Universal Guide to Catalogs of Manuscripts and Inventories of Archival Collections: A Proposal for Cooperative Listing'

IN THIS DAY, when the specialist (to cite the popular saw) ever strives to learn more and more about less and less, and when the documentalist seeks to magnify the light of information upon topics of, perhaps, minuscule size, and when, above all, emphasis is upon the contemporary, it may appear anachronistic to propose, or even to contemplate proposing, control of one aspect of the macrocosm. Yet history, seeking and knowing, is universal and dependent upon documentation.

Certainly there can be no doubt that control of sources is a prime objective in any scheme for exploitation of sources. Therefore, I suggest for consideration the listing of all useful bibliographical controls, whether published or unpublished, such as guides, calendars, catalogs, inventories and indexes for the collections of manuscripts and for the archival *fonds* in public, semi-public, and significant private institutions throughout the world.

This proposal, as is self-evident, is concerned with two separate categories of documentation, manuscripts and archives, which in the implementation of any resultant project would require separate listing and which, therefore, will require separate attention in the devel-

¹ The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and they do not necessarily represent the views of any organization or agency.

Dr. Born is secretary general, International Council on Archives. opment of the proposal. Except in the Americas, the term "manuscript" regularly is reserved for books in manuscript, whereas in this Western Hemisphere it embraces correspondence, personal papers, journals, and similar private records. Archives, on the other hand, are the organic and organized records of an entity. In deference to long established custom in Europe and other parts of the world I shall discuss under "manuscripts" only the first type and include the New World type among "archives." Librarians will not need to be reminded that libraries not infrequently possess separate documents which are archival in nature, nor archivists that archival repositories frequently possess items, especially among their museum pieces, such as are often found in libraries.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Like many another "new" idea, the present proposal does not lack precedent. Modern attempts at an international listing of manuscripts are spread over the last 200 years. Although the universal listing of archives has appeared to some to be a task too gigantic for realization, nevertheless partial listings, usually for a specific purpose, have appeared within the past 75 years. The story, which provides a background essential to the understanding and evaluation of this newest version, is not without independent interest as historical documentation.

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Manuscripts

The first modern attempt at a universal listing of manuscripts was that of Bernard de Monfaucon who published his Bibliotheca Bibliothecarum Manuscriptorum Nova in two folio volumes, each containing about 1,000 pages, at Paris in 1739. One century later, Gustav Haenel brought out his more modest effort entitled Catalogi Librorum Manuscriptorum in one quarto volume of 1,200-odd columns, which he published at Leipzig in 1830. It covered the libraries of France, Switzerland, Belgium (that is, modern Belgium-Netherlands), Great Britain, Spain and Portugal. The third (and the last to be achieved) of these great pioneer efforts is the Dictionaire des manuscrits, ou recueil de catalogues de manuscrits existants dans les principales bibliothèques d'Europe, concernant plus particulièrement les matières ecclésiastiques et historiques, attributed to Mas Latrie, which Migne included in his Nouvelle Encyclopedie Théologique and published at Paris (1853) in two volumes.

Different in nature and in purpose, albeit international if not universal in scope, are several more recent undertakings which are cited as examples illustrative of a type. Gustav Becker's Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui (1885), a compilation largely from earlier fragmentary studies, lists those catalogs made before 1500. Wilhelm Weinberger contributed to this genre a number of titles; e.g., Catalogus Catalogorum: Verzeichnis der Bibliotheken die ältere Handschriften lateinischer Kirchenschriftsteller enthalten (1902 and 1908), Beiträge (1908)Handschriftenkunde and zur 1909), and Wegweiser durch die Sammlungen altphilologischer Handschriften (1930). The last two were published in the Sitzungsberichte der K. Akad. der Wissenschaften at Vienna. Paul Lehmann produced the only two volumes which appeared (1918 and 1928) in the series Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskata-

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loge Deutschlands und der Schweiz, and Max Manitius had published posthumously his Handschriften antiker Autoren in mittelalterlichen Bibliothekskatalogen (1935).

