

SUBJECT RETRIEVAL
IN THE SEVENTIES

CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIBRARIANSHIP AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE

Series Editor: Paul Wasserman

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Maryland*
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International Symposium
Hans (Hanan) Wellisch and Thomas D. Wilson, Editors

SUBJECT RETRIEVAL IN THE SEVENTIES

NEW DIRECTIONS

PROCEEDINGS OF AN
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
HELD AT THE
CENTER OF ADULT EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK
MAY 14 TO 15, 1971

EDITED BY
HANS (HANAN) WELLISCH
AND
THOMAS D. WILSON

CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
NUMBER 3



GREENWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

PUBLISHED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

1972



DATE BY ...
Acquired by O. N. ...
20.10.89

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

Subject retrieval in the seventies.

(Contributions in librarianship and information science, no. 3)

"Proceedings of an international symposium held at the Center of Adult Education, University of Maryland, College Park, May 14 to 15, 1971."

Includes bibliographies.

1. Subject headings--Congresses. 2. Classification--Books--Congresses. 3. Information storage and retrieval systems--Congresses. I. Wellisch, Hanan, ed. II. Wilson, Thomas D., ed. III. Maryland. University. Center of Adult Education. IV. Series

Z695.S89 025.3'3 70-183149
ISBN 0-8371-6322-6

PC
025.33
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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 70-183149
ISBN: 0-8371-6322-6

Greenwood Publishing Company
A Division of Greenwood Press, Inc.
51 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880
School of Library and Information Services
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

OPENING ADDRESS by James W. Liesener	1
SUBJECT RETRIEVAL IN THE SEVENTIES—METHODS, PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS by Hans (Hanan) Wellisch	2
RECENT RESEARCH TRENDS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION RETRIEVAL LANGUAGES by Eric de Grolier	28
A GENERAL MODEL FOR INDEXING LANGUAGES: THE BASIS FOR COMPATIBILITY AND INTEGRATION by Dagobert Soergel	36
THE WORK OF THE BRITISH CLASSIFICATION RESEARCH GROUP by T. D. Wilson	62
THESAUROFACET—A NEW CONCEPT IN SUBJECT RETRIEVAL SCHEMES by Jean Aitchison	72
THE <i>PRECIS</i> SYSTEM FOR COMPUTER-GENERATED INDEXES AND ITS USE IN THE <i>BRITISH NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY</i> by Derek Austin	99
THE UNIVERSAL DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION AS AN INTERNATIONAL SWITCHING LANGUAGE by Geoffrey A. Lloyd	116
THE UDC IN MECHANIZED SUBJECT INFORMATION RETRIEVAL by Malcolm Rigby	126
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADINGS—REVIEW AND FORECAST by Richard S. Angell	143
PANEL DISCUSSION	164
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	168
RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS USED BY THE PARTICIPANTS	171
INDEX	172

SUBJECT RETRIEVAL
IN THE SEVENTIES

OPENING ADDRESS

DR. JAMES W. LIESENER, *Acting Dean*
School of Library and Information Services

The faculty of the School of Library and Information Services here at Maryland has been interested in the area of classification and the organization of knowledge from the beginning of the school in 1965. We have also been very lucky in being able to attract a continuing series of outstanding visiting faculty members from a number of different countries.

In conjunction with this emphasis in the school and this representation on our faculty, in the past few years we have conducted a number of conferences and institutes focusing on developments in the area of classification and the organization of knowledge. Some of you may have attended some of those or be aware of them through reading the proceedings. This present symposium is the second international symposium conducted in the area by the School; the first being held in 1966.

Again, this time, we feel very fortunate that we were able to attract such an outstanding group of speakers with international reputations and internationally representative, and also, we feel very pleased and encouraged at this time of restricted travel funds that we have had so much interest expressed in this conference and that we have a very broad range of institutions, agencies and areas represented.

On behalf of the University, and on behalf of the faculty and staff of the School of Library and Information Services I would like to welcome you to this Symposium: I hope that you will find the next two days rewarding and interesting and I hope that you will feel free to call on any of us for any assistance which you may need.

SUBJECT RETRIEVAL IN THE SEVENTIES — METHODS, PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS

HANS (HANAN) WELLISCH
School of Library and Information Services
University of Maryland

The subject approach to books in national, academic and public libraries is difficult and no more than about 30% of all subject searches in catalogs are successful. The present system of subject retrieval by means of Library of Congress (L.C.) *Subject Headings* is critically examined and found to be not effective because there are no firm principles to guide their formation or application. However, the system is believed to be highly reliable because it is linked to the bibliographical description of books which is indeed highly accurate. Librarians are generally able to use L.C. subject headings because they know their pitfalls, but library users find them frustrating. The MARC project simply mechanizes the existing system but does not improve it conceptually.

The formation of subject headings should follow strict rules, derived from General Systems theory and the principles of subject analysis developed during the last 30 years. L.C. *Subject headings* should be augmented by terms taken from specialized thesauri, when terms on a certain level of specificity could be linked to those at other levels (and in other thesauri) by means of common classification codes (possibly UDC). Only the principal subject headings for a book would be displayed on cards, more specific ones being stored in a computer for future retrieval purposes (similar to MEDLARS procedure). Subject headings should be applied so as to generate a co-extensive string of descriptors (as in the PRECIS system), leaving the degree of specificity of indexing terms to individual libraries. The L.C. *Subject Catalog* would then truly serve as a national subject catalog and would make individual subject cataloging largely redundant. Subject catalogs must be geared to the real needs of the user. These needs should be studied in order to create systems that respond to human beings as library users, not those of imaginary "scholars".

The title of this symposium implies some questions: Should subject retrieval in the seventies be different from what went on in previous decades? Is there anything basically wrong with subject retrieval as we know it? Are the users of information in the seventies a breed different from those which librarians have served in the past? If so, are there really new directions? And is there a new panacea for the ills that beset our systems for provision of information?

RECENT RESEARCH TRENDS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION RETRIEVAL LANGUAGES

by ERIC DE GROLIER

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(The following text is an edited version of a tape transcript.)

