

Review Articles

Bibliographic Organization

Bibliographic Organization; Papers Presented before the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School, July 24-29, 1950. Edited by Jesse H. Shera and Margaret E. Egan. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1951. XII, 275p. \$5.00.

It has long been recognized that the existing organization of bibliography is too imperfect and too incoherent for effective control. But the experiences of scholars, scientists, military men and government officials during the war, the growing realization of our increasing inability to cope with the mounting volume of significant information recorded in or out of print, and recognition of the fundamental importance of knowledge of this information to the ultimate preservation of our civilization have combined to point up the urgency of the need for positive action toward improvement before bibliographic chaos becomes complete.

This book is the record of the deliberations of the 1950 conference of the Graduate Library School which directed its attention to a systematic examination of all aspects of this problem of organizing, locating and transmitting the published and unpublished records of scholarship. The conference did not attempt to pose definite solutions but rather to outline the problem completely with due attention to all of its facets from the history of past attempts to the potentialities of mechanical devices, and to summarize those present trends which might affect existing agencies and practices, future investigations of bibliographic problems, and the development of bibliographic services.

These papers are a valuable synthesis of present thinking and suggest many avenues worthy of exploration in the effort to improve bibliography. Some of the observations are repetitious of truths long held. The delineation of bibliographic problems in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences does not add particularly to the extent of our understanding, but these new summations are useful résumés in relatively compact form. Some of the assumptions upon which the authors base their arguments are contro-

versial; others may even prove to be erroneous. But the ideas set forth are genuinely provocative and worthy of consideration by all who have a stake in the improvement of bibliography.

This is not an easy book to read. The casual browser will find much of it rough going and the serious student will have to do considerable digging to get at all of the important facts. In large measure, perhaps, this difficulty derives from the abstract nature of many of the concepts discussed, but some part of it seems to result from the extensive elaboration of examples, an overfondness for the jargon of the scholar-specialist and the librarian, and a seeming preference for polysyllabic words to convey a meaning. In view of the importance of the book it is regrettable that its difficulty will almost certainly operate to reduce the size of its audience.

It may be interesting to compare the conclusions of the various participants. Verner Clapp defines bibliographic organization and its rôle in contemporary civilization though some will argue that the distinction drawn between "bibliographic organization" and "bibliographic control" is one of semantics, not of significance. He suggests that a taxonomic study of bibliographies to identify those types which have the widest potential usefulness and therefore offer the brightest hope for achieving effective bibliographic control is of primary importance. Attention is needed also to existing gaps in coverage, the problem of duplication, appropriate levels of informativeness and comprehensiveness, methods of indicating location of materials, more cooperation among interested agencies, the development of suitable classification and coding schemes and subject heading lists, and the potentialities of mechanical devices.

Kathrine Murra reviews the history of the several abortive attempts to organize bibliography internationally but sees some reason for optimism about the future because of the interest of Unesco, the deeper understanding of the need, and the existence of more groups and individuals who can and are trying to do something about improving bibliography.

The rôle of classification in bibliography is reviewed by Mortimer Taube, Jesse Shera and S. R. Ranganathan who arrive at various conclusions. Taube, who has convinced himself that the development of current comprehensive national bibliography on a large scale is a snare and a delusion and offers no hope of effective control, concludes that traditional classification schemes are inadequate, that the development of universally-acceptable subject heading lists is impossible, and that a new classification scheme based upon "categories" of information in each subject field which can be expressed in terms of coordinates with each other offers the best hope. Such a scheme, he points out, will provide intensive or deep-level analysis and will lend itself also to coding for punched card or other mechanical sorting devices. Shera agrees with Taube on the inadequacy of existing classification schemes and proposes the need for a new classification of concepts rather than of knowledge or of books. One senses that Shera and Taube are searching for essentially the same thing. Ranganathan is in general agreement with his colleagues but submits that the Colon Classification does, or will ultimately do, precisely what Taube and Shera want their new classifications to do.

Herman Fussler emphasizes the need for increased attention to improved physical access to materials. This, he argues, must come about through an improved understanding of the needs and working methods of readers and from new approaches in library administration derived from this understanding. Other improvements in physical access may be expected from increased cooperation among libraries in acquisition programs, increased interlibrary loans, and the development of storage libraries, and from increased use of photographic reproduction, better communication among libraries, and improved local access.

The potentialities of decentralized subject cataloging, especially in academic libraries, in improving the intensity of subject analysis, the development of suitably specialized classification schemes and subject heading lists, and the selectivity and discrimination in subject analysis are suggested by Raynard Swank. His proposal for combining general reference services and descriptive cataloging activities in a new general bibliography

division is among the more provocative proposals.

