

BOOK REVIEWS

Dudley, Edward, ed. *S.R. Ranganathan 1892-1972: Papers given at a Memorial Meeting on Thursday, 25th January, 1973. London, The Library Association, 1974. [Reviewed by P B Mangla]*

Ranganathan was really a great genius in librarianship. A mathematician-turned-librarian during the early 1920s, he remained a true devotee of his new vocation for five decades and died at 80 while still actively engaged in research. From the very beginning of his professional career he committed himself to work in this profession like a true karmayogi and made original contributions which are already very well known throughout the world. His writings comprising more than 60 books and a few thousand research articles deal with the whole of library science field. Outside India however he is better known because of his Colon Classification (1st ed. 1933) and writings on classification theory and indexing.

In his approach to library problems he was always much ahead of his age, and considering from several aspects, the period of twenty five years (1948-72) when he came to be known prominently at the international plane, can undoubtedly be called an 'age of Ranganathan'. His writings permeate with seminal ideas of an intellectual giant which would greatly inspire and guide the future generations in their research work. Some of his writings such as Five Laws of Library Science (1st ed. 1931) and Prolegomena to Library Classification (1st ed. 1937) can rightly be called as 'classics' in Library Science.

In developing different theories, techniques and practices Ranganathan always insisted on giving them a scientific basis so that librarianship did not continue to be based on mere empiricism. His Five Laws, for example, most aptly summarise the role and functions of libraries as social institutions. In library classification and cataloguing as well, his canons provide a conceptual framework which facilitates the application of scientific method for further study and research.

His contributions were well recognised during his life-time itself and he was recipient of many

honours in India as well as outside. The Government of India, for example, honoured him by awarding a Padmashree in 1957 and later on in 1965, by designating him as a National Research Professor of Library Science. Not more than half a dozen academicians have been given the latter honour in India till now. Outside India, Pittsburgh University awarded him a D. Litt. degree in 1964 and in 1970 he received the Margaret Mann Citation in Cataloguing and Classification from the American Library Association. Throughout his professional career he remained very actively associated with library associations and other organisations at the national and international levels.

In this background it was quite natural therefore that the Library Association, London, of which he was an Honorary Fellow and a Vice-President, held a memorial meeting in 1973 and this small volume contains six papers presented by some of Ranganathan's friends and admirers at this meeting. The six contributors are B. C. Vickery, A. J. Wells, B. I. Palmer, D. J. Foskett, H. Coblans and D. W. Langridge, and their writings deal with the different aspects of Ranganathan's life and contributions. S.R. Ranganathan: A Chronology has been compiled by Kate Wood in this volume. The Library Association decided to publish this volume as a 'small measure of recognition of one of the outstanding influences on professional thinking in this country' (foreword).

Among the contributors, Palmer was first to come in contact with Ranganathan during the World War II when the British Royal Force work brought him at a camp in the environs of Madras. In his paper 'Ranganathan as a Person' Palmer writes about the various aspects of Ranganathan's life: personal as well as professional. To quote: "Asked if he did not tire of librarianship, he (Ranganathan) declared that a man needed three opportunities from life: to earn a living, to do creative work and to have recreation; "happy the man", he said "who can find all three in the same activity. What need for outside distractions?" Vickery writes about Ranganathan's Contributions to Indexing and concludes: "In looking back over his work, there are

times when one fears that Ranganathan's passion for intellectual analysis may have led him to scholasticism. But at bottom his vision was intensely practical . . . For Ranganathan an index was nothing if it did not reveal all these riches of the mind to every reader". Wells writes about Ranganathan's influence on bibliographical services and points out that this influence was not limited to the BNB and the Indian National Bibliography but was extended to the national bibliographies produced in countries such as Ceylon, Singapore, Malayasia and Canada.

While mentioning the new experiments in the preparation of the BNB he concludes: "The end result of this re-evaluation may produce a system which looks very different from the work now going on in Bangalore (India), but without that work and without the single-minded devotion of Ranganathan himself, I doubt whether it would have been possible at all". In his paper *Ranganathan's Professionalism*, Foskett writes about Ranganathan's involvement in his professional pursuits and says that Ranganathan 'delighted in his profession as a contribution to humanity'. Coblans writes about Ranganathan at the international level and says that "for many of his friends he became what I would like to call a 'conscience' for the West--a sort of salutary irritant of our subconscious feelings of superiority-- . . . And, above all, he continually questioned the crude assumptions that we have about the needs of under-developed countries". Langridge writes about Ranganathan's interest in mysticism. In spite of his being a great intellectual, Ranganathan was basically a South Indian Brahmin and had keen interest in mysticism, occult phenomenon, astrology and in the study of relationship between intuition and intellect. But at the same time, to quote Langridge, "Much as he appreciated the significance of mysticism, Ranganathan was not himself a mystic. He was an intellectual who absorbed much from the West and outdid us all in the application of scientific method to librarianship. Religious beliefs and ideas are not as apparent in his works as one might expect, though he does quote effectively from sacred writings. He was obviously a man well versed in the Hindu classics". In his next birth whether he would be a library thinker or a saint is an interesting topic for the mystics to dwell upon. Katewood's chronology gives a glimpse of some of Ranganathan's achievements and activities during his life time.

