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BOOK REVIEWS

Comaromi, John Phillip. *The Eighteen Editions of the Dewey Decimal Classification*. Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press Division, Lake Placid Education Foundation, 1976. xiv, 678p. \$10.00. LC 76-10604. ISBN 0-910608-17-2.

Dewey, Melvil. *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloging and Arranging Books and Pamphlets of a Library*. Amherst, Mass., 1876. Dewey Decimal Centennial 1896-1976. Facsimile reprinted by Forest Press Division, Lake Placid Education Foundation. Printed and bound Kingsport Press, Inc. Kingsport, Tenn. 44p. \$5.00.

Nothing could be more fitting during the 100th anniversary of the Dewey Decimal Classification than a facsimile reprint of the first edition and a complete history of the

classification down to 1976. Both handsomely bound volumes look sturdy enough to survive the use they almost certainly will get.

Comaromi's history begins with Dewey's idea of using a positional decimal notation for organizing all knowledge. Then he looks critically into the idea's possible sources, both acknowledged and unacknowledged. In the process, the "inverted Baconian" notion is rejected, to the delight of this reviewer who finds it extremely difficult, when explaining Bacon's system, to see any clear relationship, inverted or otherwise, between that and Dewey.

Comaromi covers the first and second editions at considerable length (126p.) because the basic outline and principles of the classification were determined in these two. After the publication, in 1885, of the second edition, the system was reasonably

complete. It is interesting to note that there were over eighty-four relocations and over 100 insertions or enlargements in the second edition. Comaromi comments that "librarians must have been stupefied by the extent of change in subject location." Dewey promised this would be a one-shot rearrangement, and librarians did what librarians have done ever since—accommodated to the new order.

But not without some clamor. The chief opponents' views are described in an amusing chapter.

A third edition came along three years later, perhaps to reassure critics that the second was only provisional after all. (Dewey was a hard person to put down. Besides promoting his system and training people to use it, he also bought the publishing company when the publisher went broke just as the third edition was about to appear.) Edition followed edition, and Comaromi, working with primary sources, manages to make the publishing history of each much more lively than might be expected.

Serious criticism from Rider, Bliss, Sayers, and others began with the seventh edition in 1911 and mostly concerned the need for major revision to keep up with the advance of knowledge, an unsolved problem that continues to plague classification and indexing systems to this day.

It is interesting to note that Dewey had introduced into the seventh edition no less than ten of the auxiliary symbols which are now claimed to be one of the chief advantages of the Universal Decimal Classification system. The chapter on the relations between DDC and the Classification Décimale (forerunner of UDC) is one of the most entertaining in the book. Among other things, it contains correspondence between Dewey and the editor, Dorcas Fellows, both writing in his simplified, telegraphic style English (thoughtfully translated by Comaromi).

The editor, who held that position for almost two decades, was a strong-minded individual. Godfrey Dewey got exactly nowhere when he tried to persuade her to stop using the classification to advance spelling reform. Similarly, criticisms by Grace Osgood Kelley were ignored because Miss Fellows disliked her and "was at war"

with her superior at the Crerar Library. Nevertheless, Dorcas Fellows was one of the best editors the classification had.

The history of recent editions (16th-18th) is covered in the last third of the book. A large number of readers will be familiar with the system, its advisors, officers, and major practitioners, so that this part is virtually current history—well documented.

Comaromi is to be congratulated for writing an excellent history and a lively and entertaining book on a subject not usually considered to be very exciting. We look forward to more work of this caliber from his pen.—Phyllis A. Richmond, *School of Library Science, Case Western Reserve University.*

Wiegand, Dietmar. *Professioneller Status und Kontrolle über ein (symbolisches) soziales Objekt am Beispiel des wissenschaftlichen Bibliothekars: Ein Beitrag zur professionssoziologischen Theorie und Kasuistik.* Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXII, Soziologie, Bd. 16. Bern: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt/M. und München: Peter Lang, 1976. 193p. ISBN 3-261-01937-9.

In case the title, which in English means *Professional Status and Control over a (Symbolic) Social Object as Illustrated by the Example of the Academic Librarian*, does not tip unwary readers off, let them be warned that this book is a doctoral dissertation in sociology: Its language is not the King's English or the Kaiser's German but German sociologese. And if that is not enough to scare readers off, let them be further warned that the author has broken the book down into decimally numbered sections, sub-sections, even sub-sub-sub-sections, giving it the forbidding appearance of a book-length outline or table of contents.

The two main parts are of almost equal length. The first is a survey of the sociology of professions. After considering various traits which might distinguish a profession from an occupation, e.g., the existence of a body of theoretical literature or of a professional organization, and finding these traits wanting, Dr. Wiegand comes down on the side of the American sociologist Everett C. Hughes and his students who