One is mildly surprised to discover Ralph Shaw, often considered the arch-advocate of mechanizing routine library activities, warning against the premature conclusion that machines are a panacea for our troubles. He points out the need for applying management methods in determining for which activities machines will be more economical and effective than other methods. Some routines, he assures us, can never be as economically performed by machine as by traditional methods, and this must be recognized in projecting mechanical solutions to our problem.

The implications of all these discussions are pointed out by John Cory who notes that they point toward the ultimate development of more specialized and personalized library service, a more careful distinction of the functions of research and nonresearch libraries, and increased reliance on research libraries by public libraries for answers to difficult reference or research questions. He also foresees that librarians will become better bibliographers and that library operations will certainly become more highly mechanized.

Margaret Schindler describes in detail the preparation of the *Bibliography of Agriculture* as a case study in the preparation of a modern current comprehensive subject bibliography. Carl Kraeling, Irene Taeuber and Herman Henkle review the problems of bibliographic control in the humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences and make positive suggestions of specific needs in each field. And Margaret Egan summarizes the general findings of the conference.

It is important to remember that none of the participants lays any claim to infallible prophetic vision. Rather each attempts to assess the significant problems within his area of interest, the trends in the solution of those problems, possible added methods of attack, and to project possible, probable or desirable developments. From these considered discussions the magnitude of the total problem becomes overwhelmingly apparent, and the many facets which must be considered in any reasonable attempt at solution loom as almost equally large problems in their own right. The many opportunities for librarians to make valuable contributions are thus more clearly seen, and it may be said that in its

attempt to make this delineation the conference has succeeded uncommonly well.

Inevitably the findings of such a conference include numerous suggestions of areas in which further study is necessary before any frontal attack on the big problem can begin. This isolation of specific problems and their solution to the end that the summation of solutions will provide a rational method for attacking the bigger problem is good research

technique and historically effective methodology. It is to be hoped, however, that in view of the magnitude of the task before us, and the urgent need for a solution, these and other experts will not linger so long over the trees that they lose sight of the forest. These papers are a challenge to the whole profession of learning, not just to the librarian and the scholar-specialist.—*Carlyle J. Frarey, Columbia University School of Library Service.*

The Scottish National Dictionary

The Scottish National Dictionary, Vols. I-III through Part III. Aberdeen, The Scottish National Dictionary Association, [1931]-1950. £20 for the complete set of 10 volumes; additional charge of 17/6 per volume if bound.

In 1907 Sir William A. Craigie suggested to the Scottish Branch of the English Association that it "collect Scottish words, ballads, legends and traditions still current." This germ idea brought about the formation of the Scottish Dialects Committee, which has been the chief mover back of the *Scottish National Dictionary*. Then in 1919 Sir William proposed that a series of period dictionaries of the English language be published, these to deal more fully and specifically with segments of the language than the *Oxford Dictionary* had done. The proposed noncommercial dictionaries are: Bosworth and Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and its supplement; the *Middle English Dictionary*, now being edited at the University of Michigan; the *Early Modern English Dictionary*, begun some years ago at the University of Michigan but now held in abeyance; the *Late Modern English Dictionary*, not yet begun; the *Dictionary of American English* (1944), which has recently had its complement in M. M. Mathews's *Dictionary of Americanisms* (1951); the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, now being edited by Sir William and in print in the f's; the *Scottish National Dictionary*, editing begun by William Grant and being continued by David D. Murison, and in print in the late d's.

Although Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* was not specified as a member of the period dictionaries, it is a valuable con-

tribution to the lexicographical group of the English language.

When Sir William came to America to edit the *Dictionary of American English*, he had in mind to produce two dictionaries: *Dictionary of American English* and *American Dialect Dictionary*. Since it soon became evident that it would be unwise to work on both at the same time, work on the dialect dictionary was discontinued. The American Dialect Society is now collecting material for a dialect dictionary of the United States and Canada.

Samuel Johnson and Joseph Wright were not the only dictionary makers who have suffered financial pains in giving birth to their lexical offspring. Officers of the American Dialect Society and the Scottish Dialects Committee are experiencing the same pains. But happily the Scotch are faring better than the Americans. The former have received financial support from the Burns Federation, the Carnegie Trust, the Educational Institute of Scotland, the American Scottish Fund, and numerous individuals in both Great Britain and the United States. The Scottish Dialects Committee labored 20 years collecting and editing material before it began publishing the dictionary.

In its coverage the dictionary aims to be national and comprehensive, to include all written and spoken words that have appeared in the nine Scottish dialects from 1700 to date (the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* will deal with the language prior to 1700). Standard English words that have different meanings in the Scots will be included. Latin, French and other foreign words used in Scots will also be included. A large number of words are of Norse origin.