Examples of three more special types international catalog-manuscripts of (including archives) of diverse provenance and ownership which relate to a national history, manuscripts (including archives) of a national provenance now found in diverse localities, manuscripts of diverse provenance and ownership containing the works of a particular author-are: David M. Matteson, List of Manuscripts Concerning American History Preserved in European Libraries and Noted in Their Published Catalogues and Similar Printed Lists (1925); Ruben Vargas Ugarte, Manuscritos Peruanos en las Bibliotecas del Extranjero (1935 -); M.L.W. Laistner, A Hand-List of Bede Manuscripts (1943).²

The most recent scheme for extensive cataloging of which I have heard is that advanced by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique at Paris in 1952 for listing manuscripts written in Roman characters between the ninth and sixteenth centuries.³ Some aspects of the plan, such as the centralized card file and the file of microfilm copies of texts maintained at national centers, are not too different from the project of the International Association of Music Libraries which plans to establish a centralized collection of negative microfilm copies of music manuscripts from which positive copies may be purchased on demand.4

The most recent proposal for a gen-

m." Accademie e Biblioteche d' Italia, XXI (1953), 39-40.
"Preliminary Draft of a Proposal for an Inter-national Microfilm Archive of Music Manuscripts" (n.d., 8 p. processed). This statement is signed by Richard S. Hill, president, International Association of Music Libraries.

² Somewhat analogous to the various cataloging efforts are those for listing incipits. See, for example, Lynn Thorndike and Pearl Kibre, A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin (1937); Auguste Pelzer, "Repertoire d'incipit pour la litterature latine philosophique et theologique du moyen age," Revue d' Histoire Ecclesiastique, XLIII (1948), 495-512. ³ "Un catalogo internazionale dei manoscritti lati-ni," Accademie e Biblioteche d' Italia, XXI (1953), 39-40.

eral world catalog however of which I am aware is that by the late Seymour de Ricci, distinguished paleographer and amateur de manuscrits, which he prepared at the request of Dr. Waldo G. Leland, then director of the American Council of Learned Societies. In his "Proposals for a Bibliography of Catalogues of Manuscripts" (2 p., mimeographed), dated at Paris in June 1939, M. de Ricci remarked: "Strange to say, considering the importance of manuscript evidence in almost every branch of culture, there is not in existence a reliable handbook containing a list of the known collections of manuscripts, with some kind of a bibliography of the catalogues in which they are described."

Dr. Leland, in the letter of transmittal by which he brought the proposal to the attention of the executive council of the ACLS, said:

The need of such a guide, which would give comparable information for all important depositories, is obvious. A mere bibliography of the titles of published catalogues is not sufficient, for that does not give the scholar who proposes to work in a given depository any adequate idea of the collections that are to be found there, nor of the extent to which they have been satisfactorily catalogued. It is my own opinion, based upon considerable experience in research in manuscript collections, that the user of such materials needs, as a sort of first aid, a general aperçu of the collections in any given depository, accompanied by a bibliography of the useful printed or unprinted catalogues of which he can avail himself.

Just ten years earlier M. de Ricci had repeated at the First World Congress of Libraries and Bibliography held at Rome his proposal entitled "Projet d'une 'Bibliotheca Manuscriptorum Nova': Catalogue mondial des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques"⁵ which he had presented originally in a communication to the Académie des In-

⁵ Atti, II: 345-350.

scriptions et Belles-Lettres at Paris in August 1927. His plan for describing the estimated one million manuscripts (codices) in 20 volumes of 1,000 pages each, arranged by libraries and publishable in fascicles, was the object of a counter-proposal, "On the Possibility to Realize the Plan of a 'Bibliotheca Manuscriptorum Nova'"⁶ by Mr. Zdenek v. Tobolka, who proposed a central card file in which would be accumulated all entries relating to a writer. Neither proposal appears to have become the object of a resolution at the congress, and therefore neither advanced from the stage of proposal to that of project.

