

stood more easily than cards with greater detail. The last vestiges of "bibliographical cataloging" can be seen in imprints, collations and notes. For consideration in this review, I shall limit my examples to a few of the more common card notes.

In two shipments of proof sheets, bibliography notes in 64 forms were counted. Of these, 50 notes appeared only once, two notes were used 17 times, and one appeared 72 times. It would seem that this is extravagant elaboration, especially since more and more librarians are coming to consider indiscriminate bibliography notes as useless. Why not use form notes in English, except when an *important characterization* of the bibliography is contained in the wording used in the book being described?¹

Cover title notes still tend to be overdone. For example, *Reed's Concise Maori Dictionary* has a title main entry and the following note: "Cover title: Concise Maori dictionary." An added title tracing is given for: "Concise Maori dictionary." Since the cover title note adds nothing new and only repeats the title entry information, it is superfluous.

Errata notes appear frequently, and again in varying forms. Could they not be handled adequately by the use of simple form notes in English? On a recent card, the note appeared as: "'Errata': slip inserted."

¹ It was gratifying to note that in the June issue of the *Library of Congress Processing Department Cataloging Service*, p. 2, a revision of the L.C. policy in regard to mention of bibliographies.

New Venture in Subject Cataloging

The Library of Congress Subject Catalog; a Cumulative List of Works Represented by Library of Congress Printed Cards. January-March 1950. Washington, 1950, 394p. Subscription price: \$100 per year.

Since the appearance of the monumental *Library of Congress Catalog* and its supplement between 1942 and 1948, many scholars and librarians alike have voiced regret that there is no subject index to this major bibliographical aid. A number of proposals for such an index have been discussed and considered but as yet, none have borne fruit. Perhaps cooperative efforts may make such an index available one day, in spite of the magnitude and expense of the task of producing it.

The question of when to add an explanatory note and whether as a note or as an integrated part of the title remains a matter of individual choice. On recent cards for four novels with the titles: *My Old Man's Badge*; *Bitter Wine*; *Guns Wanted*; and *The Pink House*, the first two had notes: "A novel." Four cards for volumes of poetry show slightly different treatment, for two cards had "Poems" integrated into the title, and the other two used the term as a drop note.

These examples indicate one thing quite clearly: the interpretation and application of the rules depends upon the individual cataloger. This independent exercise of judgment is inherent in simplified cataloging. Therefore, any code of rules should be used as a guide and not as law. That is the reason, also, that some of the exceptions and qualifications found in the rules might better have been omitted. Every cataloger knows that there is a time to disregard or go beyond the rules. Would it not have been preferable to let it go at that, and not have tried to codify the exceptions?

Let the user be aware, then, that the rules, in all their ramifications, need not be applied too literally. The Library of Congress has achieved a considerable degree of simplification in its cards. Other libraries may do the same if, instead of trying to follow L. C. exactly (a not uncommon failing) they will apply their own good judgment and common sense in the interpretation of the code.—*Winifred A. Johnson, Army Medical Library.*

In the meantime, however, the Library of Congress, ever mindful of its great responsibilities as the national library of the United States and one of the major libraries of the world, has undertaken the production of a subject index to its current *Author Catalog*. The resulting *Subject Catalog*, now appearing for the first time, is another notable example of the library's continuing efforts to improve and enlarge the bibliographical access to its collections.

Issued quarterly and cumulated annually, with larger cumulations projected for the future, the *Subject Catalog* corresponds to similar issues of the *Author Catalog*. It is not a true index, however, for there are dif-

ferences in coverage. Unlike the quarterly and annual cumulations of the *Author Catalog* which include all cards printed by the Library of Congress during the period covered regardless of the imprint date of the material described, the *Subject Catalog* is limited to imprints of the past two years in its quarterly issues, and to imprints since Jan. 1, 1945, in its annual cumulations. Belles-lettres are excluded from the quarterlies but included in the annuals. Presumably those who bear editorial responsibility for the *Subject Catalog* have determined to their own satisfaction that these differences in scope are desirable and justifiable and that any omissions which result from these policies are of little significance to potential users of the catalog. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary we must accept their judgment.

The subject captions in the catalog are Library of Congress subject headings taken from the tracings on the unit printed cards. The entries under each heading are reproduced from the type set for catalog cards, abbreviated by the omission of all notes and tracings. *See* references are included in both quarterly issues and annual cumulations, but *see also* references appear only in the annual volumes. It should be noted that in the quarterly issues, subdivisions of base headings are omitted frequently when there are "only a few titles" to be listed under the subdivisions. Such titles are entered under the base headings without subdivision, however. A special feature is the list of magazines and journals under the form heading "Periodicals (Individual Titles)".

Exhaustive criticism of the *Subject Catalog*, whose first cumulation has yet to appear, is undoubtedly premature. We may be sure that its editors are still experimenting to find the patterns best suited to a catalog of this type, and later issues are certain to reflect the results of these experiments and criticism based upon the experiences of the users of the catalog. A few observations on the present issue may not be out of order, however.

