Introduction

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In this series of papers on cataloging and classification and related matters, the authors have tried to adhere to the purpose of Library Trends, to recapitulate evaluatively current thought and practice, and to single out ideas and procedures which hold potentialities for future improvement. Some have been more historical than others, but since this is the first issue of the journal devoted exclusively to the topic in question, the editor has encouraged a backward look. Because cataloging and classification result in large and complex records and systems, which are expensive to change, it is difficult for many librarians to move rapidly in the acceptance of proposals which modify drastically current rules or practice. The historical background, therefore, is pivotal.

In earlier issues of Library Trends, some attention has been given to the technical services, including cataloging and classification. This is especially true of the first number, dealing with college and university libraries, which contains not only the paper by Wyllis E. Wright but also observations by other contributors on the relation of card catalogs to library service. Among the questions raised by the editor, Robert B. Downs, were several directly related to catalogs and their use. While earlier numbers of Library Trends were concerned with types of libraries, emphasis in the present issue is on certain functions and activities which appear in all.

Cataloging and classification aim at access to the resources for which vast sums are spent and which highly trained personnel are employed to administer, hence they deserve the continuous study members of the profession have given them. One cannot but be impressed with the literature on the subjects, as evident in the bibliographies included in the present set of papers. The catalogers themselves have been articulate, and administrators and others have also seen fit to put on Mr. Tauber is Professor of Library Service at the Columbia University School of Library Service.
record their ideas of catalogs and classification systems. There has been in the various publications of the American Library Association's Division of Cataloging and Classification, and particularly in its Journal of Cataloging and Classification, a determined effort to come to grips with problems of importance to the library profession. While there may be considerable repetition in the literature, there are sufficient glimmers of imagination to suggest that resolution of some of the questions is not too distant. Also, the Division’s Board on Cataloging Policy and Research has endeavored to initiate and stimulate pertinent investigations.¹

The papers included in this issue are concerned with eight areas: (1) rules of entry, (2) handling of complex materials, (3) subject headings, (4) classification, (5) organization and management, (6) relation to bibliographic aids, (7) training of personnel, and (8) cooperation and centralization. Together, they cover most aspects of the field.

One of the principal characteristics of cataloging practice is its reliance on rules. Despite the fact that cataloging has been referred to as an art these rules, as Seymour Lubetzky points out, have shaped our catalogs and determined their usefulness. Lubetzky has traced the development of rules of entry and has shown how the multiplication of books and publications in various other forms has had a direct effect upon the proliferation of the rules. His important document, Cataloging Rules and Principles, issued by the Library of Congress in May 1953, provides a basis for discussing possible revision of the rules. The trend is definitely to prepare a code which will be better suited to meet the modern needs of catalogers. Knowledge of principles and the exercise of judgment are the earmarks of professional practice; and in descriptive cataloging generally, as well as in the establishment of entries, the implication in simplifying rules is to allow the cataloger to exercise discretion.

Although Lubetzky’s paper points to the need for reconsideration of the rules and principles of cataloging generally, the urgency of handling special types of materials has prompted librarians to set up certain guides for organizing archives, manuscripts, and audio-visual items. Evelyn Hensel has traced the development of the several approaches and the compilation of codes for the cataloging of nonbook materials. The recent publication by the Library of Congress of rules for the descriptive cataloging of phonorecords and motion pictures and filmstrips is particularly noteworthy in this connection. Another devel-
opment which is beginning to receive systematic attention is the rec-
cording and organizing of technical reports. Violet Cabeen and Donald
Cook discuss this problem. A workshop on technical reports was held
at the Catholic University of America during the week of April 13-18,
1953. Questions of security control likewise have placed new responsi-
bilities on librarians.

Matters of entry and organization have also been a concern of those
who work with serials and published documents. Mrs. Cabeen and
Mr. Cook have carefully reviewed and described the growth and
nature of collections of serials and government publications in libraries,
in their relations to technical problems of record and arrangement.
In the field of serials, the appearance of Serial Slants as a guide and
outlet for discussion should be noted. Various publications issued by
the Library of Congress, such as Serial Titles Newly Received, are
helpful in dealing with serials. Documents, including those issued by
the United Nations, continue to present problems because of their
multiplicity and complexity. The expansion of the number of titles
issued through microfilming, microprinting, and microcarding has
added special questions in processing.

American librarians have always taken pride in their development of
subject cataloging as an aid to users. Whether subject entries appear
in a dictionary, divided, or classified catalog, they have been assembled,
at considerable expense, in order to be used. Carlyle Frarey has di-
rected attention to several recent discussions of subject heading prac-
tice. The field is currently wide open; and academic, public, special,
and school librarians have a stake in the solutions to the many prob-
lems which are referred to by Frarey. Attention is especially called to
the volume, The Subject Analysis of Library Materials, issued earlier
this year, which contains discussions on the various problem areas.

Subject headings represent one way of revealing the contents of
library resources. Another instrument is classification. Bernard Palmer
has presented the readers of Library Trends with a consideration of
fundamentals of classification. His point of view, and particularly his
discussion of the Colon Classification, should be particularly interest-
ing, since it differs from that of many American librarians. While class-
ification probably does not occupy the place it once held in American
librarianship, the development of special classifications continues.
Moreover, efforts at coordinating classification with use (as at the
John Crerar Library, the Detroit Public Library, and the Lamont Li-
library) suggest that it still is a live issue, requiring the attention of students.