In 1923 the American Library Association established its Committee on Bibliography which had as one of its objectives "the promotion of a project for a union catalog of world manuscripts, a tool more and more urgently demanded by American research scholars."⁷ This committee labored for more than ten years, accomplished more than proponents who had immediately preceded it, but nevertheless fell short of its goal even as others had done. The frustration is apparent from the brief passage quoted herewith:

In October, 1933, the ALA Board having decided that it could not solicit for the project, it seemed idle to spend more time and money elaborating preparations and it was decided to publish the rough material gathered in the way of a survey, a union catalog of catalogs and studies in method, publishing as manuscript without pretending to complete or edit beyond the point reached automatically in compiling. . . . This survey does not include all national lists by any means, or even all universal sources. . . . The total number of collections, public or private, large or small, mentioned somewhere in print, is two or three times the number given in the standard lists.8

The tangible products of the com-

^e Ibid., II: 351-357. ^T The World's Collections of Manuscript Books: A Preliminary Survey (1933), p. v. ⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

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mittee, in addition to the volume from which the quotations have been taken. are four: Ernest C. Richardson's Summary of Method (1937); Henry A. Grubbs' The Manuscript Book Collections of Spain and Portugal (1933, 1935): Nabil A. Faris' A Demonstration Experiment with Oriental Manuscripts (1934); and Dr. Richardson's A List of Printed Catalogs of Manuscript Books (1935). In the first work, Dr. Richardson, chairman of the committee, cites the plan to catalog the world's western manuscripts in three years, at an annual cost of \$25,000, which the American Philological Association fruitlessly proposed to the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and he describes at length his own 30-year struggle to establish and implement a project for a world catalog.

Before passing on to the discussion of archives I should mention several other references which provide, in varying degree and by greatly varying methods, an international guide to catalogs of catalogs. In 1933 the Departement des Manuscrits of the Bibliotheque Nationale at Paris brought out the fourth edition of its Catalogue alphabetique des livres imprimés mis à la disposition des lecteurs dans la Salle de Travail which contains many of the titles basic to world-wide research. In 1937 Enrique Sparn of Argentina published Las Bibliotecas con Quinientos y mas Manuscritos del Viejo Mundo in which he lists, among many other items, a large number of published catalogs. He also points out, in passing, the difficulties which result from the use of the Americas of the word "manuscript" to include not only codices but also documents, acts, autographs.

In 1948 Professor Paul O. Kristeller of Columbia University published his "Latin Manuscript Books Before 1600: A Bibliography of the Printed Catalogues of Extant Collections"⁹ in which he assembled general works giving primarily bibliographical or statistical information about manuscript collections, catalogs (many of which he has analyzed) covering collections in more than one library, and catalogs of individual libraries. "On the whole," he says in his introduction, "cataloguing of the manuscript collections has been completed in France, and carried very far in Great Britain, Belgium, and a few other countries. Large gaps still exist not only for Spain but also for Italy and Germany. The ultimate goal, of course, is to describe in print all extant collections. Meanwhile, all handwritten catalogues available on the spot in the various libraries should be microfilmed as soon as possible." An appreciable aid to this end is provided by the author himself who five years later published a second bibliography which he entitled "A Tentative List of Unpublished Inventories of Imperfectly Catalogued Extant Collections,"10

Archives

In the last decades of the nineteenth and in the first of the twentieth century several works appeared which, although written for a specific purpose or from a special point of view, provide partial international coverage: Herman Osterley, Wegweiser durch die Literatur der Urkundensammlungen (1885-86), volume two of which deals with non-German institutions: Carl A. H. Burkhardt. Hand- und Addressbuch der deutschen Archive (1887) which describes collections in German-language areas as well as in Germany; Charles V. Langlois and Henri Stein, Les archives de l'histoire de France (1891-93), part two of which describes collections in archives outside France, and part three of which describes materials in manuscript libraries both within and without France; Gustav Wolf, Einfuehrung in das Studium der

¹⁰ Ibid., IX (1953), 393-418. The 500 titles were located in some 20 countries.

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⁹ Traditio, VI (1948), 227-317.

neueren Geschichte (1910), pages 665-729 of which, entitled "Das Archivwesen," enumerate quantities of inventories among other titles.