In discussing research trends in the field of information retrieval languages we must first define what we mean by the term and, since there is no clear, internationally standardized definition I will adopt that given by J.-C. Gardin: any set of symbols used for expressing certain characteristics of data on which data processing is performed, in whatever field. Gardin adds that the data are frequently verbal data and, in this case, what is envisaged is the data from the point of view of meaning or content. Generally these languages are organized on the paradigmatic plane, i.e. they are presented in the form of a classification system. Furthermore, these languages are often accompanied by rules which determine the permitted syntactic links, or, in other words, they possess some form of organization on the syntagmatic plane. In 1967, Gardin introduced a differentiation which is now generally adopted in France: he said that information retrieval languages are part of the larger class of semantic meta-languages oriented towards applications in the field of retrieval of scientific and technical information. This definition, therefore, excludes meta-languages which are constructed to describe objects, for example archeological objects.

Some idea of the historical background to information retrieval and the emergence of principles is also essential for an understanding of recent developments. The first of these principles, the principle of specific entry, was discovered by C. A. Cutter and a little later Wyndham Hulme enunciated the principle of literary warrant which had already been put into effect by the Library of Congress in making its classification scheme. Even earlier Melvil Dewey had invented a principle which the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris had been striving to achieve for over two centuries, that is the principle of the independence of classification and notation. Dewey was also responsible for the principle of common

A GENERAL MODEL FOR INDEXING LANGUAGES: THE BASIS FOR COMPATIBILITY AND INTEGRATION

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Classification theory is divided into two areas: analysis of conceptual structure and file organization. The primacy of the first is stressed. A model for conceptual structure in terms of concept coordination and polyhierarchy is sketched. Some problems of file organization, namely post-coordination vs. pre-coordination and synthetic vs. enumerative schemes are discussed in relation to this model. A model for a classification scheme for different kinds of file organization is then proposed. The scheme would consist of a "core classification scheme" made up of elemental concepts and an "extended classification scheme" made up of combinations of elemental concepts. While the core scheme would be universal, extended schemes would be developed as needed in a specific application. This would make for flexibility while maintaining inter-system compatibility.

0 *Introduction*

The purpose of this paper is to give a perspective, not new results. It tries to put into perspective the problems of classification theory. These problems can be divided into two major areas: conceptual structure and file organization. It seems to this writer that classificationists have concentrated too exclusively on file organization and have looked too often on conceptual structure from the point of view of file organization and not as an area to be considered independently. This imposed many restrictions on the consideration of conceptual structure, and many aspects important for information retrieval have not been brought out. This might be one of the reasons why the results of classification theory have been neglected or sometimes reinvented in a rather amateurish manner in mechanized information retrieval systems where the restrictions imposed by file organization are by far less severe than in manual systems.

Contrary to this attitude we take the following position: the primary and basic task is to understand conceptual structure and its functions in the retrieval process. We say again that this task should be performed

THE WORK OF THE BRITISH CLASSIFICATION RESEARCH GROUP

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University of Maryland**

Outlines the work of the CRG paying particular attention to the period since 1962. The intention is to emphasize theoretical concerns and their impact and also to provide background information for the papers by Austin and Aitchison.

The word "classification" is one which, in relation to information retrieval, seems to evoke a curious range of responses from wholesale acceptance of the validity of the idea that the two concepts are compatible, to utter incomprehension. This, it seems, is due to the fact that "classification" evokes at least three images:

- (a) that of a system for arranging books on shelves. Traditionally this is the aspect of classification which has been emphasized in the U.S.A. and which is still considered by many to be its only function;
- (b) that of a basis for the subject analysis of documents, i.e. the exact specification of the subject content of documents within the framework of a classification system. This aspect has been strongly emphasized in Europe since the development of the Universal Decimal Classification scheme. In the U.S.A. this function has been performed through the use of alphabetic subject heading lists and, more recently, through the development of "thesauri";
- (c) that of an aid to information retrieval, either through searching classified files prepared on the basis of (b) above, or through the provision of "classificatory maps" to alphabetically ordered manual files, or machine files ordered in a variety of ways.

In the past, attempts have been made to construct general classification systems which are capable of serving all three of the above functions. However, it is now being realized, particularly since the advent of com-

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THESAUROFACET

A New Concept in Subject Retrieval Schemes

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The English Electric *Thesourofacet* is a combined faceted classification and thesaurus, for engineering and related subjects. In perspective, it is seen not so much as a departure from existing practice in thesaurus construction; but the culmination of a trend towards the integration of complementary alphabetical and systematic sequences. However, it can claim to be a new concept in subject retrieval, since it is the first indexing language designed for use in both pre-coordination and post-coordinate situations. The structure of *Thesourofacet* is examined. Each term appears both in the thesaurus and in the schedules. In the schedules the term is displayed in the most appropriate facet and hierarchy: the thesaurus supplements this information by indicating alternate hierarchies and other relationships that cut across the classified arrangement. The thesaurus also controls word forms and synonyms and acts as an alphabetical index to the class numbers. The part played by classification during compilation of *Thesourofacet* is discussed and some consideration given to the problems of updating, including the use of synthesis for building new concepts. Finally, methods of application of *Thesourofacet* are analysed for post-coordinate and pre-coordinate information retrieval systems.

Thesourofacet in perspective

Thesourofacet (1), the successor to the English Electric *Faceted Classification for Engineering* (2), integrates a faceted classification system with a thesaurus. At the time of compilation, it was thought to be an entirely new species of retrieval language; but it is now realised that *Thesourofacet* is not so much a new concept in subject retrieval systems, as a refinement of techniques in thesaurus construction, which have been evolving since the mid-sixties.

To put *Thesourofacet* into perspective, it is necessary to study the development of classification techniques in thesaurus construction. The thesauri of the late fifties and early sixties were structured purely alphabetically. The limitations of the alphabetical arrangement led to the employment of classification aids, ranging from the broad to the detailed, and from auxiliary to integrated devices. Fig. 1 is a list of the categories of classification aids which may be employed, with examples from specific thesauri.

