

**CLASSIFICATION, THEORETICAL AND
PRACTICAL: 1. THE ORDER OF THE SCIENCES;
2. THE CLASSIFICATION OF BOOKS,
TOGETHER WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING
AN ESSAY TOWARDS A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
HISTORY OF CLASSIFICATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649142880

Classification, theoretical and practical: 1.The order of the sciences; 2.The classification of books, together with an appendix containing an essay towards a bibliographical history of classification by Ernest Cushing Richardson

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ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON

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THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL

- I. The Order of the Sciences*
- II. The Classification of Books*

Together with an Appendix containing an
Essay towards a Bibliographical History
of Systems of Classification

BY

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52054
1901

THE NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION ALUMNI LECTURES
1900-1901

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1901

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PREFACE.

A word of explanation is due to the members of the Alumni Association regarding these lectures. The invitation to deliver them was a double one; on the one hand from a representative of the school who wished something on the philosophical order, which should be a contribution to the theory of library science, and on the other hand from a representative of the alumni who wished something very practical. The lectures are the result of an attempt to meet both wishes even at the risk of falling between two stools.

There is a perhaps small, but very earnest, number of librarians at the present day who are extremely anxious that the rising generation of librarians should be thoroughly grounded in the habit of searching the historical and philosophical basis of their art to the very bottom. They believe that the real progress of things in years to come depends precisely on that thing, that there is no danger of any neglect of the most thorough study of practical method in every aspect, but that there is danger that the habit of scientific thought will be neglected. They be-

lieve as cordially as any that the scholar without business ability and training is as much out of place in a library as he would be in Wall Street, but they believe also and with equal conviction that the best banker without literary and scholarly attainment is a pitiable spectacle as a librarian.

This view is perhaps held as concretely at the Albany Library School as anywhere, although the bibliographical and even palaeographical courses at Pratt Institute and elsewhere are strong symptoms of the same feeling. At the Albany school with its nearly fifty students, every one college trained, if anywhere, something of the most scholarly possible work can be, and is, attempted with success. It was felt that here, if anywhere, the attempt might be made to present to students of library science the view that the most highly philosophical treatment that can be given to its problems has important bearing on progress in the most practical details of the art.

It is by no means intended to claim that these particular lectures represent adequate philosophical knowledge or that their conclusions are in any sense final. They are simply the thinking of this one lecturer along this line. If there is in them any contribution, however small, so much the better. The point

of the lectures, however, was not so much to reach results as to incite others to scholarly work. If the lectures fail to reach this end, whether through being too scholastic or for any other reason, it will be a matter of regret to the lecturer, but it will be his fault, not the fault of the principle.

Of these lectures it may perhaps be said with some degree of reason that a pure discussion of the order of the sciences seems to belong rather to the college course itself than to a library school course. As a matter of fact, however, the student in college does not get this—at least does not get it in that intensely practical way in which it comes to those whose life work will be the interpretation of a system, or perhaps helping in the evolution of a new system.

As regards the matter in itself considered, one may sustain the thesis that it is as necessary for a thoroughly first class librarian to know the philosophical order and divisions of the sciences as it is for a bridge-builder to know Mechanics. Those librarians therefore who say that they "do not see the use" of the study of incunabula, palaeography, the laws (rather than the rules) of classification, the history of libraries, ethics and social conditions as governing and governed by the production and distribution of books, the theory

of literature, etc., etc., have an undoubted right to their point of view, but that point of view is not the one calculated to produce a true librarian.

There are those who seem to think that anything scholarly leads to unpracticality because many of the men represented to be most learned are unpractical. But are there none unpractical among the ignorant? Learning which is not practical is not scholarly but scholastic. Of learning which is practical there cannot be too much in any trade. Other things being equal — heredity, personality and common sense — the more "learned" a librarian is the better he will buy, the better organize his treasury, secretaryship, shelf and delivery and all the other departments, the better too will his books be cataloged, classified and used.

Since the lectures were delivered two observations have been made which require notice here. Mr. E. M. Fairchild, of the Albany Educational Church Board, has, apropos of the question of the natural order, called attention to the fact that the new educators, not only in colleges but in secondary schools, are coming to arrange their lines of teaching according to the "natural" order of the sciences. It follows that if the system of classification in vogue in any library is at variance