At the International Congress of Archivists and Librarians held at Brussels in 1910, M. Hubert Nelis of the Archives Générales du Royaume in Belgium presented a paper entitled "Les publications des administrations d'archives"¹¹ in which he pointed out the lamentable nonexistence of local and national inventories and guides, not to mention an international list of such controls. Although his resolution calling for such a general bibliography of all publications of archival repositories was adopted by the section devoted to the question and ratified by the General Assembly at its closing session, nothing more concrete appears to have occurred as a direct result.

In 1953, at the Second International Congress of Archivists convened by the International Council on Archives, the Society of American Archivists presented a resolution that "the ICA study the feasibility of compiling a selected, annotated, universal bibliography on archival administration"12 which, presumably, would contain titles of national lists. The same group likewise proposed that the ICA study the feasibility of compiling a universal guide to the records of international government-sponsored conferences and the records of nongovernmental international conferences sponsored by non-continuing bodies.13 Although both resolutions were adopted no report of action has been received.

The years intervening between 1910 and 1953 saw the publication of such general references as Minerva-Handbücher: Die Archive (1932) which lists data on archives in twelve countries of Europe; Hans Nabholz and Paul Kläui, Internationaler Archivführer (1936),which complements the Guide international des archives: Europe (1934) which had been prepared by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation; such delimited references as those prepared by Roscoe R. Hill, The National Archives of Latin America (1945) and American Missions in European Archives (1951); and such diverse but particularized items as the guides to the materials for American history prepared by various scholars for various countries-e.g., Carl R. Fish, Guide to the Materials for American History in Roman and Other Italian Archives (1911) and the Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-occupied Countries (1946) which was prepared and published by the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction.

Under the sponsorship of the ICA, M. Robert-Henri Bautier published in 1953 his "Bibliographie selective des guides d'archives"14 which supplements and extends in coverage the Guide international. The ICA, which has been studying since 1951 the problems inherent in revising the Guide and in extending it to world coverage, in the fall of 1952 addressed a preliminary questionnaire to national archives and associations of archivists. No report has been published. In that same year the Library of Congress issued a 25-page list of Unpublished Bibliographical Tools in Certain Archives and Libraries of Europe, a sampling from some 100 institutions in eight countries, which was intended as a stimulant to others to carry on by listing and by microfilming the actual finding aids.15

PROPOSAL-PROJECT

The conversion of the proposal into a project involves consideration of at

¹⁴ Journal of Documentation, IX (1953), 1-41. ¹⁵ The Council of Europe in 1954 adopted a scheme (a) to microfilm all useful unpublished find-ing aids in the national archives of the member countries and (b) to exchange these films mutually. Presumably such a program demands a priori a knowledge of what exists.

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¹¹ Congres international des archivistes et des biblio-thécaires, Brussels, 1910. Actes, (Brussels, 1912), pp. 144-150.
¹² American Archivist, XVI (1953), 375.
¹³ Ibid.

least six items: (a) estimates of quantities of materials, (b) method of operation, (c) dissemination of results, (d) time schedule, (e) costs, (f) sources of funds. Here, however, I shall limit myself mainly to a discussion of the first three topics.

Quantity of Materials

It is extremely difficult to estimate the number of catalogs of manuscripts or the number of guides and inventories for archival fonds and collections of personal papers. In 1939 M. de Ricci estimated that there were approximately one million extant manuscripts (codices written prior to 1500); and that 200,-000 were housed at the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, another 100,000 at the Bodleian and the Vatican, and the remaining 700,000 scattered among a very large number of libraries. How many catalogs result from this? How many result from the addition of "modern" manuscripts such as correspondence, personal papers, music scores, literary texts and the like? How many guides and inventories are there for the archival fonds housed in thousands of archival depositories? And what of the Near East and Asia which most persons have not included in their calculations?

