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COLON CLASSIFICATION

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PART I Rules of Classification

PART II Schedules of Classification

PART III Index to the Schedules



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To
MY BELOVED PROFESSOR
EDWARD B. ROSS

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PREFACE

BY

THE MADRAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

WITH the object of spreading the essential ideas of the 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*, a collection of essays by Divers Hands, was widely circulated throughout the country. The second volume, *The Five Laws of Library Science* by Mr. S. R. Ranganathan sought to expound the principles of library organisation and management in a systematic form. The preface to that book contained the announcement "With the present volume on the *Five Laws of Library Science* . . . the Madras Library Association commences the publication of a series of books on the technical and practical aspects of library work."

In partial fulfilment of this announcement, the Association is publishing the present volume on the *Colon Classification* the manuscript of which Mr. S. R. Ranganathan had been good enough to place at the disposal of the Association.

The Association hopes that this volume will get as widely circulated as its predecessors and enable the libraries in India and elsewhere to get their resources classified and arranged in an efficient, scientific and serviceable manner.

INTRODUCTION

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. 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. These 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.

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 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 years and has behaved admirably, in spite of the large number of specialised books and monographs which the library possesses.
