

EDITORIAL

What is your opinion?

Now that INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION can look back on its first three years of existence the time may be ripe to give some thought to the question of just where we stand today in our endeavour to mobilize interest in and understanding for questions of classification, and just where we are going.

On the whole, we feel that things are moving well. The various conferences that have taken place in the past two years have brought some more life into classification matters. It started out with the FID/CR Conference in Bombay¹, soon followed by the five conferences on the occasion of the Dewey Classification Centennial, i. e.:

- the DDC Conference in Allerton House, Monticello, Illinois, Nov. 9–12, 1975,
- the classification meeting of the American Library Association on the occasion of its annual convention, July 20, 1976,
- the “A CDU e o Centenario de Dewey” conference in Rio de Janeiro with some 600 participants, Sept. 12–17, 1976,
- the DDC European Centenary Seminar in Banbury, England, Sept. 26–29, 1976,
- the UDC/DDC Conference of the FID in Brussels, Nov. 25–26, 1976.

Numerous other conferences, encounters and exchanges of views have helped develop a new awareness which is now beginning to imbue classification, ten years ago already declared “dead” by some, with new dynamic vigor. This has above all produced the result that a growing recognition of the common basis of all classification interests is slowly becoming evident.

Also deserving mention is the fact that for the first time contributions on classification questions are appearing in the series “Advances in Librarianship” (Vol. 7) and that the problems of *classification theory* are since recently also being discussed in Soviet library science².

In addition, the question of “*classification data availability*” is beginning to play a part in computerized national bibliographies. The concept of “*Shared Classification*”, coined by *Rolf Kluth*³, has made its entry into the world of library policy and administration. It involves either the selection of an international standard classification or the establishment of extensive conversion mechanisms between existing systems – if not both – so that huge tasks may be lying ahead of us.

One event of the recent past gives occasion to joyful reflection: In the honour of *S. R. Ranganathan* the DRTC Alumni Association, Bangalore, has instituted a prize to be awarded every two years for an outstanding contribution in the field of classification. This year, 1976, *Derek Austin*, London, became the first winner of this prize, in recognition of his immense work on the development and implementation of PRECIS, the indexing system of the British National Bibliography, which has already been adopted by many other indexing systems as well, whether realized in English or in other languages.

At this point we wish to extend to *Derek Austin* our

warmest congratulations on the awarding of this prize and at the same time express our joy over the fact that proper recognition has thus been given to an achievement which has provided a new insight into the indexing process – for the PRECIS method is a truly *information-related* indexing method, one that does not content itself with the selection of single, unrelated terms of a document but which rather reflects these terms and their concepts in their syntactic context, thus ensuring the preservation of the information contained in a statement, of its ‘informeme’, as *A. Diemer* called it. Now this is indeed a wholly new look at the manner of information representation and an approach which also spans a link with the past, namely with the facet organisation of classes (or rather classates) as developed by *S. R. Ranganathan*, who in his chain indexing method provided for corresponding alphabetic access.

Quite close to happiness and joy one may usually also find sadness. We have to face the fact this year that *Abner Vicentini*, who in 1974, in the 2nd issue of this journal welcomed it in such jubilant terms, thereby giving us so much courage and strength, is no longer among the living. In him we have lost not only an untiringly alert and attentive collaborator on our I. C. – Advisory Board but also a forever helpful, brotherly friend whose efforts in defending the interests of classification both in his Brazilian homeland and within the FID can hardly be surpassed. How keenly was he looking forward only recently to the forthcoming Brazilian classification conference!

And where are we going? Are we realizing the program we set ourselves in no. 1 of 1974?

The present issue is the first one to contain an article – H. Small’s “Structural Dynamics of Scientific Literature” – which at first glance seems to have nothing to do with classification at all, but which nevertheless goes right into what can be regarded as the no. 1 challenge for our work: how does the methodology of classification, how can the structure of concept systems deal with this problem of constantly shifting centers of interest of scientific work? What solutions present themselves to meet this problem? What type of order possesses in itself so much dynamic force as to remain unaffected by ephemeral changes while nevertheless registering them and securing adequate access to their results?

The huge data bank of scientific literature built up over the past 15 years through *E. Garfield’s* initiative at his Institute of Scientific Information in Philadelphia might offer for everybody interested in classification both an incentive to and starting material for an intensive preoccupation with the question of what topics contemporary scientific work is actually centered on. It remains for us to activate somewhat more our intelligence and to develop somewhat more creativity to meet such a new challenge.

This is where we perceive the new tasks for knowledge classification. And what is your opinion?

Ingetraut Dahlberg

- 1) See the reports on this conference in Intern. Classificat. 2 (1975) No. 1.
- 2) Sokolov, A. V.: Aktualnye problemy teorii klassifikatsii – tema III meždunarodnoj konferencii v Bombay. In: Naučnye i tehničeskije biblioteki SSR (1976) No. 8, p. 35–47, 25 refs.
- 3) See the contribution of M. Weitemeyer in this issue.