I want to begin by recommending this book wholeheartedly to everyone who is concerned with the problem of making knowledge available to searchers, because although its relevance to librarians is immediately obvious the book indexer may think at first sight that it does not particularly concern him. But he will be wrong, as I hope to show in this review.

No one in this country is better qualified than B. C. Vickery to write on the subject of classification and he may be taken as representative of an important section of the most advanced thought of the day. He is also very well acquainted with research in other countries on somewhat different lines from his own so that his text, together with the bibliographies for each chapter, form a remarkably lucid and succinct guide to the present state of research into methods of "information retrieval". Despite this lucidity no one without some knowledge of previous literature must expect to find the whole of the book easy reading. As the structure of knowledge built up by modern science becomes more and more complicated, the techniques for organising it must necessarily grow more elaborate; present workers must build on past contributions and for precision their studies must have a specialised terminology.

In addition, the author deals with the problem in its most comprehensive form and when he uses the term "indexing of books" he means collections of books, not the contents of individual books. For those who are concerned only with the latter problem some parts of the book will not be of interest, but its main thesis does apply to everyone and may be stated by direct reference from Chapter I: "... classification is essential in all forms of subject indexing, in order to reveal the pattern of knowledge to the searcher." Classification is used explicitly by the librarian and this book deals directly with his problems, but the book indexer must also work from a classification even if only implicitly, and he, no less than the librarian, can benefit from the chapters dealing with the analysis of subjects, the construction of schedules and the provision of effective alphabetical keys to systematic orders.

A third apparent limitation of the book is the "science" in its title. It is true that the majority of examples are taken from the physical sciences but the principles are equally applicable to social studies: compound subjects, for example, create difficulties in such subjects as education and business management just as they do in physical sciences.

In Chapter I the author sets out to answer the question "What is the use of classification in subject indexing?" He surveys the current techniques for information retrieval, and shows how all attempts to treat alphabetical indexing,
co-ordinate indexing or mechanical selection as alternatives to classification have had to fall back on classification in the end. Classification is essential to reveal the pattern of knowledge to the searcher and to provide unequivocal combination order for compound subjects in alphabetical indexing.

Chapter II is called "The Construction of Classification Schedules," and while most readers of this journal will probably never be called on to design a schedule for general use, they should benefit enormously from this study of the structure of knowledge. Conscious or unconscious, a classification must be behind our indexing and the more conscious we make it the better are the results likely to be. Even for those who know their own special subject inside out, it could be extremely useful to have such an effective method for analysing the subject they do not know quite so well, as most book indexers have to do at some time.

Chapter III on Notation and Chapter IV on Mechanical Selection are more limited in their application but will be of great interest to anyone concerned with collections of literature.

Chapter V describes a fully flexible indexing system which not only provides specific reference to each subject but also generic survey and some degree of reference between co-ordinate terms. It includes a demonstration of how an alphabetical index can be improved by being based on the right sort of classification.

The book concludes with three very good appendices: a short history of the classification of science; some examples of faceted classifications, including Soil Science and Food Technology; and a discussion of fundamental categories in the world of knowledge.

Derek W. Langridge.

TOOLS OF OUR TRADE—(1)

It is proposed from time to time to review books, both new and old, which are useful and informative to members of the Society in their professional work and which they may wish to add to their personal library. The first to be dealt with in this way are three newly published reference works.

Encyclopaedia of Librarianship.


This work which was compiled largely as the result of a suggestion by our Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Collison, who himself is responsible for the entry on Indexing of books and periodicals, should, despite its many defects and shortcomings, be warmly welcomed. The book "is designed to fill a noticeable gap in the available literature of librarianship, and to provide a comprehensive quick reference book on all aspects of the subject . . . in the style of an encyclopaedia with articles and entries ranging from a few words defining a term to signed monographs on the more important subjects ".

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Many of the entries are lengthy and detailed and excellent introductions to the subject, e.g., Colon classification, Government libraries, etc., but others are severely and unnecessarily brief, e.g., abstract, compositor. There are, too, some strange omissions, e.g., microcard and its allied techniques. The more important entries are signed and there are over 60 contributors all of whom are well versed in their subject.

Although the Encyclopaedia in this first edition is, without doubt, of more use to librarians than to indexers, it is also a work of general reference for all connected with books and periodicals and printing and it is to be hoped that future editions which are envisaged will reflect a wider range of interests. That the editor would welcome suggestions to this end is evident for he says "It is hoped to fill gaps and enlarge the scope in future editions on the same co-operative basis which has made the present work possible".

Perhaps our members would note.

The Concise Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, 600-1950.

Ed. by George Watson. Cambridge University Press. 1958. ix, 272 pp. 20/-.

Scholars, and others, will know of those massive works, The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 vols (together with its own summary by George Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature) and The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature edited by F. W. Bateson in 4 vols with a supplement, which between them constitute a complete and detailed guide to what is possibly the world's richest national literature. But for the average reader the sheer bulk is overwhelming and a barrier to use.

The new book provides "a concise statement of the bibliography of all periods of English literature from Caedmon to Dylan Thomas" and can be unhesitatingly recommended. The editor has "tried to include such authors . . . as the reader of a bibliography of English literature might ordinarily expect to find there" and the book is a means of identifying some 400 authors in the period 600-1950 who were English natives or mainly resident in the British Isles. Thus American and Commonwealth writers are excluded.

The book first lists bibliographies, literary histories, anthologies, etc., and then divides into six literary/historical periods: the Old English period (600-1100), the Middle English (1100-1500), the Renaissance to the Restoration (1500-1660), the Restoration to the Romantics (1660-1800), the Nineteenth Century (1800-1900) and the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1950). The authors are listed alphabetically within these periods. Each entry has two parts, works "by", giving the main works with dates and editors and annotations where necessary, and works "about" which includes standard biographies and major and general critical studies. The
emphasis is on books rather than on articles, although occasionally eminent scholarly essays are included. Where applicable a published bibliography of the author’s work is also noted.

_A handbook for printers’ readers._

The Provincial Guild of Printers’ Readers, 1958. 32 pp. 2/6d.

This is a very useful and practical book which sets out concisely and in a pleasant informative manner the work and duties of a printers’ reader.

Based on the standard practice in a number of the larger provincial printing houses it should be read carefully by all who are interested in the means whereby the written word becomes the printed word. The chapter readings are indicative of the nature of the work. After an interesting introduction on the ethics of the job the chapters deal with preparation of copy, first proof to press, bookwork, commercial printing, signs and marks used in correcting proofs, etc.

One serious deficiency is in the section, _Books of reference_. This needs a severe overhaul and reorganisation both in its inclusions and in its exclusions. The category headings—phrases such as _Personal “Musts”_ and _Books to Hoard_—should be avoided and there should be less vagueness about many of the entries. Specific titles should be recommended.