

LANGRIDGE, Derek W. **Classification: Its Kinds, Elements, Systems and Applications.** London-Melbourne-Munich-New York: Bowker-Saur 1992. X,84p. ISBN 0-86291-622-4 = Topics in Library and Information Studies.

Classification is a fundamental activity of every system. It is cerebral, neural, cognitive, social, academic and organizational in nature. Life in every sense of the word would be a chaos, nay impossible, without it. It is manifested in defining, naming, analyzing, discriminating, individualizing, identifying, choosing, selecting, grouping, arranging, categorizing, ranking, ordering, correlating, tabulating, mapping, co-ordinating and controlling. Classification transforms a heap of bricks into a purposeful mansion. Classification is the only difference between an unruly mob (synonymous with terror and insecurity) and a disciplined army (always a symbol of peace and security). John Dewey (1859-1952) has rightly been quoted, though Langridge does not fully agree with him, as saying that „all knowledge is classification“ (p.3). No doubt, knowledge advances by classification. Concepts, information and classification are intrinsically linked. Classification, be it of concrete or abstract entities, be it scientific, philosophical or bibliographic, is always utilitarian in purpose. A successful person is a skilled classifier in her/his domain of living and work, be it with ideas, words, events, or men and material. It is a basic study subject for library and information work. For Langridge, „classification means a way of thinking that pervades all subject work“ (p.X).

This small booklet is the most basic book existing on classification in all senses of the word and its wider applications. The author, Derek Wilton Langridge, who is deeply influenced by Ranganathan, is an outstanding expert and exponent of classification and classification studies and is already known for his fundamental books:

(1) *Approach to Classification for Students of Librarianship* (1973); (2) *Classification and Indexing in the Humanities* (1976); (3) *Subject Analysis: Principles and Procedures* (1989).

The book is a brief but fine summary of his previous work as embodied in the above books. The book is unconventional in the sense that its chapters are unnumbered and brief, consisting merely of a paragraph or two – only a very few spill over to the next page. The book has been broadly divided into two parts.

Part I, „Classification in General“ has the following sections: *The nature of classification. Fundamentals of classification. The classification of knowledge.* This part deals with the nature, definition, and everyday uses of classification; the process of division to form classes by application of characteristics; the nature of knowledge, its division into main classes, and its relation to bibliographic classification.

Part II, „Bibliographic Classification“, has the following sections: *Elements of bibliographic classification. Classification schemes. Applications of classification.* It deals with: documents and their various viewpoints, forms, subject and topical divisions; fundamental categories and their relation to facets, and kinds of subjects. It continues with classification systems, their kinds and ingredients such as main classes,

their order, facets and their sequence and notation, their functions and qualities. Lastly it deals with the applications of classification in subject indexing, in the arrangement of catalogue entries and information in reference works and computerized databases.

There are 58 chapters in all with axiomatic titles of headings full of distilled wisdom and pithy sentences. Savor a few picked at random:

Classifications are made, not discovered. Logic includes the fundamental principles of classification. Main classes are not what they seem. Notation must be acceptable to users. Classification is the basis of all indexing languages. There is no substitute for classification.

Indeed these are quotable quotes and have been elaborated with examples, arguments and citations from authoritative writers. The author is of the opinion that all classifications are artificial – these are made, not discovered – designed to serve a specific purpose. He challenges a deep-rooted doctrine that some classifications are natural and some artificial, depending upon the characteristics of division chosen. Bibliographic classification is a secondary form which goes beyond the simple applications of logical division. In a classification schedule, classification techniques are in full display. In library and information work, what looks like avoiding a classification is in fact opting for an alternative classification. There is no escape from classification even in electronic environments: „Computers are only complex machines, but they provide the means for effective use of classification“ (p.70). Langridge causes some confusion by saying „Forms of knowledge are the basis of subject classification“ (p.32). But in fact by *Forms of Knowledge* he actually means the major disciplines of knowledge.

The book closes with a brief appendix of the terms used, and a small list of suggested readings, and references cited.

It is a fundamental and rudimentary book dwelling on the perennial elements in classificatory techniques and bibliographic classification systems. It is a refreshing summary of all classification work and concepts. Being brief and too concise, it may not be of much help to the novice learner. The treatment is cursory and so requires some prior familiarity with the subject. To the initiated it provides lucid reading which refreshes and reinforces the fundamental concepts of classification and equips the readers with aphoristic and articulated maxims on classification studies.

Despite the two misprints „extravert“ (p.6, para 2) for extrovert and „man“ (p.56, para 3) for „main“, the book in its resplendent binding presents an attractive get-up and has been priced accordingly.

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SEARS, Minnie Earl: **Sears List of Subject Headings. 15th ed.**, Ed. by Joseph Miller. New York: H.W. Wilson 1994. XLVI, 758p., ISBN 0-8242-0858-7

First published in 1923 and designed by Minnie Earl Sears (1873-1933) in deference to the demands of small libraries,