THE *PRECIS* SYSTEM FOR COMPUTER-GENERATED INDEXES AND ITS USE IN THE *BRITISH NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY*

DEREK AUSTIN

OSTI/PRECIS Project
British National Bibliography

A logical extension of the theory of faceted classification is considered from the viewpoints of (a) shelf order classifications and (b) machine-based retrieval systems. A general citation order formula which holds throughout the subject spectrum is not regarded as feasible for a shelf order scheme, but becomes a practical proposition from the viewpoint of machine-held files. A general decision-making model for regulating citation order, based on the syntax of English, is now being developed at the British National Bibliography. Its application to *PRECIS* is described, and its use as the basis for a multi-system authority file is considered.

I feel I should start by making a small but important point concerning the status of *PRECIS* as a computer-generated subject index. In the strict sense of the words, this index is not generated by a computer. Although we use the machine to reduce the clerical drudgery of manipulating index terms and filing entries and references, it will be seen that both the verbal content and the format of an index entry, as well as the complementary hierarchies of "See" and "See also" references, are entirely dependent upon human intellectual decisions. We are not, therefore, engaged in computerised indexing as this is sometimes understood so much as in developing and using a decision-making model which allows us to make a reasonable use of machine assistance.

Before we get down to what might be called the anatomy and physiology of a *PRECIS* index, we should first consider briefly some of the stages in its evolution, and see how these relate to the classification research which Tom Wilson reported in his paper. Although we are concerned with the manipulation of English words and phrases, not with a system of notation, *PRECIS* has nevertheless developed directly out of those techniques of faceted classification and relational analysis which were described this morning, and I like to think of the development of this index as part of the continuing search for a new general classification.

THE UNIVERSAL DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION AS AN INTERNATIONAL SWITCHING LANGUAGE

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Four questions, with special reference to the needs of the joint UNESCO/ICSU project UNISIST are examined:

- why is an international switching language essential today?
- why is the UDC advocated by the FID for this purpose?
- how can the UDC help to promote systems interconnection and compatibility and to minimize interlingual and interdisciplinary barriers?
- what should be done to fit the UDC for this important role?

Little originality is claimed for this paper, which summarizes and expands material presented over the last decade or longer mainly by circles associated with the FID (Fédération Internationale de Documentation), more particularly by members of its Central Classification Committee (FID/CCC) (2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14). It even draws on some of the ideas expressed during the thirties and forties by F. Donker Duyvis, whose name should always be linked with the two Belgian pioneers Otlet and La Fontaine and the group of European enthusiasts — among them Bradford, Lancaster Jones and Pollard in Britain, and Walther and Frank in Germany — who transformed Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification (DC, 5th ed.) into what later became known as the Classification Décimale Universelle (CDU), or to us the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC).

Why is an international switching language essential today?

The rapidly increasing production, transfer and consumption of scientific information — call it 'information explosion' if nuclear, population and drug explosions are not enough — present the scientific-technical community, and therefore our profession, with serious problems of inter-

THE UDC IN MECHANIZED SUBJECT INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

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Introduction

We have for some time been acutely aware of the wide variety of subject retrieval systems or modes available to an information systems designer. Now we are certain that a special system is available or may be adapted to suit any given collection, situation or purpose.

In this discussion, the criteria for choice or development of a system or systems for subject indexing, retrieval or browsing will first be examined from a theoretical and a practical point of view. Next the relative merits and limitations of the UDC for certain types and sizes of collection will be argued. Finally the use of the UDC in mechanized information or data retrieval systems and the use of automatic data processing equipment for maintaining and improving the UDC by itself and in concordance with other subject indexing systems will be touched upon.

The fact should be kept in mind that, whereas the UDC is actually universal in the sense that it covers all branches of knowledge, in practice it has from the start been a controlled collection of special hierarchical systems with a unifying notation structure and coordination mechanism. Although it is universal in the sense of being independent of language or orthography, yet it is hospitable to various languages and alphabets. Whereas it is itself a programming language, it requires special instructions as to filing, sorting and display in either a manual or a machine mode. Finally, whereas it has greater versatility than almost any other subject indexing or classification system, it is most often used, or misused, for purposes other than those for which it was originally intended (such as linear shelving or vocabulary control). It has therefore aroused considerable dissatisfaction among the users who want a perfect system for their peculiar uses, and controversy among those who are charged with developing and maintaining the system (for instance whether to subdivide hierarchically as originally intended or to subdivide by co-

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADINGS — REVIEW AND FORECAST

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A description of the Library of Congress list of subject headings is followed by an indication of the bibliographical records and services in which it is employed. Recommendations for review and improvement of the list are offered within the framework of certain general assumptions and enumerated under six commonly identified problems of the alphabetical subject catalog: Terminology, Specificity, Form and structure of headings, Reference provisions, Complexity and size, and Maintenance. A technique for adopting revised headings within the constraints of the present card catalogs is illustrated and suggestions offered for fuller publication of the total LC subject heading system in future editions.

Note

In the preparation of this paper the author has had the benefit of the advice and assistance of Library of Congress colleagues. The views expressed, however, are his own. Some have the status of recommendations for the review, analysis, and future development of the Library's Subject Heading List. The paper has been cleared in the Library for presentation in this symposium, but no decision has been made on the extent, if any, to which the recommendations will be put into effect.

Introduction

The principal means of subject access to the collections of libraries in the United States is the subject-entry component of the dictionary catalog. For the most part, the subject headings used in these catalogs derive from statements of "objects" and "means" formulated by Charles Ammi Cutter in his *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*. (1)

The final formulation of Cutter's objectives and rules was taking place at the same time that the Library of Congress was expanding and reorganizing the collections at the turn of the century. His work had a considerable influence on the founders of the Library of Congress catalog. While the early officers were in accord with Cutter and the majority of United States libraries in rejecting the classified or alphabetic-classed catalog in favor of the dictionary catalog, they were unwilling to contemplate the dispersion of headings that could follow from full adherence

PANEL DISCUSSION

PANELISTS

Dr. Harold Wooster (Moderator)	National Library of Medicine
Mr. Robert R. Freeman	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Dr. Laurence B. Heilprin	School of Library and Information Services, University of Maryland
Mr. J. I. Smith	ERIC Clearinghouse on Library and Information Sciences
Miss Sarah M. Thomas	Environmental Protection Agency
Dr. Isaac D. Welt	American University

This concluding session of the Symposium was organized so as to give each panelist about ten minutes in which to make a contribution. The following is an edited version of the taped transcript.