The British Museum's The Catalogues of the Manuscript Collections (1951) and The Catalogues of the Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts (1951) together list about 200 catalogs of manuscripts, one of which, "The Class Catalogue," is composed of 106 volumes. At an estimated 20 titles per page, Richardson's A List of Printed Catalogs of Manuscript Books, which covers the world, contains approximately 7,000 titles of catalogs. The État des Inventaires des Archives Nationales, Departementales, Communales et Hospitalieres in France as of January 1937 lists nearly 900 inventories and indexes, both printed and manuscript, at the Archives

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Nationales in Paris and an estimated 5,000 for the other institutions. The *Guide international* lists for four countries (France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands) some 300 items by title; refers generally to certain periodicals and series; and, in the case of France, mentions the existence of 500 inventories in the archives of departments.¹⁶

My estimate of quantity presumes, for manuscripts, that (a) Richardson's list is as complete as the compiler believed it to be, (b) additional catalogs have been printed, (c) still other catalogs remain in manuscript, (d) not all catalogs will be worth listing; and, for archival fonds and collections of personal papers, that (a) most lists are very incomplete, (b) additional finding aids have been printed, (c) many finding aids are constantly being prepared, (d) the general lack of guides, or comprehensive lists, requires enumeration of countless specific inventories, (e) not all finding aids will be worth listing, (f) not all types of finding aids can be listed regardless of quality. For manuscripts (codices), therefore. I estimate the number of catalogs which will require listing to be 30,-000; for archival fonds and collections of personal papers, with even greater hesitancy, I estimate the number to be 100,000.

Method of Operation

Clearly the first step in actual operations would be enumeration of all ascertainable printed catalogs and similar works. This postulates access to extensive reference collections rich in bibliographical tools. From this it follows that the project could best be conducted from such locales as London, Paris, Rome, Washington. At the last named full use could be made of the work which Dr. Richardson was obliged to leave unfinished. Under the direction of a general editor and two assistant edi-

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¹⁶ The Minerva Jahrbuch der gelehrten Welt (1937) lists approximately 1,700 archival repositories throughout the world.

tors (one for manuscripts, one for archives) a clerical staff with some competence in languages could extract titles on cards, revise from source if necessary, and file the cards alphabetically by author under general works and under specific works, arranging the latter under country, city, institution. Under the general direction of the central office, national agencies such as the national library, the academy of letters, or a professional society in each country could be asked to procure and transmit to the central office all titles of pertinent unprinted catalogs and similar works. The cards for these would be integrated into the central file.

No one, I am sure, will be misled by the apparent simplicity of the scheme. The value of an international guide to finding aids has appeared obvious to many, but it may not appear obvious to many others: those who will want access to knowledge of collections in their custody to remain dependent upon a visit to their institution: those who will object to the foreseeable consequence of listing, namely requests for photographic reproduction of the (perhaps) imperfect finding aids in their possession; those who regard their collections as a private preserve. Even from countries in which there is a centralized authority over archives and libraries delays must be anticipated. Even the minutiae of bibliographical form will bedevil the editors and may lead to the pursuit of ghosts or the establishment of double entries for single entities.17

Dissemination

An international clearing house of information, which is what the central office would become ad interim, has definite limitations upon its usefulness even in a world connected by air mail routes. Therefore, the logical end product of any project should be publication. This, obviously, must be in two series (archives, manuscripts) and I sug-

gest for consideration that it be accomplished by fascicles restricted to a single country or area. Fascicles are recommended, in spite of certain negative characteristics, because their use would permit publication of readied material, without delay caused by incomplete reports from countries which take alphabetical precedence, and because they would permit wider distribution of national lists among institutions which might not want an entire volume or series.

If the managers of the project would sacrifice esthetics to economics, they could achieve publication of the Universal Guide at a very reasonable cost. I suggest that the materials be typed upon cards which can be mounted on a board, photographed, and printed by photooffset in reduced size.18 On pages 9" x 111//, arranged in three columns, 50 titles (at an average of 6 lines each) could be reproduced neatly and legibly on each page. On the basis of the estimated 30,000 titles for catalogs of manuscripts this scheme would result in 600