Although there are already numerous other writings on and about Ranganathan, this small volume can still be considered as an important and timely contribution by the Library Association, London, in the memory of this great man. Ranganathan always had a tremendous interest in British librarianship and he maintained regular contacts with many British librarians. These six papers in this small volume are in a way an attempt to "assess our corporate indebtedness to one whose simple but brilliant analysis, based upon an almost alien philosophy, penetrated problems which defied earlier solution, and who helped to create a deeper

appreciation of the international significance of our work". (foreword).

PRECIS, a manual of concept analysis and subject indexing by Derek Austin. London, the Council of the British National Bibliography Ltd., 1974. x, 551p. ISBN 0-900220-42-2 £ 7.00. [Reviewed by T.N. Rajan].

A notable and significant development in the area of subject indexing in the 1970s has been the introduction of Preserved Context Subject Index (PRECIS) in the British National Bibliography (BNB) for the preparation and production of its subject index, replacing the technique of chain indexing which had been in use for almost two decades. In 1971, BNB had developed the Machine Readable Catalogue (MARC) system in the United Kingdom and had started using the computer for the production of BNB. PRECIS was developed as a means for producing the printed subject index from data held on machine-readable files. Although PRECIS was viewed with some scepticism in the beginning, it has now established itself as an accepted method of subject indexing. Besides BNB, the Australian National Bibliography, the British National Film Catalogue and a few other printed bibliographies are now making use of PRECIS.

The book under review is a manual on PRECIS by Derek Austin who has been the principal architect of the system. The manual is aimed to be a reference tool for the more experienced indexer, wherein can be found a detailed analysis of more complex problems of subject indexing together with sufficient theory, in addition to detailed descriptions of standard routines and procedures for indexing. In a succinct foreword, Wells, the editor of BNB, sets out the reasons for switching over to the new system from 'chain index' while acknowledging that PRECIS has evolved out of Chain Procedure.

The principal features of PRECIS are the methods of formation of the string consisting of elements that together express the subject contents of a document and the automatic manipulation of entries by the computer. While the string formation is essentially the product of human intellectual effort, the computer's main task is to reduce clerical drudgery and attendant risk of errors. The string forming operations are backed up by a set of procedures for syntactic controls and for establishing semantic relationships between concepts. All the elements of the syntax are embodied in a scheme of 'Role operators' which regulate the formation of the input string. One of these role operating codes is prefixed to each term in the string which represent in a summary form, the subject contents of the document. The position of the elements in the string is determined by the ordinal value of the role operating code, which also indicate

the function of the indexed term. The result of these operations produces coextensive index entries under each one of the elements chosen to lead the entry. The role operating codes do not, however, feature in the actual entries. Each one of the entries preserves the full context of the selected terms of the entry. The semantic aspects of PRECIS are taken care of by a set of procedures for making See and See also entries for terms that do not form part of the string but might be approach points. A thesaurus of terms is used for the purpose of ensuring consistency and providing for a semantic network of terms. The thesaurus of terms is used for the purpose of ensuring consistency and providing for a semantic network of terms. The thesaurus is 'open ended', in the sense, that new terms are admitted at any time they are encountered in the literature.

The theoretical basis of the system as well as the operating procedures and methods are described in great detail in the manual. The theoretical approach of PRECIS had its roots in the efforts of the Classification Research Group (CRG) to design a general classification system in the sixties to cope with the pressing needs for proper subject representation of contents of documents and also its suitability for computer applications. With the results obtained by CRG for achieving a prescribed citation order in a freely faceted classification scheme, the order of citing terms according to the principle of "context dependency" was hit upon, in which one term sets the next term into meaningful context, regardless of their relative importance as collocating factors. This has a close resemblance to the ways in which sentences are formed in a natural language. The passive form of sentences has been favoured for representing the order of role indicators in PRECIS. The entries that are formed from the string are presented in a two-line format, each one of the entries preserving the logic of context dependency.