Dr. *Heilprin* said that he had received some input from the Symposium on two topics: one of them being the economics of classification, the other, the stability of classification schemes. On the former, one of the principal factors was the competition for scarce resources and it seemed obvious that the two principal competitors for the role of international system, namely UDC and LC, differed considerably in respect to two aspects which had significance for this competition, i.e. in the specific and logical, or switching, efficiency in the service rendered for search and retrieval, and in the administrative services involved in keeping the system up to date.

On the stability of classification schemes, he noted that in the conceptual lattices and in the file structures which attempted to reproduce them, it was clear that the most general classes have the greatest stability, whereas the classes lower down the hierarchy change more and more rapidly the deeper one goes. This leads to the conclusion that there is some merit in trying to achieve a world classification system using the first two or three levels which are comparatively stable: it is a matter of determining the threshold in terms of rates of obsolescence in order to decide how specific such a system should attempt to be.

Miss *Thomas* said that in all of the sessions she had attended the speakers were talking about creating tools which information people were going to use. She was convinced, however, that the users (at least of special

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Samuel, Parkash
Schneider, John
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Community Information Center
NC News Service, Documentation Center
Kent State University
NASA Scientific and
Technical Information Facility
University of Maryland
Health Sciences Library
Smithsonian Institution
Smithsonian Institution
Library of Congress
National Agricultural Library
Library of Congress
University of Maryland
Health Sciences Library
Coastal Engineering Research Center
U.S. Army Computer Systems Support
and Evaluation Command
Library of Congress
Library of Congress
Mankato State College
Peabody Institute Library
Graduate School of Library Science,
Drexel Univ.
Enoch Pratt Free Library
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Library of Congress
ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
Milton S. Eisenhower Library
Johns Hopkins University
Geophysical Sciences Library,
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
Library of Congress
Enoch Pratt Free Library
New York State Library
Westvaco Corporation
U.S. Army. War College Library
Western Electric Co.
Library of Congress
National Institutes of Health
Highway Research Board

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Tubio, Manuel	Glassboro State College
Wilcox, Margaret A.	World Bank
Wilson, Florence N.	Denver Public Library
Witty, Francis J.	Catholic University
Zenich, Margaret	U.S. Corps of Engineers
Zlatich, Marko	World Bank

RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS USED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

(from data submitted on application forms)

CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

Dewey Decimal	17
Library of Congress	48
UDC	2
National Library of Medicine	1
Own system	2
No classification system	5

ALPHABETICAL LISTS OF TERMS

Sears' list of subject headings	1
LC subject heading list	52
Thesauri	
Agricultural/Biological Vocabulary	2
LEX	3
LINCS*	1
NLM MeSH	1
NASA Thesaurus	1
Pulp and Paper Institute of Canada	1
Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors	4
Thesaurus of Engineering and Scientific Terms	2
Not specified	4
Own list	11

IR SYSTEMS OPERATION

Manual	37
Mechanized	4
Both	18

*Language Information Network Clearinghouse System

INDEX

Page numbers followed by the letter d indicate a topic referred to in discussion or the name of a discussant. Page numbers followed by the letter r indicate a bibliographical reference. Page numbers followed by an asterisk indicate an illustration.

- AIP *see* American Institute of Physics
ALD *see* *Aligned List of Descriptors*
aboutness 6, 21
academic libraries 4
Admiralty Underwater Weapons Establishment (AUWE) [U.K.] 139
Agricultural/Biological Vocabulary 162r
Aitchison, J. 26r, 69, 96r, 97r, 98d, 120, 165
Aligned List of Descriptors (ALD) 121
All-Union Institute for Scientific and Technical Information [U.S.S.R.] 132
alphabetic subject indexing *see* indexing; dictionary catalogs
alternative forms of terms 156
American Geological Institute 139
American Institute of Physics (AIP) 31, 32, 119, 139
American National Standards Institute 140
analytic relationships 29
analytico-synthetic classification *see* faceted classification
Angell, R. S. 27, 162, 163d
antonyms 156
Arnold, D. V. 166
Arntz, H. 123
arrowgraphs 76*
Aslib-Cranfield project 115, 119
Atherton, P. 119, 139, 141r
Atomic Energy Authority [U.K.] 139
AUDACIOUS 139, 141r
Austin, D. 27r, 59r, 67, 68, 69, 71r, 90, 114d, 115d, 120, 142d
authority file 112-113
automatic indexing *see* indexing by computers
auxiliary tables 122, 127
Ayres, F. H. 25r
BC *see* Bibliographic Classification
BNB *see* *British National Bibliography*
Bagley, D. 96r
Barhydt, G. C. 162r
Barnholdt, B. 138, 141r
Bauer, G. 74, 97r
Becker, A. M. 141r
Bely, N. 33r
Bibliographic Classification (BC) 118
bibliographic description 6-7
Bibliography and Index of Geology 139
Bibliotheca universalis 14
Bibliothèque des Halles, Paris 138
Bibliothèque nationale, [France] 28
Binns, J. 96r
Bliss, H. E. 29, 30, 33r, 65, 118
Boreal Institute, University of Alberta 119, 138
Borillo, A. 31, 33r
Borko, H. 20, 26r
Bowker (R.R.) Co. 146
Bradford, S. C. 116
Brenner, E. H. 97r
British Catalogue of Music Classification 66, 71
British National Bibliography (BNB) 22, 58, 69, 71, 74, 90, 103, 111, 112, 113, 114, 120, 142, 146
British Standards Institution 140
British Steel Corp. 119, 139
British Technology Index 65, 71
broader terms 44, 50, 83, 88, 156-157, 162-163d
Brown, H. 117
Brown, J. D. 29, 33r
browsing 65, 127-132
CC *see* Colon Classification
CDA *see* Copper Development Association

