

# **MADRAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

**Publication Series, 8**

## **COLON CLASSIFICATION**

**(Revised Edition)**

# MADRAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## PUBLICATION SERIES

1. *Library movement*.—A Collection of Essays by Divers Hands with a Foreword by the Rt. Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, P.C., C.H., and a message from the Rt. Hon'ble Viscount Goschen of Hawkhurst, G.C.S.I., C.B.E., V.D. Demy. 8vo., 1929. *Out of print.*
2. *The five laws of library science*, by S. R. Ranganathan, M.A., L.T., F.L.A., University Librarian, Madras, with a Foreword by Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Ayyar, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., and with an Introduction by W. C. Berwick Sayers, F.L.A., Chief Librarian, Croydon Public Libraries. Demy 8vo., 1931.
3. *Colon classification*, by S. R. Ranganathan, M.A., L.T., F.L.A. In three parts. Demy 8vo. First edition, 1933.
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. To  
MY BELOVED PROFESSOR  
EDWARD B. ROSS

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(SECOND EDITION)

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## PREFACE

BY

### THE MADRAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

WITH the object of spreading the essential ideas of Library Movement and of directing thought towards the creation of a library service suited to our country, the Madras Library Association inaugurated its Publication Series in 1929. The first volume, *The library movement* was by Divers Hands. The next six volumes were all by S. R. Ranganathan. As their titles show they dealt with technical and practical aspects of library work: *The five laws of library science*, 1931; *Colon classification*, 1933; *Classified catalogue code*, 1934; *Library administration*, 1935; *Prolegomena to library classification*, 1937; *Theory of library catalogue*, 1938. All these volumes have circulated well both in India and abroad.

As another instalment of this Publication Series the Association now publishes a second (*revised*) edition of the *Colon classification* the manuscript of which Mr. S. R. Ranganathan has been good enough to place at its disposal.

The fourth part of the book, which gives about 3,000 examples of Call Numbers, is a reprint of the Classified Part of the 1938 Supplement of the Catalogue of the Madras University Library. The Association is indebted to the Vice-Chancellor and the Syndicate of the University of Madras for permission to take reprints for issue as part of this publication.

The Association hopes that this volume will circulate as widely as its predecessors and that it will help libraries in India and elsewhere to organise their work in an efficient, scientific and serviceable way.



## INTRODUCTION

### TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE purpose of this book is neither to expound the general philosophy of classification nor to discuss the theories of book classification. Information on the former subject can be had in any good book on logic and on the latter in *The manual of classification* by W. C. Berwick Sayers (and in my *Prolegomena to library classification*). The aim of the book is to give a working manual for classifying books according to the scheme of classification which has been termed the "Colon Classification".

The *Colon classification* differs from Dewey's *Decimal classification* and the volumes of *Congress classification* in some fundamental respects. It is their manifest aim to provide a ready-made Class Number for most topics. Hence, such manuals consist, for the most part, of the Schedules of Classification. And their Schedules are by several times larger than that of the *Colon classification*.

In the *Colon classification*, however, ready-made Class Numbers are not assigned to topics. The Schedule in the *Colon classification* may be said to consist of certain standard unit schedules. The standard unit schedules correspond to the standard pieces in a Meccano apparatus. Even a child knows, that, by combining these standard pieces in different ways, many different objects can be constructed. So also, by combining the classes in the different unit schedules in assigned permutations and combinations, the Class Numbers for all possible topics can be constructed. In this scheme, the function of the Colon (:) is like that of the bolts and nuts in a Meccano set. (*Vide* Fundamental constituent terms *vs.* derived composite terms in the *Prolegomena to library classification*. Pp. 135-139.)

A more detailed account of the part played by the symbol "colon" is given in Section 61 of Chapter 6 of Part I.

Certain other devices enumerated in Chapter 6 of Part I also act as connecting apparatus.

One natural result of this method of giving certain standard schedules, rather than ready-made Class Numbers for topics, is the extraordinary mnemonic quality that the Scheme has acquired. It has been felt in the libraries using this Scheme that, after a little experience, the need for looking into the

## INTRODUCTION

Schedule becomes increasingly small; and this is so even for specialised monographs requiring a long drawn out Class Number.

It has been found necessary to give, in addition to the unit schedules, a set of Rules for constructing the Class Numbers with the aid of the unit schedules. The spirit of standardisation has greatly simplified the Rules themselves. The first six chapters which occupy a third of the First Part bring together many of the general Rules and Devices and discuss them once for all; with the result that the chapters devoted to the classification of specific subjects gain considerably in brevity and clarity.

Another feature of this scheme is the very great minuteness of classification in most of the subjects. Even extremely specialised monographs get individualised in this scheme more easily than in other schemes. It is a matter of experience that such a detailed classification is quite necessary if all the resources of a library on every topic, however great its intension, are to be disclosed with the least expenditure of time.

