

Classification Research. Ed. by Pauline Atherton. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965. 563p. \$12. (65-24483).

To the overwhelming majority of American academic and public librarians, classification is known and valued only as a convenient device for arranging on the shelves the books and pamphlets that are their physical stock in trade. While they consider it desirable to find together all the books dealing with the same subject, the finer points of sequential arrangement of various subjects are frequently dismissed as being of relatively little importance. Whether, on the one hand, botany should be followed directly by agriculture, zoology by animal husbandry, physics by engineering, or, on the other hand, botany, zoology, and physics should be grouped together as natural sciences and should as a group precede the techniques associated with them, is an issue that is more important to the scholars than to the librarians. Committed as we are to the dictionary catalog with alphabetically arranged specific subject headings, we look upon the classification mainly as a system of addresses for locating individual books.

To such a public this book will be somewhat of a revelation. Here are the proceedings of the Second International Study Conference on Classification Research, held in Elsinore, Denmark, in September 1964, under the auspices of the International Federation of Documentation, or FID. (The first conference was held in Dorking, England, in 1957.) Assembled together were classificationists—the *aficionados*' name for classification-makers—and classification theorists from India, Poland, Britain, the United States, and points between. To the members of this group classification is a basic tool of information retrieval, not just book

or document retrieval. Their work utilizes mathematics, logic, semantics, sociology, engineering. Classification they define as "any method creating relations, generic or other, between individual semantic units, regardless of the degree in hierarchy contained in the systems and of whether those systems would be applied in connection with traditional or more or less mechanized methods of document searching." Their discussions are studded with phrases like *depth classification*, *theory of integrative levels*, *idea plane*, *notational plane*, *verbal plane*, *paradigmatic* and *syntagmatic relations*, *mathematical models*.

A study of the papers given at this conference and the discussions that followed will widen our horizons and stretch our brain cells; it will show why in parts of Asia and Europe classification is said to be the most if not the only truly professional activity in library and information science.

Of special interest to American librarians is Richard S. Angell's paper "On the Future of the Library of Congress Classification."

Pauline Atherton's editorial ministrations in transcribing and editing the tapes are masterly. She has combined work of authors, translators, and *rapporteurs* into a cohesive whole by altering "the discussant's words to fit my own taste and inclinations," and in extenuation quotes a colleague: "Why not print the words exactly in the confused and illogical order that they were conceived by those who uttered them? By suppressing the inanities and chopping out the vicious asides which are the most productive part of conferences, you editors create the impression that a conference is a sane, orderly process, an impression that drives impressionable youngsters into more interesting activities." Be that as it may, the printed record is impressive.—*Benjamin A. Custer, The Library of Congress.*

