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"Laboratory Work" in Library Science

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Special Studies
in Conjunction with
Honors Program

Submitted to Mrs. Chapel.

"LABORATORY WORK" IN LIBRARY SCIENCE

Marty Rayfield

Fall Semester, 1967

"LABORATORY WORK" IN LIBRARY SCIENCE

This special studies was the practical application (in a "laboratory") of what has been learned in several library science courses. The laboratory consisted of shelf after shelf of unclassified books arranged in no order and covering fields from physical education to American literature. The collection had to be evaluated, generally organized, classified, lettered and reshelfed. Later, author, title, and shelf-list cards will be made. From a hodge-podge of books with limited value because of lack of organization, this collection has become a useful library. No longer will one have to search for a book through every shelf only to find that it has been loaned or lost. With an organized arrangement, a book may be located immediately or accounted for if it is not there, since each book has a specific location.

The first step in organizing this collection of over six hundred books was appraisal to note the major areas to be dealt with. The largest number of books fell into the 800's--poetry, drama, rhetoric, and fiction (novels, short stories, essays). Of course, there were a number of English grammars, dictionaries, spellers, and language guides in this English professor's collection. The rest of the books included histories, handbooks, etiquette (1), physical education (1), fine arts (music, sculpture, painting), biographies, economics, bulletins, and catalogs.

After the initial appraisal some general organization was effected to aid the classification process. The basic groups were; drama, novels, American literature other than novels, and plays, English literature other than novels and plays, rhetorics, grammars, 100's, 200's, and world anthologies. This greatly facilitated classification since details concerning classifying short stories, for instance, were not so difficult to remember if all the short story anthologies were done together.

The most time-consuming and difficult section of this special studies was the actual classification. Since there was no Unabridged Dewey Decimal Classification Table available for use outside Riley Library, a great deal of unnecessary time was wasted copying entire sections from the library copy to be used later. An old abridged volume was made available and was helpful in looking up general headings: however, since these volumes do change from time to time, it was necessary to double-check everything in the more current unabridged edition. (For instance, prosody books used to be classified in the 800's, but now are in the 400's)

For further verification, each book was looked for in the National Union Catalog. The Library of Congress card number (or the copyright date) was recorded for each book. With this information plus the author and title, it was possible to find a Dewey decimal number assigned to some of the books by the Library of Congress catalogers. Some books were not listed and some had such recent copyright dates that the National Union Catalogs in which they were to be listed were not available. If the numbers were not included in the National Union Catalog entry, the number was sometimes found in Riley Library's card catalog. The Book Review Digest provided classification information for only one book. It was sometimes possible to arrive at a suitable classification number by comparing similar books which had been classified previously *with* the one in question. (In most cases, an attempt was made to limit the classification number to five numerals. In such a small collection, it seemed unnecessary to have many numbers any longer than this.)

When a classification number was decided, it was written on a slip of paper and inserted in the top of the book. Not only would the correct number be with each book for the lettering process, but it was possible to determine at a glance which books had been classified. Of course, there were two records of a book's number--one in the book and one kept on a cumulative list along with each title and author. To assure consistency in classification and to shorten unnecessarily long numbers, the list was gone over several times.

With the classification completed, the next step was clearing the shelves and arranging the books in a more exact order. It was impossible to letter all the books and then shelve them all at once because the work was done in an office area which had to be kept relatively free from clutter. The books were lettered from the shelf. Since this was a relatively small collection (600-700 books), it seemed unnecessary to assign each book a Gutter number. Instead, a call number consists of the classification number plus the first three letters of the author's last name: for instance, the call number for the English Review Manual by James A. Gowen is $\frac{42812}{Gow}$. A novel by James Steinbeck would have $\frac{F}{Ste}$ as a call number, the "F" standing for "fiction."

The lettering was done with a lettering pen and white ink. If a book had a spine on which the lettering would not show up, cloth tape was put on the spine and the lettering was put on the tape. (If a book had a good jacket on it, the jacket was saved. At the location of the lettering [approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the bottom] a hole was cut in the jacket so the jacket could be replaced on the book with the classification number still visible. This would protect the book until the jacket gets tattered, at which time the jacket can be removed to reveal a new book.) When the ink dried, the lettering was sprayed with Spraylen to protect the lettering. The entire spine was also sprayed after the first spraying had dried. This meant that the spine was protected by one plastic coating and that the lettering was doubly protected.

Some repair was needed but an extensive job was impossible since many of the books were paperbacks and practically unmendable. However, glue and tape were used on those books which were salvageable. No weeding and discarding could be done without consulting the library's owner, of course; therefore, many of the books were cataloged regardless of condition--if they were especially useful.

The overall arrangement of the sections of books on the shelves has been determined greatly by the shelves available. Since it was more desirable to keep certain types of books together (all rhetorics in one bookshelf) than to strive for continuity around the walls of the Dewey Decimal system, it will be desirable that the shelves are labelled to facilitate easy location and future shelving of the books.