- CDS *see* Unesco. Computerized Documentation Service
- CDU *see* Universal Decimal Classification
- CNRS *see* Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
- CRG *see* Classification Research Group
- Campbell, D. J. 90
- Canada 119, 138
- card catalogs 46, 57
- Carmichael, J. J. 119, 124r
- catalog card service of LC 12, 146, 147
- catalogs
size 158
use studies 4, 10
- causal dependence 68
- Centralny Instytut Informacji Naukowej i Ekonomicznej (CIINTE) [Poland] 139
- Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) [France] 132
- chain indexes 54, 94
- Chernyi, A. I. 25r
- CIRIA *see* Construction Industry Research and Information Association
- citation indexes 165d
- citation order 56, 69, 94, 100, 101, 104-106
- classed thesauri 91, 95*
- classification 16, 28-31, 62-71, 165d, 171
conceptual structure 36-45
economics 164d
history 30-31
research 30, 62-71
specificity 132
stability 63, 134, 164
theory 36-61
- Classification Décimale Universelle (CDU) *see* Universal Decimal Classification
- Classification Research Group (CRG) 62, 65-71, 71r, 101, 120
- classified catalogs 20, 59, 81
- Cleverdon, C. W. 30, 33r, 119
- clumping 74
- Coates, E. 26r, 65, 71r, 124r, 158, 161r, 162r
- collection size 127-132, 142d
- Colon Classification (CC) 100, 118
- combinatorial indexes 54-55
- common subdivisions 29
- complex subjects 152-153
- compound concepts 45, 48, 54, 58, 100, 101-102
- Computer-produced Regional Bibliography: Eastern Mediterranean, Suez Canal and Red Sea* 139
- computers 14-16, 21-22, 81, 101, 117
computer-aided indexing 21-22, 99, 107
files 92, 102, 103, 114d, 147, 165d
production of *LCSH* 145
retrieval 30, 40, 47, 64, 88, 102
UDC 119-120, 126-140
- concepts
categories 64-67, 84-85, 101
combinations 47*
coordination 39-45
formation 71
hierarchical structures 38*, 41*, 42*, 43*
linear arrangements 39*
organization 30, 35-45, 60d, 67
substitutions 47*
universe of 63-64
- concordances between indexing languages 70, 120-122
- consecutiveness 68
- Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) 81, 81*, 84, 88, 90, 97r
- context dependency 104-107, 109, 114
- coordinate indexing 40, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 57, 81
- Copenhagen 120
- Copper Development Association (CDA) 74, 78*, 97r
- Corbett, L. 119, 141r
- Cordonnier, G. 29, 31, 33r, 59r
- core classification 52, 52*, 54, 57, 59
- Council of Europe 121
- Cournot, A. A. 29, 33r
- Coyaud, M. 29, 33r
- Cranfield project 115, 119
- Croghan, A. 81, 82*, 97r
- cross references *see* references
- Cuadra, C. A. 31, 33r
- Cutter, C. A. 8, 9, 10, 20, 28, 33r, 143, 144, 149, 150, 153, 161r
Rules for a Dictionary Catalog 143
- DC *see* Dewey Decimal Classification
- DDC *see* Defense Documentation Center
- DK *see* Universal Decimal Classification
- Dahlberg, I. 123, 124r

- Day, D. A. 13, 26r
 Daily, J. E. 26r, 162r
 Defense Documentation Center (DDC) [U.S.], 131
 Denmark 119, 120, 138
 Desaubliaux, R. 29, 33r
 descriptive cataloging 6-7
Deutsche Bibliographie [German National Bibliography] 138
 Deutscher Normenausschuss (DNA) 138
 Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut [Germany], 138
 Dewey, H. 11, 26r
 Dewey, M. 28
 Dewey Decimal Classification (DC) 6, 15, 37, 40, 54, 58, 71, 100, 111, 112, 113, 116, 118, 123, 130, 135
 Dezimalklassifikation (DK) *see* Universal Decimal Classification
DK-Handausgabe 138
 dictionary catalogs 4, 5, 143-144
 effectiveness 6-12
 information cards 159
 disciplines 70, 84, 118
 distributed relatives 153
 documents
 arrangement on shelves 6, 15, 46, 49-50, 58, 62, 64, 81, 88, 101, 165d
 collection size 127-132, 142d
 delineation 45-59, 46*
 retrieval, *see* subject retrieval
Documentatio Geographica 138, 142r
 Donker Duyvis, F. 116
 Double KWIC 94
 Dowell, N. G. 97r
 Dreese, M. J. 139
 Dunkin, P. S. 149, 154, 162r
 Dym, E. 74, 80*, 90, 97r
 EJC *see* Engineers' Joint Council
 East Europe 119
 economics
 of classification 164d
 of retrieval systems 13-14
 Edmonton 119
 Engineers' Joint Council (EJC) 26r, 96r, 121
 England *see* United Kingdom
 English Electric Library 72, 92, 94
 entry concepts 46
 arrangement 55-57
 compound 46-59
 designation 55
 entry concepts—*continued*
 elemental 46-59
 new 56-57, 60d
 retrieval mechanisms 50-55
 selection 55-57
 Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA) [U.S.] 139
 Euratom 74, 96r, 124r
 Europe 119
 expressive notation 101
 FID *see* Fédération Internationale de Documentation
 facet analysis 65, 73, 74, 84-85
 faceted classification 49, 55, 56, 57, 60d, 65, 69, 72-96, 99-101
Faceted Classification for Engineering 72, 96r
 faceted structure of thesauri 80*, 81*, 82*
 Fairthorne, R. A. 7, 21, 26r, 29, 31, 33r
 Farmington plan 21
 Farradane, J.E.L. 29, 33r, 66, 69, 71r
 Fédération Internationale de Documentation (FID) 116, 118, 119, 121, 123, 125, 134, 139, 140
Catalogue of publications 140
 Central Classification Committee (FID/CCC) 116, 119, 120, 121, 123
 Feibleman, J.K. 71r
 file organization, 36-37, 45-59, 60d
 Fink, D. 138
 Flint, R. 30, 33r
 form subdivisions 151-152
 Foskett, D. J. 31, 33r, 59r, 65, 71r
 France 28, 29, 30, 31, 138
 Bibliothèque nationale 28
 Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 132
 Frank, O. 116
 Frankfurt/Main 120
 Frarey, C. J. 149, 158, 162r
 Freeman, R. R. 32d, 98d, 115d, 119, 124r, 125d, 139, 141r, 142d, 163d, 165
 fundamental categories 64-67, 84-85, 101
 Gallizia, A. 141r
 Galtung, J. 30
 Gardin, J.-C. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33r
 general classification schemes 62, 66, 100