In addition to the great minuteness of its classes, this scheme is much more hospitable than any other, owing chiefly to the Eight Devices explained in Chapter 6 of Part I. This can be experienced in the schedule of almost every subject.

Further, the notation being completely decimal, its elasticity is quite commensurate with the hospitality of the schedules. The length of notation is proportionate to the intension; thus the Call Number of a common text-book will be very short.

Topics in Indology have been worked out in far greater detail than in other schemes. Books on Indology are numerous not only in Indian libraries but also in many foreign libraries. The Indological schedules will also be of use in classifying Oriental Manuscript Libraries. It is hoped to include in the next edition similar detailed schedules for other oriental subjects as well.

This scheme has been in use in the Madras University Library for nearly ten (now sixteen) years and has behaved admirably, in spite of the large number of specialised books and monographs which the library possesses.

## LENGTH OF NOTATION

An abnormally long class number given in the first edition to illustrate the extreme length to which it can go and lack of opportunity to apply the scheme to a varied collection appear to have misled some to believe that the Colon Notation is long. Pages 83-89 of the *Prolegomena to library classification* contain a systematic statistical analysis of this question. It is proved mathematically that the Colon Notation is distinctly shorter than the Decimal Notation whatever be the measure of length taken.

An important respect in which the Colon Classification differs from other schemes is its ideal to individualise every topic. This ideal it realises with a remarkably short notation.

A random selection of about 250 articles from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was used for practical work in classification in the last year's session of the School of Library Science of the University of Madras. The class numbers were worked out (1) to the maximum possible intension by Decimal Classification, (2) to the same degree of intension by Colon Classification and (3) to the maximum possible intension by Colon Classification, which resulted in exact individualisation in most cases.

Then the averages of the length of the notation were calculated. The result was as follows:

<i>Average number of digits in class number</i>	
1. Decimal (Maximum possible intension)	5.8
2. Colon (Same intension as above)	5
3. Colon (Maximum possible intension, resulting in individualisation of topics)	6.5
4. Decimal (Individualisation of topics not possible).	

Should individualisation of topics be aimed at or should it be sacrificed to keep the notation within "economic limits"?

Bliss stands for the latter. Many of his criticisms of the Colon Classification are traceable to that position.

The Colon Classification works for the former, without too much violence to "economic limits", as statistical analysis shows.

Indeed the chief field for future research by classificationists is the invention of more powerful principles by which individualisation of topics can be secured with even a shorter notation.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

This revised edition does not essentially differ from the first. But the following distinctive features may be noted:

(1) In response to the suggestion of Mr. Wm. Stetson Merrill and other friends in various countries that there should be plenty of illustrations, a fourth part has been added. It gives about 3,000 examples of class numbers constructed according to the Colon Scheme. These are in effect chosen at random: they represent books (other than current volumes of periodical publications) added to the Madras University Library in 1938.

This part may be useful to:

(a) Librarians who work in libraries already classified by other schemes and therefore find no opportunity to try the Colon Scheme in practice;

(b) Freshmen who have to learn the subject; and

(c) Libraries anxious to classify their collections but unable to engage full-timed trained librarians or assistants.

The substantive part of the book continues to be practically of the same size as before, although the size of the book as a whole has nearly doubled as a result of the addition of the fourth part.

(2) Since the publication of the first edition the foundations of the theory of classification have been critically explored and reconstructed in the *Prolegomena to library classification*. The whole scheme has now been subjected to the searchlight of its twenty-eight canons and minor maladjustments—mostly relating to the Octave Principle and the Unscheduled Mnemonics—have been set right.

(3) To satisfy the Canon of Currency certain terms have been changed, the major changes being that of 'Philology' to 'Linguistics' and 'Politics' to 'Political Science'. In the light of the same Canon 'Anthropology' has been transferred from the Main Class 'V History' to the Class 'Y1 Sociology'.

(4) The schedules for Common Subdivisions, Sound, Electricity, Technology, Biology, Public Health, Indian Philosophy, Sociology and Law have been revised or recast in the light of the experiments and observations made during the last

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

five years. About 800 new divisions have been added to the schedules as a whole.

(5) The schedules illustrating the Classic Device have been enlarged. About 300 new classics have been added.

(6) The 'Last Octave Principle', one of great potentiality, has newly been enunciated in Rule 661. The associated 'Penultimate Octave Principle' follows in Rule 662.

(7) The Auto-Bias Device mentioned in the *Prolegomena to library classification* has been enunciated in Rule 683 as a special form of the Bias Number Device.

(8) Schedules have been added for Mechanics, Veterinary Science, Ancient Tamil Poetry, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Anthropology.

(9) A new Main Class ' $\Delta$  Spiritual Experience and Mysticism' has been introduced. Its necessity, scope and resource are explained in chapter  $\Delta$ .

**PART I**  
**RULES OF CLASSIFICATION**

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**1.17**