After explaining the theoretical premises of PRECIS in the first few chapters, its syntax and the techniques of string formation using the role operators are dealt with in great detail in the succeeding twenty chapters. The role operators which form the backbone of PRECIS, are considered in three groups viz., Main line operators (0-6), Interposed operators (p-t, g), and Differencing operators (h-d). The Main line operators identify the basic components of a compound subject and also regulate the order in which these components should be written. The Interposed operators are inserted operators at various, increasing the specificity of a string. They, however, cannot start a string. The Differencing operators have semantic rather than syntactic functions and are used to those parts of a compound term which limit the connotation of the focus without prescribing either its syntactical role and its position in the string.

The treatment of compound terms and the technique of differencing are particularly interesting. In fact, this has been one of the oldest problems of alphabetical subject indexing still needing neat solutions. Looking at the problem afresh, Austin has thoroughly examined varieties of compound terms and has offered fairly satisfactory solutions.

The identification of terms as main line or interposed operators is largely interpretative and might lead to differences among indexers. However, with numerous examples, Austin has tried to introduce a systematic approach to string formation and thereby reduce possible differences and inconsistencies in handling these operators.

The semantic aspects of PRECIS are dealt with in detail in five chapters. Each term in the string which are marked as a lead is considered out of its context and as an entity in its own right and semantically related terms such as synonyms, antonyms, superordinate and associative terms are established. In this way, a network of semantically related terms are formed and See and See also reference entries are generated. The procedure for generating these cross reference entries from data held by machine-readable files are explained at length.

The rest of the chapters are devoted to automatic construction of feature headings, management aspects of PRECIS and problems requiring further investigation. Throughout the text, a number of examples are worked out to illustrate the ideas delineated. In addition, series of exercises are set at different intervals of the text, to help the learners to test their progress of learning with the answers provided at the end.

The appendix contains flow diagrams of basic indexing decisions, algorithms for entry construction and feature headings, automatic data processing aspects of PRECIS, examples of PRECIS entries in Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Finnish, Norwegian, Sinhala and Swedish demonstrating the potential of PRECIS as a multilingual system. Two indexes are given, one covering the examples used in the text and the other for the text matter itself for which the same system has been used, again illustrating the feasibility of PRECIS as a system for book indexing.

The book has been brought out very well and is reasonably priced.

To sum up, the PRECIS manual is one of the most valuable publications on subject indexing. Not only does it serve as an excellent manual for learning and using the system methodically, it is useful as a general book on subject indexing also.

The Anatomy of Censorship by Jay E. Daily,
New York, Marcel Dekker, Inc. 1973. xv+403 p.
(Books in Library and Information Science, 6)
ISBN 0-8247-6065-4 [Reviewed by Surendar Mohan]

Censorship of sexual subjects in the 19th century had limited or affected expression of serious literary, artistic, political and scientific ideas. Censorship is said to be both contagious and highly profitable. If one considers freedom of choice important, one will certainly find 'The Anatomy of Censorship' by Jay. E. Daily, a fascinating and significant book. It is notable not only for its scholarship, reflecting ten years' intensive research but also for its frankness. Pornography, political repression, and many others are discussed in depth. The accent is mainly on sex. The Anatomy of Censorship will be a useful guide for readers from all walks of life and educational backgrounds.

Dr. Daily not only reveals such information that the Federal Government has indeed had official book burnings, but braves the opinions of those who hunt most to reach certain startling conclusions. Do most waves of censorship occur at a time when official corruption is made public? Is there any relationship between the Supreme Court decision on censorship and the Watergate affair? And what will the price of the new Puritanism be to one and one's family? After all, there is no such thing as a little censorship. Answers to these questions can be found in this book.

The jacket of the book is revealing. The book is divided into two parts with mystifying, allegorical headings - Part I - 'The Pathetic Agony' Part II 'Harlotry and Heresy'. The chapter headings of each part are equally mystifying in their allegory. However, the scope of the book is worldwide though necessarily centered on the United States. Because those who publish or distribute "obscene" materials are liable to criminal proceedings and punishment, librarians are imperilled along with other professionals who work in mass communications in the United States. Librarians are asked to use this book as it helps in their necessary battle for intellectual freedom, aided, it is hoped, by all who use libraries and agree. When a librarian builds a collection he has no moral values of his own, no politics and no religions as far as the building of the library collection goes; he is bound solely to serve the interests of his community, hopefully in broadening them, but always in respecting them. The difference between selection and censorship is even more difficult. Library schools should include studies in the field of censorship in order to educate professionals who know how to deal with censored literature.

Thirty-four pages of references and quotations have been cited at the end of the publication which add to the value of the book. The get-up of the book is excellent and the glossy paper adds to its aesthetic appeal.