- generic posting 48, 55
 generic trees 29, 74, 78*, 79*
 Geneva 121
Geo-Sciences Abstracts 139
 German National Bibliography 138
 Germany 70, 116, 119, 120
 Gesner, Konrad 14
 Gilchrist, A. 29
 Gilyarevskii, R. S. 25r
 Gomersall, A. 96r
 Goodman, N. 27r
 Great Britain *see* United Kingdom
 Grolier, E. de 30, 34r, 60d, 61, 125d, 166, 167d
 Groupe informatiste de bibliothèques universitaires et spécialisées (GIBUS) 138
 The Hague 120
- Harris, J. L. 11, 26r
 Haykin, D. J. 144, 149, 150, 151, 161r
Subject Headings: A Practical Guide 144
 Heaps, D. 119, 138
 Heilprin, L. B. 164
 Herceg-Novii 117
 hierarchical displays 77, 83
 hierarchical notation 101
 hierarchy 37-40, 44-45, 50, 74, 91
 definition 37
 Hindson, R. 119, 139
 history of classifications 30-31
 Holmstrom, J. E. 29, 34r
 homographs 150
 hospitality of notation 88
 Hulme, E. W. 28, 34r
- ICP *see* *International Classification of Patents*
 ICSSD *see* International Council for Social Sciences Documentation
 ICSU *see* International Council of Scientific Unions
 IRRD *see* International Road Research Documentation
IRRD Thesaurus 74, 96r
 ISO *see* International Organization for Standardization
Index Medicus 20
 indexing 5, 6, 35-59, 62, 65, 108-109
 by computers 21-22, 99, 107
 specificity 10-11, 22
 time 114d
 indexing languages *see* information retrieval languages
- information cards 159
 information retrieval languages 28-32, 117, 171
 compatibility 31, 148
 definition 28, 37
 efficiency 30, 37
 models 31
 revision 165d
 terminology 29, 32d, 136, 148
 typology 29, 32d
 universal systems 31
Information Retrieval Thesaurus of Education Terms 158, 162r
 Information Service for Physics, Electrotechnology and Control (INSPEC) 74, 98
 INIS *see* International Nuclear Information System
 INSPEC *see* Information Service for Physics, Electrotechnology and Control
 Integrated Library Administration and Cataloguing System [Netherlands] 139
 integrative levels 67-68
 Interdepartmental Committee on Atmospheric Sciences (ICAS) [U.S.] 139, 141r
 intermediate lexicon 70
 International Atomic Energy Authority, 74, 97r
International Classification of Patents (ICP) 121
 International Council for Social Sciences Documentation (ICSSD) 121
 International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) 117
 International Federation for Documentation *see* Fédération Internationale de Documentation
International Glossary of Hydrology 139
 International Nuclear Information Systems (INIS) 74, 76*
 International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 121
 International Road Research Documentation (IRRD) 74, 96r
 INTREX 20, 27r
 inverted files 46-47, 49
 inverted headings 153-154
 Ireland, R. 96r

- Israel 140
 Sea Fisheries Research Station, Haifa 139
 Italy 139
- Jackson, S. L. 27d
 Jakobson, R. 30
 Japan 119
 Jonker, F. 29, 32, 34r, 60r
- Kaiser, J. 31, 34r
 Katter, R. V. 33r
 Kelley, G. O. 30, 34r
 Kent, A. 29, 31, 34r
 Kervégant, D. 29, 34r
 Knapp, P. B. 10, 26r
 Knowledge
 organization of 30-31
 universe of 63-64
 Koch, K. H. 119, 141r, 142r
 Kochen, M. 26r
 Kuhn, T. S. 30, 34r
 KWIC indexes 30, 53*, 54, 94,
 130, 160-161
 KWOC indexes 30, 94
 Kyle, B. 71r
- LC *see* Library of Congress
 La Fontaine, H. 116
 Lancaster, F. W. 30, 34r
 Lancaster-Jones, J. 116
 Langridge, D. W. 70
 language subdivisions 152
 Latin America 119
 lattices 29
 Lavoisier, A. L. 29
 lead-in vocabularies 165
 Leeds Polytechnic, School of
 Information Science 92
 Lesk, M. E. 97r
 Lévi-Strauss, C. 30
 Libbey, M. A. 60r
- Library and Information Science
 Abstracts (LISA)* 69, 71
- Library Association [U.K.] 66, 71r
- Library of Congress (LC) 5, 7, 8, 9,
 16-18, 21-24, 27, 132, 143-163
Catalog. Books. Subjects 23, 146
 catalog card service 12, 146, 147
 classification 6, 15, 37, 51*, 54,
 55, 57, 59, 111, 113, 118,
 130, 135, 164, 166
 Processing Department 145, 163
 Subject Cataloging Division 144, 158
- Library of Congress—*continued*
Subject headings 6, 8, 9, 16-18, 26r,
 50, 51*, 54, 55, 143-163, 161r
 and thesauri 156-158
 computer production 145
 references 154-159, 155*, 157*
 revision 158-161, 163
- Liesener, J. W. 1
 Lilley, O. L. 149, 162r
 Line, M. B. 25, 27r
 linguistic decomposition 40, 42
 linguistics 21, 29
 links between different indexing tools
 18, 19*
- Lipetz, B.-A. 25r, 128, 142r
- LISA see Library and Information
 Science Abstracts*
- literary warrant 28
 Lloyd, G. A. 124r, 125d, 165
 London, G. 90, 91*, 97r
 Lubetzky, S. 10, 23, 26r
- McCash, W. H. 119, 124r
 machine-readable bibliographic stores
 92, 102, 103, 114d, 147, 165d
 machines *see* computers
 main classes 70
 Mann, M. 157, 162r, 163
 MARC 14, 15, 18, 20, 25, 102, 103,
 111, 112, 113, 114, 118, 146,
 151, 152
 Maretti, E. 141r
 Marlot, L. 74, 97r
 Marosi, A. 124r
 Marshall, J. W. 97r
 mechanical translation 31-32
 mechanized searching 30, 40,
 47, 64, 88, 102
- Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)*
 74, 79*, 88, 97r, 98, 121
- MEDLARS 20, 30, 121
 mentefacts 67, 68, 69
 Merton, R. K. 30, 34r
 MeSH *see Medical Subject Headings
 Meteorological and Geostrophical
 Abstracts* 139
- Meynen, E. 138, 142r
 Mikhailov, A. I. 25r
 Milan University 139
 Miller, R. A. 26r
 Mills, J. 119, 149, 162r
- Mission Bay Research Foundation 139
 models 31
 Mølgaard-Hansen, R. 142r

