Book Reviews

Margaret Rohdy, Editor

The DDC, the Universe of Knowledge, and the Post-Modern Library. Francis L. Miksa. Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1998. 99p. $5. (ISBN 0-910608-64-4). LC97-41719.

Why is the DDC (Dewey Decimal Classification) structured the way it is? What is its relationship to theories of classification of knowledge and of library classification? How has it evolved over the years, and what are its prospects as we enter the age of the "post-modern library"? These are some of the questions Francis Miksa discusses in this interesting study, an expansion of his DDC Anniversary Lecture at the Fourth International ISKO (International Society for Knowledge Organization) Conference in July 1996.

The DDC is one of the most successful library classification systems in the world, as evidenced by its widespread use in libraries in the United States and in many other countries and by its growth and evolution over more than 120 years. But the history of the DDC has not followed a straight line. Its development has been affected by the personal beliefs of founder Melvil Dewey and of the various editors who came after him, by changing theories of library classification, and by practical considerations. Numerous controversies have arisen along the way; for example, the radical changes in the fifteenth edition in 1951 are blamed in part for the move by many academic libraries from the DDC to the Library of Congress Classification.

The DDC was a product of its age. Dewey developed it in the 1870s, when the larger scientific and philosophical community was greatly interested in the classification of all knowledge. However, library classification always has had a practical aspect—the DDC is not just a classification of knowledge; it is used to classify actual books in libraries of various sizes and types. There always have been conflicts over how many levels of hierarchy to include in the Dewey classification scheme and over how much it should be revised to keep up with changing knowledge, given the need for integrity of class numbers to reduce the work of reclassifying books in libraries.

In 1899, the Library of Congress wanted to adopt the DDC, but with fundamental changes that Dewey refused. LC then went on to develop its own very different classification scheme. Also at the turn of the century, the new Institut International de Bibliographie in Brussels set out to catalog and classify scientific literature. Paul Otlet and Henri LaFontaine began by expanding on the DDC, but the specialized nature of the materials with which they were dealing and the particular needs of the scientists and scholars they served led to the development of the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC). Their work led to a new idea of subjects, one that was much more complex and more difficult to contain in a strict hierarchy. Miksa also details the contributions of Ernest Cushing Richardson, Henry Evelyn Bliss, W.C. Berwick Sayers, and S.R. Ranganathan to library classification theory in the early parts of the twentieth century, when the old view of the universe of knowledge as a one-dimensional, hierarchical structure was replaced by a more complex, modular, and faceted view.

Since the 1950s, these theoretical developments have had an impact on the DDC in its major efforts to keep the ter-

minology up-to-date and to improve subject collocation, as well as in increasing use of subject faceting and notational synthesis. However, Miksa finds that the DDC is still based on three assumptions that, if unexamined, could have a negative effect on its future and on the future of library classification in general. These assumptions are: "knowledge categories are by nature hierarchical and logical; one best classification system is achievable; and document retrieval is the main purpose of library classification" (p. 82).

Only in his conclusion does Miksa consider the "post-modern library," by which he means both an evolving concept of the library as a personal space, made possible by electronic information and modern telecommunications, and the library as a product of the post-modern age, in which knowledge and truth are no longer absolute and everything is relative. The best hope for the survival and continued relevance of the DDC in this age lies in a thorough reconception of the system, including variable levels of specification and alternative arrangements for collocating information.

This slim book will interest readers who are curious about the history of libraries and the classification of knowledge. Its relevance is not limited to libraries using the DDC or to classifiers. It is very well organized, though it may provide a little too much detail on the history of the various editions of the DDC and not enough insight into possible future developments. A nine-page reference list is included. —*John Hostage (hostage@ law.harvard. edu), Authorities Librarian, Harvard Law School Library, Cambridge, Mass.*

Communicating Research. A. J. Meadows. San Diego, Calif.: Academic Press, 1998. 266p. $59.95. (ISBN 0-12-487415-0). LC97-23432.

In *Communicating Research,* A. J. Meadows begins by stating that "Communication lies at the heart of research . . . for research cannot properly claim that name until it has been scrutinized and accepted by colleagues" (p. ix). This is obvious, but perhaps too easily taken for granted. Throughout this book, Meadows reiterates that understanding results from communication—from the interaction between the researcher and the receiver of research information. Research communication continues to evolve, most recently with the introduction of electronic networks—Meadows summarizes his main theme as "change and diversity" (p. 239). In his view, changes in the research communication process are not driven solely by technology, but also by the needs of the research community. He recognizes the effects of the technology, but considers it in its proper place as a tool of the researcher.

This book provides a good overview of the history and evolution of research communication, with a concise timeline that proceeds from Aristotle's symposia to the invention of printing, the development of postal systems, and the rise of the modern research journal as learned societies found meetings, personal correspondence, and books inadequate to keep a growing audience abreast of expanding research.

The emphasis in *Communicating Research* is on academic research, though private industry and government-funded research are included as a basis for comparison. Meadows focuses mainly on research in the natural sciences and includes humanities and social sciences research when he touches on the evolution of these distinct fields and the difficulty in defining the boundaries between them. A general characterization of the differences between the humanities and social sciences versus the natural sciences is that in the former, the book is more widely used as a tool of communication, while the journal article is most common in the latter. In addition, the emphasis in the natural sciences is almost always on the most current research, while older knowledge is read and cited more often in the humanities and social sciences. The structure of the journal article contributes to the efficiency of the communication process by providing the expected title, author, date of receipt (essential for establishing "first" discoveries, especially in the natural sciences), abstract, body (usually introduction, methodology, results, conclusion), and list of references. Books also have a typical layout, with an