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⁴⁷ M. de Ricci appended to his 1939 proposal, as an example of form, the materials (5 p. mimeographed) which he had at hand for the Biblioteca Nazionale at Florence. A comparison of this list with the titles is by the Bibliotheque Nationale (1933), Richardson (1935), G. Gabrieli (Notizie statistiche, storiche, bibliografiche delle collezioni di manoscritti oggi conservati nelle biblioteche italiane [1936], Sparn (1937), and Kristeller (1948) showed some diversity in coverage and considerable diversity in form of entry. A few examples of the latter will suffice. Guiseppe Molini (Codici manoscritti idaliani . . .) is listed by name in de Ricci but only by title, as if anonymous, in Gabrieli, Francesco Palermo (1 manoscritti dell' Nots, and 1 pt., but in Gabrieli and Kristeller as in 3 vols. Aurelio Bianchi (Relazione . . . dei manoscritti appears as a separate publication), but under the collective title, "Indici e Cataloghi," by B. N., Gabrieli and Kristeller. Lupo Buonazia (Catalogo dei codici arabi . . . , is listed by a Ricci as a separate (43 p.) offprinted from Cataloghi dei codici orientali . . . , for which volume and year are not given, whereas Gabrieli lists the title only in series for which all indicia are supplied. And August Reifferscheid (Bibliotheca patrum italica), omitted by de Ricci, is listed in diverse ways by the B. N. and Gabrieli (separate publication, general). Richardson (without title of work, with pagination ustaled), and Kristeller (full references, full analysis). Caveant lectores et collaborantes.
¹⁴ M. an example of this method is the recent publication of the Library of Congress, British Manousci of Learned Societies (1955; xvii, 179 p.), wherein more than 11,000 titles are listed on 145 pages. The type size was reduced photographically from 12 point to 8 point.

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pages of lists to which would be added title pages, introduction, and name index which, for discussion, may be estimated arbitrarily at another 200 pages. For the archival series the estimated 100,000 finding aids would produce 2,000 pages of text and would require some 500 pages of introductory and final matter. That is, the two series would appear on a grand total of only 3,300 pages.

Schedule, Costs, Funds

Cooperative projects, especially those on an international scale, have never been distinguished by the celerity of their completion. Probably five years would elapse between the active inception of the project and the publication of the final fascicle. The choice of locale for the central office and for the reproduction will affect the costs materially, although probably not so much as it would have done even 20 years ago. Other cost factors are the size, qualifications, and rates of remuneration of paid staff; the number of contributing staff; the amount, if any, of space, equipment, and utilities services furnished gratis to the central office.

The cost of a project the size of that proposed here will not be negligible. It is, very probably, too expensive for selfsupport through subscription. It is, however, the type of project to which institutions, public or private, such as libraries and academies often have offered hospitality in the past. It is, moreover, the type of project which should appeal directly to those philanthropic foundations interested in the dissemination of ideas which will lead to better understanding between peoples. It is nothing less than the key to the keys to knowledge that is locked in unpublished source materials. The division into manuscript and archival series and the possible further division of each into an Eastern and a Western subseries would permit partial support of the project by each of several foundations. The interest, at 5%, on one million dollars guaranteed annually for five years would do much to assure the inception and successful prosecution of the project.

Classification Schemes in Specialized Fields

Classified outlines of subject matter in specialized fields of knowledge are currently being collected by the Special Libraries Association. Such classification schemes are of tremendous help, not only to librarians but to researchers, scientists, and others concerned with organizing the literature in their particular fields of interest.

The Special Libraries Association maintains a "loan collection" of such classifications on subjects ranging from "accounting" to "wood." The collection includes both the natural and social sciences in broad categories such as chemistry, physics, and law, and also in narrower subdivisions such as "entomology," "radiology" and "steels."

This collection of classification schemes is currently being brought up to date and ex-

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panded, and contributions of classifications for all fields of knowledge are being solicited. Such contributions can be donated either on a permanent basis or on loan.

The collection is housed at the School of Library Science, Western Reserve University. Plans are under way to supply microfilm or photostat copies at a nominal fee.

The work of enlarging the collection and bringing it up to date is under the direction of the Committee on Special Classifications of the Special Libraries Association. Donations of classifications or requests for further information should be addressed to: Allen Kent, Chairman, Committee on Special Classifications, SLA, c/o School of Library Science, Western Reserve University, Cleveland 6, Ohio.