- Mollame, F. 141r
 mono-hierarchy 37
 Mooers, C. N. 29, 34r
 Moscovia, S. 30
 Moureau, M. 74, 97r
 multiple entry 56-58
 multi-system authority file 112-113
 Mulvihill, J. G. 74, 90, 97r
- NTIS *see* National Technical Information Service
 narrower terms 45, 50, 156-157
 NASA *see* National Aeronautics and Space Administration
 National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) [U.S.] 74, 121, 131
 National Agricultural Library [U.S.] 131, 148, 151, 158, 162r
 National Bureau of Standards [U.S.] 124r
 national libraries 4
 National Libraries Task Force on Automation [U.S.] 151
 National Library of Medicine [U.S.] 74, 97r, 98, 121, 131, 148, 151
 National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC) [U.S.] 139
 National Technical Information Service (NTIS) [U.S.] 131
 NATO project 66-69
 NATO Science Foundation 66, 69
 natural languages 30, 96
 Needham, R. M. 60r
 Netherlands 139
 Neville, H. H. 26r, 124r
 Newton, I. 29
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization *see* NATO
 notation 28, 31, 56, 64, 69, 81, 86-88, 100-101, 134-135
- OECD *see* Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
 obsolescence *see* revision
Oceanic Index 139
 Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) [U.K.] 70
 Office of Water Resources Research [U.S.] 26r
 omitted categories of terms 144-145
 optical coincidence cards 40, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51
 ordinal notation 65-66, 86-88
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 121
 organization of knowledge 30-31
 OSTI *see* Office for Scientific and Technical Information [U.K.]
 Ostwald, W. 30
 Otlet, P. 29, 34r, 116
- paradigmatic relationships 21, 28, 29
 peek-a-boo systems 40, 46, 47, 49, 50, 57
 period subdivisions 151
 Perreault, J. M. 29, 34r, 118, 124r
 Perry, J. W. 29, 31, 34r
 Petzholdt, J. 30, 34r
 phrase headings 9-10, 150
 Piaget, J. 30, 34r
 place subdivisions 151
 Poland 119
 Centralny Instytut Informacji Naukowo-Technicznej i Ekonomicznej 139
 Pollard, A.F.C. 116
 polyhierarchy 40, 50-54, 74, 88-90
 post-coordinate systems 47-50, 94-96
PRECIS 22, 54, 58, 69, 71, 99-115, 120
 pre-coordinate systems 57-50, 94, 144
 prepositional phrases 109
 Preserved Context Index System *see* *PRECIS*
 Price, D. J. de S. 30, 34r
 Price, D. S. 166d
 psychology 30
 public libraries 4
Publisher's Weekly 146
 Putnam, H. 27r
- Ranganathan, S. R. 29, 30, 31, 34r, 65, 101, 118
 references 16, 99, 110-111, 145
 LCSH 154-159, 155*, 157*
 thesauri 157*
 related terms 50, 90, 91, 156
 relational analysis 99, 102
 relational operators *see* relators
 relators 66, 69, 103, 107-109
 relevance 31
 retrieval languages *see* information retrieval languages
 retroactive ordinal notation 65-66
 revision
 of indexing languages 165d
 of *LCSH* 158-161, 163
 of *Thesaurfacet* 92, 98
 of UDC by computer 126, 134

- Richmond, P. A. 20, 26r
 Rigby, M. 119, 124r, 125, 141r,
 142, 142r
 role indicators 69, 115d
 roof code 123
 Rostron, R. M. 74, 96r
 rotated indexes 54, 103, 104
Rules for a Dictionary Catalog 143
 Russell, M. 141r
- Salton, G. 30, 34r
 Saussure, F. 34r
 Scheele, M. 60r
 Schneider, K. 119, 141r, 142r
 School of Information Science,
 Leeds Polytechnic 92
Science Abstracts 98
 Science Museum Library [U.K.] 131
 Sea Fisheries Research Station,
 Haifa 139
 searching 4-5, 37-59, 63, 127
 by computers 30, 102
 search concepts 45
Sears' List of Subject Headings
 6, 146, 161r
 Selective Listing In Combination
see SLIC index
 semantic factors 31, 39-42, 44-45,
 50, 54, 55, 60d
 semantic meta-languages 28
 semantic relationships 110
 Sharp, J. R. 60r, 97r
 Shell, E. E. 13, 26r
 shelf arrangement 6, 15, 46,
 49-50, 58, 62, 64, 81, 101, 165d
 Sherwood, G. B. 114d, 166d
 Shumway, N. P. 60d, 98d
 Siot-Decauville, N. 33r
 size of collections 127-132, 142d
 SLIC index 30, 54, 94
 Smith, J. I. 166
Social Science Information 30
Sociology of Education Abstracts 115
 sociology of science 30
 Soergel, D. 60d, 60r, 61d, 71r,
 142d, 162d
 Song, C. T. 142r
 Soviet Union *see* Union of
 Soviet Socialist Republics
 Spalding, C. S. 27d, 162d
 Sparck-Jones, K. 97r
 special classification schemes 65, 69
 special libraries 3
 specific entry 28, 149-150
 specificity of retrieval systems 16, 132
 stability of retrieval systems 63,
 134, 164d
 Stüdeli, B. 119
 subject analysis *see* indexing
 subject catalogs 4-12, 20, 59, 81,
 143-144, 159
Subject Guide to Books in Print 146
 subject headings 6, 48, 54, 62, 136,
 143-161, 171
 augmentation 16-20
 computer-generated 145
 hierarchical arrangement 20
 inversion 153-154
 parenthetical qualification 150
 punctuation 150
 revision 158-161
 shortcomings 8-12
 specificity 20-22, 149-150
 structural changes 16
 subdivisions 145, 150-151
Subject Headings: A Practical Guide
 144
 subject indexing *see* indexing
 subject retrieval
 by computers 21-22
 by conventional methods 3
 in dictionary catalogs 4
 MARC 14-16
 UDC 126-140
 Sulzer Bros. 119
 Sulzer Literature Dissemination
 and Classification System 139
 Sviridov, F. A. 124r
 Swanson, R. 25, 27r
 switching languages 70, 116-123,
 125d, 142d, 148
 Switzerland, 119, 139
 synonyms 88, 91, 156
 syntactic links 28, 31
 syntagmatic relationships 21, 28, 29
 synthesis in *Thesourofacet* 92
 synthetic relationships 29
- Tagliocozzo, R. 26r
 Tel Aviv University Library 24
 terminology 29, 32d, 136, 148
 terms
 alternative forms of 156
 hierarchical structures 38*, 41*,
 42*, 43*
 linear arrangements 39*
 visual display of 74
*TEST see Thesaurus of Engineering
 and Scientific Terms*

