

Efficiency of Indexing Systems

ASLIB Cranfield Research Project, Report on the First Stage of an Investigation into the Comparative Efficiency of Indexing Systems. By Cyril W. Cleverdon, Cranfield, England, College of Aeronautics, 1960. 166 p.

In 1957, the British National Science Foundation awarded a grant to ASLIB (Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux) to study the comparative efficiency of four indexing systems. The indexing systems selected were the Universal Decimal Classification, an alphabetic subject catalog, a faceted classification scheme, and a Uni-term system of coordinate indexing. This report covers the first phase of this study, the indexing of eighteen thousand journal articles and reports in the field of aeronautics. Two other variables were also selected for this experiment: the training of the indexer (whether technical knowledge of the subject but no indexing experience, indexing experience in the subject field, indexing experience in another subject field, or theoretical knowledge of indexing) and time allotted for indexing a document.

The detailed discussion of problems encountered in indexing should be required (though not easy) reading for anyone involved with installing or revising indexing systems. The U.D.C., faceted classification system, and alphabetic subject catalog are discussed extensively. The alphabetic subject catalog, for example, is discussed in terms of cross references, structure, relationship among component parts, word order, and specificity of subject headings. Cleverdon's decision on one of these points, the indication of relationships among component parts of a subject heading, warrants further discussion. This point can best be illustrated with an example. If the subject of missiles controlled by gyroscopes were to be indexed, subject headings with and without indications of relationships among the subject heading's component parts would be:

Missiles—controlled by—gyroscopes (with relationships)

Missiles—gyroscopes (without relationships).

The recent history of indexing systems is not without its paradoxes. Advocates of traditional indexing systems have cited as one of their systems' advantages the fact that relationships among component parts of the index entry can be brought out. In recent years attempts have been made to bring out relationships among concepts in coordinate indexing systems, thereby reducing the coordinate index's false drops (though also its flexibility). In this study Cleverdon decided to omit indications of relationships among component parts of the alphabetic subject headings in view of the difficulties involved. Whether an indication of relationships is required in either traditional or coordinate index entries will be answered at least in part in the second step of the study, the testing of the indexes with 1600 questions.

While merits and faults of indexing systems are reported on at great length, comparative studies of indexing systems based on experimental work are rare. Cleverdon's work is such a study and is a real contribution to our knowledge of the subject.—*Gerald Jahoda, Esso Research and Engineering Company, Linden, N. J.*

Guide to Art

Guide to Art Reference Books. By Mary W. Chamberlin. Chicago: ALA, 1959. xiv, 418p. \$10.00.

Until the appearance of this excellent guide neither the librarian nor the student working in the burgeoning field of art history had available a satisfactory English-language tool for finding the basic reference books and sources on the subject.

Mary Chamberlin, fine arts librarian at Columbia University, has surveyed the tremendous volume of literature in the field and skillfully selected a large core of titles that will help both the beginner and the advanced scholar locate authoritative information and materials. Her selection is based not only on long experience in art reference work during which she could observe actual use of the titles, but also on extensive personal use of American and European art libraries and on consultation with a considerable number of distinguished specialists. Her interpretation of the term reference books is a broad one and ranges all the way