First of all, there seems to be a contradiction between the expressed editorial policy as outlined in the introduction, and the practice in the catalog itself. Although subdivisions of headings under which only a few titles could be listed are supposed to be omitted in favor of the base heading, there are many instances throughout the catalog where single

titles are listed under subdivided subject headings and no titles are listed under the corresponding base heading, e.g., BUDGET; INDUSTRIAL ARTS; LABOR CONTRACT. In contrast, some timely subjects (e.g., LABOR LAWS AND LEGISLATION; SOCIALISM) have a sizeable number of entries under the undivided base heading, even though some of the titles so listed, according to their corresponding entries in the *Author Catalog*, are properly entered under some subdivision of that heading. Ideally, of course, adherence to the stated policy should produce exactly opposite results. It is perhaps even fair to question whether, in view of the relatively small number of entries in each quarterly issue, the presumed added convenience to the user of the catalog justifies the added editorial effort involved in modifying assigned subject headings, especially when some inconsistencies in entry are certain to result.

To this reviewer, the legibility of the printed page leaves a great deal to be desired. Although the subject captions are distinguished from the entries by using underlined roman capitals, the captions do not seem to stand out, especially since the author line of each entry under each caption is printed in boldface type. In view of the method used to reproduce the catalog, the problem of distinguishing the subject captions is not one that can be solved easily. Perhaps some modification of the spacing or the indentation, or perhaps the use of italics for the captions would improve the legibility. Another practice which seems neither to enhance legibility nor to facilitate the use of the catalog is that of abbreviating the subdivisions of the subject captions. HIST. & CRIT., or DESCR. & TRAV. may be easily understood, but CO., although a correct abbreviation for *county*, may be misinterpreted by those users who are more accustomed to reading this abbreviation as *company*. Since there is ample space to permit printing the subject captions in full in most cases, and since Library of Congress practice is against the use of abbreviations in subject headings except in the tracings on unit cards, there seems to be little logic in using abbreviated subject captions in the *Subject Catalog* especially when they interfere with easy reading.

There are a few other minor errors. An occasional title is listed under the wrong heading, e.g., Roussy's *Precis d'anatomie patho-*

logique under ANATOMY, ARTISTIC instead of ANATOMY, PATHOLOGICAL. Although the heading FLUIDS AND HUMORS, ANIMAL was abandoned late in 1948 in favor of the more modern term BODY FLUIDS, one title is listed under the older heading in the present issue. And on page 360, there is both an entry under and a *see* reference from TROPICAL FRUIT (in this case the reference should read *see also*). Such errors are admittedly isolated examples and not typical of the careful editing and freedom from error which characterize the bulk of the catalog.

The general excellence of the catalog far outweighs its minor faults, however. There can be no question but that this added key to the contents of current literature will be invaluable to scholars and librarians alike. Since the materials included are not limited by language, subject, or country of origin, this subject bibliography is unique. As the most comprehensive bibliography of its type available to library patrons, it is likely to be one of the first and most heavily used. Its

usefulness to the librarian in reference work, cataloging, and perhaps book selection is apparent enough, but enterprising librarians will not be slow to discover added uses. What the ultimate effect of this new catalog may be upon the future of the present costly subject analysis in library card catalogs cannot yet be foreseen, but it would be unrealistic to suppose that it will not in time have some. Indeed, if the *Subject Catalog* follows in the footsteps of its predecessor, the *Author Catalog*, its impact upon library methods and technique may result in a variety of new practices and added economies.

A worthy venture has been well launched, and the world of learning owes the Library of Congress another debt of gratitude. It is to be hoped that the *Subject Catalog* will receive the support it so justifiably deserves; indeed, it is hard to conceive that any library attempting to give maximum service to its serious users can afford to be without this newest bibliographical tool.—*Carlyle J. Frarey, College of the City of New York Library.*

Problems of Bibliographical Description

Standards of Bibliographical Description. By Curt F. Bühler, James G. McManaway and Lawrence C. Wroth. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1949, viii, 120p. (A Publication of The A.S.W. Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography.) \$2.00.

Principles of Bibliographical Description. By Fredson Bowers. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949, xvii, 505p., facsimiles. \$10.00.

Descriptive bibliography is a form of activity that has long engaged the attention of students of the history of printing, scholars concerned with textual criticism, and bibliophiles eagerly pursuing "points" which enhance the market value of their rare-book purchases. As a discipline it is concerned with the physical characteristics of the book or pamphlet quite apart from the intellectual content of the work, and therefore must be content to serve always as handmaiden to the research investigations of other disciplines. Its values, therefore, are never self-sufficient or self-evident, but are always buried in the measurement of the significance of the larger contribution. In other words, the results of descriptive bibliography can never be more

important than the findings of textual criticism itself or than the detailed knowledge of the minutiae of printing in the early centuries. At its best it has made some fairly important contributions to our knowledge of the methods of work of the fifteenth-century European printers and to our understanding of the plays of Shakespeare. At its worst, it has degenerated into an empty pedantry that has probably done no real harm to sound scholarship except, perhaps, to help support the artificial price structure of the rare-book market.

For Dr. Greg the task of descriptive bibliography is to "reconstruct for each particular book the history of its life, to make it reveal in its most intimate detail the story of its birth and adventures as the material vehicle of the living work." To Copinger descriptive bibliography is, somewhat pompously, "the grammar of literary investigation," but most workers in the field would probably agree with Lawrence Wroth that "the end of bibliographical analysis is the elucidation of the history of texts . . . not an end but a means, a process in the study of the transmission of texts."¹ Whatever definition of the objectives of descriptive bibliography one

¹ Bühler, *et al*, p.105.