- thesauri 59, 62, 69, 72-81, 136
 and *LCSH* 156-158
 and UDC 121-123
 classed 91, 95*
 classificatory aids 73*
 cross references 157*
 faceted structure 80*, 81*, 82*
 form used in compilation 93*
 references in 157*
 tree structure 79*
- Thesourofacet* 20, 69, 70, 72-98,
 83*, 85-87*, 89*, 93*, 95*,
 110, 120, 157, 162r, 165
- Thesaurus for non-book materials*
 81, 97r
- Thesaurus for the construction in-
 dustry* 81, 97r
- Thesaurus of Engineering and Scienti-
 fic Terms (TEST)* 18, 74, 75*,
 77*, 96r, 121, 122, 135
- Thomas, S. M. 164
- time subdivisions 151
- Toman, J. 29, 35r
- Tomlinson, H. 66, 67
- topical subdivisions 151
- tree structures 29, 74, 78*, 79*
- typology of information retrieval
 languages 29, 32d
- UDC *see* Universal Decimal Classi-
 fication
- U.K. *see* United Kingdom
- U.K.A.E.A. *see* United Kingdom.
 Atomic Energy Authority
- Unesco 121, 139
 Computerized Documentation Service
 (CDS) 121
 Unesco/ICSU 117, 124r
- UNIDEK 139, 141r
- Union of Soviet Socialist Re-
 publics 30, 119
 All-Union Institute for Scien-
 tific and Technical Informa-
 tion (VINITI) 132
- UNISIST 117, 118, 119, 122, 123,
 124r, 132
- United Kingdom 29, 31, 70, 94, 116,
 119, 139
 Admiralty Underwater Weapons Es-
 tablishment 139
 Atomic Energy Authority 119
 Atomic Weapons Research Establish-
 ment 139
 Office for Scientific and Techni-
 cal Information (OSTI) 70
- United Nations Educational, Sci-
 entific and Cultural Organi-
 zation *see* Unesco
- United States 29, 30, 62, 119,
 120, 135, 139, 143, 146
 Defense Documentation Center 131
 Environmental Science Services Ad-
 ministration 139
 Interdepartmental Committee on At-
 mospheric Sciences 139, 141r
 National Aeronautics and Space Ad-
 ministration 74, 121
 National Agricultural Library
 131, 148, 151, 158, 162r
 National Bureau of Standards 124r
 National Libraries Task Force on
 Automation 151
 National Library of Medicine 74,
 97r, 98, 121, 148, 151
 National Technical Information
 Service 131
 Office of Water Resources Research
 26r
- Uniterms 119
- universal classification 31, 59, 62-63
- Universal Decimal Classification
 (CDU, DK, UDC) 18, 19*, 31, 32,
 37, 62, 100, 101, 116-142, 164, 166
 computer retrieval 119-120, 126-140
DK-Handausgabe 138
 editions in various languages
 135-136, 140
 revision by computer 126, 134
 Seminar on UDC in a mechanized re-
 trieval system 119-120, 142r
 UDC/TEST concordance 121-122
 users 119
- universe of concepts 63-64
 universe of knowledge 63-64
- Università degli studi. Milano 139
- University of Alberta 119, 138
- University of Chicago. Graduate
 Library School 25r
- updating *see* revision
- users' needs 10-11, 12-13, 24-25,
 27d, 164-165
- users of UDC 119
- Vickery, B. C. 31, 35r, 71r, 119
- VINITI *see* All-Union Institute for
 Scientific and Technical Infor-
 mation [USSR]

- Virbel, J. 33r
 visual display of terms 74
 vocabulary 29, 32d, 136, 148
- Walter, C. 116
Water Resources Thesaurus 18
- Weeks, D. 70
- Wellisch, H. 27d, 32d, 121, 122,
 123, 124r, 125
- Welsh, W. J. 163
- Welt, I. D. 114d, 125d, 165
- Western Europe 119
- Wilson (H.W.) Co. 146
- Wilson, T. D. 61, 99, 101, 166d
- Wooster, H. 25, 27r, 164
- World Meteorological Organization
 (WMO) 139
- World Scientific Information System
 (UNISIST) 117
- Wundt, W. 30, 35r
- Yngve, W. H. 35r
- Yugoslavia 117
- ZMD *see* Zentralstelle für maschinelle
 Dokumentation
- Zentralstelle für maschinelle
 Dokumentation (ZMD) [Germany]
 119, 138

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