

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 Unit-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

from useful introductory texts for the general reader to specialized collections of documents and sources basic for research. Her emphasis, clearer in her preface than in her title, is on materials for study and research in art history.

So vast indeed is the literature on art that a number of important limitations were considered essential. The six basic areas covered are architecture, sculpture, drawings, painting, prints and engravings, and applied arts. Many peripheral fields had to be omitted, including (among others) advertising art, book arts, landscape gardening, numismatics, and interior decoration. Much of special interest to this last area is to be found, however, in the section on applied arts. Also certain types of art books were excluded, among them how-to-do-it books and catalogs of museums, exhibitions, and private collections. Monographs on individual artists, monuments, and sites are understandably not included since even a selective guide covering these would constitute another whole volume. Some of these omissions will cause inevitable disappointment, but in many cases the reader will find in the *Guide* valuable leads to other sources for discovering them, including such titles as the still very useful 1952 *Harvard List of Books on Art* by E. Louise Lucas. Once the limitations of the *Guide* had been decided upon, there remained a tremendous amount of material from which to select for the areas the author proposed to cover. Given such a situation, it is inevitable that each serious user will find a favorite title or two not included, but the selection on the whole is extremely good.

Arrangement of the 2489 bibliographic items in the main part of this volume is by form and subject. Ten introductory sections, comprising nearly a third of the entries, cover general reference materials in the field. These include sections on such forms as bibliographies, indexes, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, and also on some types, especially important in art history and often elusive, such as sales records, reproductions, and iconography. These are followed by more extensive sections on each of the six basic subject areas, which in turn have their own subdivisions, both for kinds of reference books and for materials on individual countries or regions. Special lists of documents and sources, periodicals, and series complete the

main body of the *Guide*. An appendix describing some seventy-five art research libraries in the United States and Western Europe precedes in index.

It is, of course, very difficult to organize such a large body of material in a way that will satisfy all of its potential users. Many librarians will find its arrangement convenient because it to some extent reflects that of their own collections, but the specialist may not agree. The medievalist or the orientalist, for instance, will wish to find all his materials brought together regardless of media, and so will the scholar working on the art of a particular nation. Happily this problem is fairly easily overcome by the excellent and detailed index, the intelligent inclusion of cross references throughout the text, and the consistent inner arrangement of each of the subject sections.

Bibliographical description of each title in the *Guide* is full and the level of accuracy exceptionally high. Contents or special sections and features are noted when they might prove useful or shed light on the scope of the book. Exact page references are given for bibliographies and indexes, although it would seem that in many cases those for the latter might have been omitted unless the index were a divided one or had a special feature important enough to be emphasized. The brief and often qualitative annotations which accompany each entry include especially useful notes on other editions, translations, and related works.

The section on documents and sources will be a particularly valuable one for the advanced student beginning to specialize and for the librarian needing to go back to original sources. Collections in this important section cover a number of areas and require the use of the index or cross references to relate them to other material.

The selection of 250 art periodicals, although it omits museum bulletins, is a good one and made especially useful by notes regarding change of title and by indications of where the titles are indexed. Inclusive dates of indexing are given for the *Art Index* but not for the twenty other indexes cited.

The final bibliographical section is a list of more than a hundred art series, both current and discontinued. Because complete listings proved impractical, only representative titles appear under each entry and these

selections have not usually been included in the index since they are given simply to show the type of title to be found in each series.

The appendix on art research libraries brings together in one geographically arranged list those libraries and photographic archives most important for research. Since much of this material can be found elsewhere, although not conveniently, the strength of the section lies in the author's valuable notes on the collections. In most cases she was able to survey and evaluate them at first hand, and this record is particularly helpful.

One serious problem faced by both the compiler and publisher of such a work as this one is the need to have the book reasonably up-to-date at the time of publication. This is of special importance in an era of prolific publishing in the subject covered. In this case the terminal date of January 1, 1958 and the publication date of December 1959 leaves a gap of nearly two years. The prob-

lem has been partially met by the addition of a number of later titles, either published or announced while the volume was in production. While it made possible the inclusion of the new and important *Encyclopedia of World Art*, the difficulties in this procedure are reflected by the inclusion of such things as the publisher's projected contents for the Spanish *Ars Hispaniae* from which he has since deviated in actual publication, and Karpel's important bibliography on modern art, *Arts of the 20th Century*, which has been announced repeatedly for years but which still remains an aggravating ghost.

This criticism seems very minor, however, when viewed in the light of the total accomplishment of the *Guide* which is so well executed that it should create its own demand for some means of keeping it up to date. It is a significant contribution to art literature of which the author and the library profession can be immensely proud.—*Jean M. Moore, Art Librarian, University of California at Los Angeles.*

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