This interest is revealed to some extent in the paper by Dale M. Bentz and Thera P. Cavender. Librarians have not ceased reclassifying and recataloging their collections, even though major operations which might well frighten off less adventurous souls are involved. Mr. Bentz and Miss Cavender indicate that the direction in reclassification, for the most part, is towards introduction of the Library of Congress system. Their paper is also useful in bringing up to date some of the primary considerations of policy and procedure in reorganizational projects.

Three papers which follow are concerned with matters of organization and administration. Arnold Trotier’s review of the patterns of catalog departments reveals efforts to establish approaches which will result in efficiency and accuracy. Trotier also sketches developments in centralization within a library system, storage libraries and attendant problems in cataloging and classification, and programs to clear arrears.

How a large catalog can develop flaws over the years is described in a paper on catalog maintenance by Andrew D. Osborn and Susan M. Haskins. These authors clearly show, with the Harvard catalog as an example, the importance of a regular program if the catalog is to be an effective instrument. In addition to the imperfections which develop as a result of changes in policies, rules, and procedures, the problems of wear and tear on the cards, lack of guide cards, filing errors, and missing cards have not been faced squarely always by librarians. Usually, catalog departments have not had sufficient personnel; and budgetary allotments for the systematic editing of catalogs are relatively rare, despite the fact that such tools frequently represent investments of millions of dollars. Mr. Osborn and Miss Haskins demonstrate that such matters as filing, weeding, and editing are as essential as the original work which went into the preparation of the cards.

Related to the papers by Trotier and Osborn and Miss Haskins is the study of the cost of cataloging by Felix Reichmann. The nature of the personnel, the kind of cataloging done, the type of catalog produced—these factors are directly involved in cataloging cost. Reichmann traces the many efforts to investigate costs, and because he found in them certain shortcomings has contributed a study of his own. Instead of working specifically in terms of dollars and cents, however, Reichmann’s focus is the time factor. Undoubtedly, there will be a lively discussion of his procedure and findings, but he has introduced
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an approach which has received little attention. His listing of specific elements in a cost study, as well as his comprehensive bibliography, should provide readers with a useful body of information.

Should the card catalog be retained? C. D. Gull provides us with a review of the discussions which have been concerned with its possible replacement. His comparison of suggested alternatives in terms of physical form, possible arrangements, flexibility, currency and completeness, ease of consultation, widespread availability, and speed of searches in subject arrangements also is a contribution to the understanding of the major factors involved in evaluating records.

In several of the papers, particularly those by Lubetzky, Trotier, and Reichmann, reference is made to the personnel concerned with cataloging and classifying. The paper on the training of catalogers and classifiers is designed to point up the nature of the current programs in library schools. It may be noted here, however, that in any plan of instruction for cataloging and classification, the essential objectives to be emphasized are: (1) inculcating basic knowledge in the fields, and the competence to use this knowledge; (2) developing ability in orderly, analytical thinking on a professional level, so that sound conclusions will be reached in situations requiring decisions; (3) conveying concepts which will provide the professional worker with the desire to grow in knowledge and keep abreast of the changing current of his work; (4) adjusting the philosophical viewpoint, basic knowledge, and feeling for values, so that the professional cataloger will understand and recognize the economic and service aspects of his problems; and (5) nurturing an understanding that will bring into play his professional background when dealing with problems that are library-wide.

It is appropriate to close this series of papers with a discussion of possibilities in centralization and cooperation. The hope that cooperative and centralized cataloging and classification would be extended so far that many of the local problems of librarians would be minimized has not yet been fulfilled. Lucile Morsch has reviewed the efforts at cooperation in both the United States and foreign countries. In the United States, the suggestions for enlarging the program of the Library of Congress so that there can be prompter and greater coverage of titles through its printed cards remain to be materialized. Some success has been achieved in getting American publishers to collaborate with the national library. It seems clear, however, that the problem of cooperative and centralized cataloging will not be resolved
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except as the libraries of the country work together. It has been said before, and it bears repeating, that it makes little sense for a number of libraries to do original cataloging simultaneously of the same titles.

One subject which is not treated in any detail concerns union catalogs and bibliographical centers. These instruments of service present cataloging problems which are important in the national framework. A number of relevant articles have been published since Downs's volume, *Union Catalogs in the United States*, was issued in 1942. Several of these appeared in the January and July 1947 and July 1948 issues of *College and Research Libraries*. Janice W. Sherwood and Eleanor E. Campion 2 provide a résumé of services up to 1950. Trotier discusses some of the problems of the Midwest Inter-Library Center in the present pages.

Finally, it may be observed that some attention is being given to the manifolding of cards. Cards have been produced by letterpress, multigraph, multilith, mimeograph, hectograph, photostat, and other photographic methods. At the present time a few libraries are experimenting with Xerography.3 Only the smaller libraries continue to use the typewriter as the principal device for preparing catalog cards.

The following papers as a group raise many unsolved problems of cataloging and classification. Administrators of large libraries particularly, since they face more complicated situations than occur in smaller units, are beginning to take stock of current conditions so that plans may be worked out for the future. Temporary solutions to remove momentary pressures in a local library situation may be one way of proceeding, but they might well be studied in relation to the national problem of cataloging. This area of librarianship requires the attention of all thinking members of the profession.

References


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