

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Miksa, Francis L. *The Subject in the Dictionary Catalog from Cutter to the Present.* Chicago: American Library Assn., 1983. 496p. \$55. LC 83-2556 ISBN 0-8389-0367-3.

Francis Miksa has given us a truly major historical study of the role of subject headings in the dictionary catalog. The study confirms what we have always feared: the system of subject headings we use today is filled with contradictions. The character of these contradictions is identified through an analysis of the writings of many subject specialists—especially those of Charles Cutter, J.C.M. Hanson, and David Haykin.

The analysis shows that the work of these specialists often derived from contradictory assumptions. As a consequence the present system represents a meld of headings and practices that were adopted at different times for different and often contradictory reasons. Accordingly, the user often cannot predict the most likely heading for the material he seeks. Not surprisingly, Miksa concludes that a subject catalog built upon a single system would be better, but the real value of this study is the way in which he identifies the major schools of thought that have gone into the present system.

For many readers, the most surprising part of Miksa's study is his interpretation of Cutter's subject rules as an internally consistent and logical system. The system fits well with the tenets of a single philosophical school, Scottish common sense realism. This philosophy was widely studied until well after the middle of the nineteenth century but, by the end of the cen-

tury, it was no longer so widely accepted.

Two of the more important differences between Cutter and Hanson were their criteria for the choice of a subject and subject name and their characterization of the catalog user.

Both men required that the choice of subject be the most specific subject but 'specific' is an ambiguous term. For Cutter, a subject was part of a recognized system of knowledge, and this fact was reflected in the fact that the subject had either a conventional or an individual name. If the topic of the book was not generally known by either a conventional or an individual name, then the terms describing the topic should be reviewed in order to determine which of these terms were conventional or individual names. The subject heading was then the most significant of these names. Thus, a book on the 'Ornithology of New England' was entered under 'New England' because an individual name had greater significance than a general name. Miksa's explication of Cutter's significance formula helps to clarify many of the puzzles which we find in Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*.

For Hanson, 'specific subject' meant a term or phrase that just exactly matched the topic of the work. If there were no conventional name for this topic, Hanson would introduce a new heading for the topic. Thus, Hanson introduced a great many new headings into the catalog.

Hanson also believed that the chief user of the catalog, at least for Library of Congress, was a scholar. Such a user would want to have an overview of books on related topics as well as a list of works on the

specific topic of inquiry. Accordingly, Hanson preferred to develop classed sequences in the catalog. This was often done by introducing subdivisions to already existing headings, and, perhaps not surprisingly, the public catalog often reflected the sequence of classes found in the library's classification schedules.

Charles Cutter, on the other hand, believed that the casual reader was the most constant user of the dictionary catalog. As a consequence, he believed that headings should be entered directly and, certainly, without topical subdivisions. The catalog included "see-also" references to assist the occasional scholar as well as to educate the casual reader by providing a means for learning of other related topics.

While Haykin did not necessarily do away with the existing classed headings, he did prefer phrases in direct form over inverted headings or headings with subdivisions. As a consequence, even though classed sequences remained in the catalog, the newer headings were in direct form, and many related topics were scattered throughout the alphabet. In addition, under Haykin, Library of Congress frequently assigned a set of subject headings to a single work. The set of headings was defined so as to match the subject of the work, but the individual headings were often broader than the work.

For many readers the most rewarding part of Miksa's study will be his rediscovery of the meaning of Cutter's subject rules. For when these rules are reinterpreted, it not only clarifies Cutter's words and restores our respect for the intellectual incisiveness of one of the founders of modern library science but also makes clear the inappropriateness of these rules for modern subject analysis.

But Miksa's study goes further. He explains the fact that our existing system is contradictory because it includes layers defined in terms of conflicting assumptions about the nature of a subject heading and the nature of the catalog user. Thus, Miksa not only helps us to understand our past but frees us from it by clarifying the basic contradictions of our present practices.—D. Kathryn Weintraub, *University of California, Irvine*.

World Librarianship: A Comparative Study. Ed. by Richard Krzys and Gaston Litton with the assistance of Ann Hewitt. New York: Dekker, 1983. 239p. \$38.50. LC 82-22213. ISBN 0-8247-1731-7.

This work is an addition to the literature focusing on comparative librarianship in the international perspective. The work is divided into three sections, "Philosophy and Theory," "The Study," and "Conclusions." The first is a detailed methodological statement outlining the editors' approach to comparative study in international librarianship, including a good deal of the historical background in the evolution of the methodology they have developed. The editors outline eight major objectives and attempt to reach their goals by analyzing nine geographic regions of the world, investigating eleven aspects of librarianship in each of these nine regions. The second section contains the results of their analysis followed by a brief conclusion.

The work itself is set into the context of no fewer than four key evolutionary terms introduced by the editors: metalibrarianism, world study in librarianship, global librarianship, and extraterrestrial librarianship. Since the definitions of these terms will most probably be unknown to many readers, it would be best to briefly note that metalibrarianism is defined as "the philosophy and theory underlying the practice of librarianship throughout the world" (p.3). World study in librarianship is defined as the process of comparative study itself (p.3-4). Global librarianship is library development "characterized by decision-making for the purpose of satisfying humanity's information needs rather than purely regional or national needs" (p.201). Extraterrestrial librarianship (p.203) will, it is expected, be a logical outgrowth of successful global librarianship.

The methodological framework for analysis in this study developed in the first section (p.3-53) is not well complemented by the second section (p.57-198) in which uneven area studies are put forth as a means for developing world study in librarianship. By uneven, it is meant that