the choice of terms made in the subject cataloging department of the Library of Congress and followed by catalogers across the land. Father Shanahan, in reviewing this section of the original editions, thus summarized it: "A reasoned outline, with many well-chosen examples of subject heading procedure which is familiar to us through long association, but which we might have difficulty in describing briefly to inquirers." (*Catholic Library World*, February 1940.) All of us who teach, be it in formal classes or as part of cataloging department procedure, know too well how great the difficulty is.

That catalogers had recognized the value of this section from the very beginning is evidenced by the number of persons who had been working on it. The editor tells us that in addition to Mr. Vesselowsky's translation, use was made of a partial restatement of the rules for English usage by John Ansteinson, the original author of this section and once a student at the library school in Albany. Also utilized was a translation prepared by Katharine Adams, formerly of the Baker Library, Harvard School of Business Administration, and an adaptation to Library of Congress practice prepared by Lawrence H. Bloedel while a student at the School of Library Service, Columbia University.

In order to make this section as useful as possible a different policy from that followed in the remainder of the volume was adopted. For these chapters both a translation and an adaptation are included, chiefly by supplying headings used by the Library of Congress, listed in parallel column to the Italian headings. When possible the English heading is merely a translation of the Italian. Otherwise an English term which illustrates the rule is used. In some cases, to avoid listing a long column of equivalent English expressions, reference is made to special lists issued by L.C.—for example, the subdivisions used under names of languages, general form divisions, etc.

The section on subject headings covers about 70 pages, divided into ten chapters: "Subject cards." Definitions, general directions; "Form of the heading." Singular *vs.*

plural, phrase headings, etc.; "Relations between subjects." Subject subdivision, compound headings, etc.; "Bibliographical and critical material." Includes relations between sovereigns and countries, between persons and events; "Corporate bodies." Includes treatment of their publications as well as material about them; "Geographical subjects;" "Historical periods and events;" "Language and Literature;" "Form headings;" "References for subject headings."

Systematically organized, clearly and concisely enunciated, copiously illustrated with helpful examples—need we ask that a code do any more. Probably it should not but the fact remains that we do need more. The very conciseness of the wording of the rules precludes much explanation and practically no reasons for the choice of terms, the part of Cutter's code which is the most valuable. It is fortunate for the beginner that many questions are answered by Julia Pettee's *Subject Headings* (N.Y., H. W. Wilson, 1946), the only book in English devoted entirely to this topic. By means of Part I of this book the beginner can be reasonably, interestingly and painlessly guided from his known world of encyclopedias to the *terra incognita* of subject headings. Likewise he will read of the evolution of the dictionary catalog, an account which gives meaning and reason to current practices not otherwise understandable.

After studying the "Vatican Code," full of questions as to reasons why, the student can again find help by using Part II of Miss Pettee's book—"Principles and Practice." For example, the code states: "Works are recorded under their specific subjects, and not under the names and designations of the classes and disciplines to which they belong" (Rule 374a). Miss Pettee explains under what types of headings and in what types of libraries this rule should be followed or modified. She also discusses "How specific must the specific topic be?" Going far beyond the scope of any code for subject headings Miss Pettee covers questions which are an essential part of the subject heading process. She considers subject headings both as a feature of the whole dictionary catalog and also in their relation to classification and the shelflist. Likewise she examines the nature of words as well as the nature of the clientele of the library.

The tools for the subject cataloger have been enormously benefited by the addition of these two publications, each one serving to supplement the other. The high price of the *Vatican Rules* is indeed unfortunate. In the opinion of the reviewer it would be eminently worthwhile to issue separately, at a reasonable price, these valuable and unique ten chapters on subject headings.—*Bertha M. Frick, School of Library Service, Columbia University.*

## Red Dog and Podunk

*Bibliography of Place Name Literature, United States, Canada, Alaska and Newfoundland.* By Richard B. Sealock and Pauline A. Seely. Chicago, American Library Association, 1948, [10], 331p. \$4.50.

The poetical and historical charm of our American place names was first brought home to me many years ago as I sat in the Minnesota Senate gallery in Saint Paul and heard the Speaker recognize the various senators as they arose to address the chair. He would say: "I recognize the gentleman from Lac Qui Parle County," or "the gentleman from Ottertail County" and I remembered that this was the country of the voyageur, of the trappers who mingled their quaint names with those left on the lakes and rivers by the Sioux and the Chippewas, the country of

the old fur brigades, sweeping down the Great Lakes toward Quebec with their winter's catch of pelts, dipping their paddles to the rhythm of "A la Clair Fontaine."

Each racial element has left its distinctive, poetical or whimsical mark on the place names of our frontiers even down to our own time, when we find such geographical monikers as Gene Autry, and New Deal, or mountains named for Churchill, Eisenhower and Stalin. Some of the queer people who lived on the edge of the wilderness are remembered in Big John's Spring, Crazy Woman, Mike Mountain Horse, Red Dog and White Woman Creek. Certain characteristics of the local citizens are perpetuated in the names they gave their settlements, such as Fairplay, Frugality, Hangtown, Hairy