

CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION

Report on the May, 1950, Examination

MARY S. FLEMING AND ENID A. EVANS

THE standard of work presented in the May examination was uniformly low, and we think that some comment from the examiners may help those who failed to understand why they did so; we hope also that our remarks may be helpful to future students.

Of the twenty-four students who sat the examination, eight passed. Of these eight, not one was above average. The paper that was set should have presented few difficulties to anyone who had worked through the course, but, in most cases, lack of understanding of fundamental principles was evident.

One of the worst features of the work done was the large number of careless mistakes in spelling, punctuation, and transcription of Dewey numbers. Errors such as the following are quite unpardonable: Olaf for Olof, Meeks for Meek, ornitholy for ornithology, quarterley, Hawaiiin, Andersen for Anderson, quaternay, quaternary, phanerograms for phanerogams, reminiscences, edpedition, espedition. There was even frequent inaccuracy in the statement on the card of the tools which had been used, e.g., Munro for Monro, Cataloguing for Cataloging. Every cataloguer should take to heart the words of L. Stanley Jast, who says that 'to put a semi-colon when the code requires a colon: to add extraneous marks to a class symbol: to change or mis-spell a word in a title: to do anything whatever except exactly what the code permits: this in a cataloguer is arson, high treason, burglary, everything that is illegal or wicked.' W. W. Bishop says, 'Accuracy [in a cataloguer] . . . is the sine qua non of success.'

Most students seemed to regard punctuation as a minor matter and inserted commas, full stops or dashes quite impartially. Remember that in subject headings the use of a comma or dash may alter the place where a card is filed in the catalogue. Carelessness was shown in most papers, and it should be understood that it can be responsible for the loss of many marks. Inaccuracy in a library's catalogue can seriously impair the library's efficiency.

References caused some trouble. Some made none, others made too many. *See also* references can be overdone, and should not be made unless they have some bearing on the work in question. References should not be made from the specific to the general, but only from the general to the specific; nor should references be made to a heading not used. One student made references the wrong way round, e.g. BIRDS *see* ORNITHOLOGY, when the *Subject Headings* clearly said ORNITHOLOGY *see* BIRDS.

This report, dated 16th May, 1950, on the May examination in Cataloguing and Classification (General Training Course, Part II), is written by the examiners. Miss Fleming is Senior Lecturer at the Library School and Miss Evans is Librarian, Auckland Institute and Museum.

Subject subdivisions were made without a proper understanding of the extent to which they are possible, *e.g.*, BIRDS—AUSTRALIA—PERIODICALS, and BIRDS—SOCIETIES—PERIODICALS. There should have been two headings: BIRDS—AUSTRALIA and BIRDS—PERIODICALS.

Classification on the whole was fair, but lack of knowledge of 'building' numbers was evident, and 'building' was done far too freely. Dewey's instructions should be carefully read.

Following are some comments on individual questions:

QUESTION 1. Selling, Olof H. *Studies in Hawaiian pollen statistics.*

This evidently gave considerable trouble. Only one student gave the collation correctly. The 'three parts' caused some puzzlement, although it was quite clear that this meant 'three volumes'. The dates were stated clearly (1946, 1947, 1948), yet only three students gave them correctly as 1946-48. Others gave 194-, 194 , 1948?, c.1948, 1949? and even n.d. In no case was the series entry absolutely correct. The classification was admittedly difficult, but the addition of 69, 9969 or 09969 (for Hawaii) to 581.16622 was an elementary error. Subject headings also were perhaps not easy to choose, but HAWAII—BOTANY, for BOTANY—HAWAII, was also an elementary error.

QUESTION 2. *The Emu.*

Few gave correct indention, and no entry was completely correct. Some omitted to give commencing date, others to give the date and volume number of holdings. One gave main entry under Royal Australasian ornithologists union, 1901, a bad error for an item which is so obviously a title entry. Another, entering the union wrongly under Victoria, gave Victoria, Australasia. The most correct classification was 598.2993, although 598.205 and 598.2994 were accepted. Dewey's instructions are, '598.29, divide geographically like 930-999,' but this became 598.293 or 598.299305 in some of the papers.

QUESTION 3. Meek, C. K. *Land law and custom in the colonies.*

The geographic subdivision here caused considerable trouble. LAND TENURE was in most cases given correctly, but then efforts were made to find a geographic subdivision. As there is none for the British colonies, the general heading only should have been used. One heading appeared as GREAT BRITAIN—COLONIES—LAND TENURE, for which there was no excuse, as the *Subject Headings* clearly indicate that LAND TENURE can be subdivided by country, but cannot be a subhead. The use of 2nd, 2nd., second, for 2d, appeared frequently.

QUESTIONS 4 AND 5

Both these questions on the classified catalogue were done badly, and the work showed even less comprehension than in the previous three questions.

Very few realized the necessity for making the index cards under author and title, and, in the case of question 5, also under the joint author, although usually they were given correctly in the tracings. Analytics were generally fairly correct, although some gave the same number for the analytic as the one at which the book was classified. Others gave subject headings as tracings, and *see also* references in the subject index.

In question 4 (Laseron, C. F. *South with Mawson*) the classification was generally correct, and some gave an analytic for 508.3. None gave it correctly as 508.99.

Question 5 (Norman, J. R., and Fraser, F. C. *Giant fishes, whales and dolphins*) was a very easy one, so easy that students probably suspected a trap. Unnecessary subject index cards were made for obscure and unlikely subjects.

Only a few of the errors that were made have been mentioned, but they will give students some idea how they lost their marks.

BOOK CENSORSHIP IN THE AIR

A RECOMMENDATION by the Dunedin Branch of the Associated Booksellers of New Zealand caused a certain amount of fluttering in newspaper offices recently. It was that the Government should act on the report of the NZLA Censorship Committee convened by Dr G. H. Scholefield in 1946, printed in *New Zealand Libraries* 9:189-91 N '46. The recommendations of this committee were:

That if the prohibition of any publication is contemplated the matter should be referred to an advisory board of three members who should be free of political or commercial interest and chosen for their intelligence, integrity and impartiality.

That appeals against the decisions of such board should be heard by an appeal censor, who should be a legal person of high standing.

That decisions of the censors should be communicated forthwith to the NZLA (*or* the principal librarians) and the NZ Booksellers' Association.

That the NZ Censorship Board should co-operate closely with similar authorities in the British Dominions and the United States with a view to obtaining early information and advance copies of doubtful publications.

That there should be no prosecution in respect of a publication which has been passed by the Censorship Board.

The *Otago Daily Times* printed on 20th April a report of interviews with several people interested in the subject. Mr D. O. W. Hall, director of adult education for the University of Otago, said that the existing safeguards of law in relation to indecent or objectionable publications were sufficient without it being necessary to impose a direct censorship. He thought the liability of prosecution under the present law was a sufficient censoring influence. Principal A. L. Haddon, principal of the Church of Christ College in Dunedin, said he thought that the standard of education and morality in New Zealand was such that the majority of people could safely be left to select their own reading . . . What