Book Reviews

HARRIS, Kevin: **The Dickens House Classification**. London: Polytechnic of North London 1986. 98p. ISBN 0-946232-44-X. = School of Librarianship and Information Studies. Research Report 18.

Imagine Mr.Micawber visiting Dickens House and trying to find his way through some 4,000 books (of which 40% are criticism of Dickens' work) and some 5,000 items offprints, photocopies of articles, papers and miscellanea. Would the *Dickens House Classification* (DHC) be of any help to him? Or would he rather have to rely on his infallible optimism of the "something will turn up"-kind?

In a three-year project Kevin Harris designed a scheme to classify the collection of Dickens House, that is to say, the classification is supposed to be serving both library and museum purposes. To call the DHC scheme elaborate would be an understatement. The tables run to almost 58 closely printed A4 pages. The printed display of DHC cannot be exhaustive, however. For DHC is a faceted classification, based on the 2nd edition of *Bliss Bibliographic Classification*, and the schedules allow for a possibly infinite variety of compound classes.

DHC has five major sections, comprising
(a) common divisions - as to form (00-99), chronology of Dickens' life and writings (b-y), language, time (B), and place (C),
(b) background to Dickens studies (D-G)
(c) Dickens' biography (H-L),
(d) criticism of appreciation of Dickens' writings (M-X)
(e) writings of Dickens himself (Z).

Each section has numerous sub-sections, all being arranged enumeratively. There are brief introductory remarks to every section, complemented by detailed instructions on the use of most features of individual classes. It remains to be seen whether all this is indeed sufficient to support subsequent adaptation of DHC on other than Dickensian collections. A more generous display of examples would certainly be welcome to users outside Dickens House. The DHC notation is of the ordinal and non-hierarchical type; combinations of upper and lower case letters as well as digits (for form divisions) are being employed, placing, for instance, an investigation into the burlesque in *Pickwick Papers* at classmark Xf Vkf (X = individual work, f = Pickwick Papers, Vkf = Burlesque), a copy of *Pickwick Papers* at Zf, and a study of the burlesque in all of Dickens' works, in turn, at Vkf. It is not exactly helpful to have notations without a mnemotechnic device in a subject area dealing prominently with literary works, the titles of which would readily serve as a basis for more "telling" notations than f for *Pickwick Papers*. The f, by the way, results from an alphabetical representation of the chronology of Dickens' works. This may be appropriate for a special library such as Dickens House, but it will hardly be useful in a public library environment. Having said that, it must be acknowledged that Mr. Harris is well aware of the peculiarities of DHC notations which in his opinion need not necessarily be accepted by librarians adapting

DHC (p.13). For "Jewish stereotype characteristics of Fagin", therefore, something more indicative than Xg Sx FAG Ncnqvhj may be found (p.50). Since Dickens studies are, apparently, a thriving industry, hospitality is of paramount importance in DHC; although it seems difficult to think of additional subjects in the "Background to Dickens studies"-section. Something may turn up, though.

Anyone familiar with the unsatisfactory literature sections in universal classifications and the Babel of critical tongues will probably find the section on "study & appreciation of the writings of Charles Dickens" the most challenging feature of DHC. After all, DHC caters for both the general, often appreciative books and the highly specialized scholarly article. Mr.Harris points out that despite its focus on Dickens studies, "it seems likely that this section represents the most detailed classification available in literature studies" (p.8). It certainly is detailed, but a glance at classified glossaries of literary terms (e.g. by Ruttkowski) reveals DHC to be biased towards fiction (quite naturally so) and lacking the terms of genre theory required from a comprehensive classification. All the same, DHC, as it now stands, is quite a decisive terminological step ahead of other library minded classifications.

Access to the classified schedules is facilitated by an alphabetical index. Albeit a simplified one, without cross-references and compound classes as well as providing only a limited number of scope notes, this index seems essential to retrieve DHC classified items. As for the use of DHC in its printed version: it is impaired by poor printing quality (introduction) and a somewhat fuzzy layout (classification). The latter does without bold print, italics, varying print sizes or other common word processing features, which would improve the handling of DHC considerably.

To assess the feasibility of DHC seems difficult. A first sight, the present ratio of DHC subsections and the number of items actually classified in Dickens House seems a little odd. But then, DHC was obviously designed to be a model classification applicable to literary authors in general, which would also explain for the very detailed schedule. Given the understandable limitations of DHC (being one concrete example of the classifying structure developed by Mr.Harris), further adaptations are likely to be successful if the present structure of literary terminology is accepted, details superfluous in a decidedly Dickensian approach are added, and a more appealing notational system is adopted.

Heiner Schnelling

Dr.H.Schnelling, Universitätsbibliothek der FU Berlin, Garystr.39, D-1000 Berlin 33

CHAN, Lois Mai; RICHMOND, Phyllis A.; SVENONIUS, Elaine (Eds.): **Theory of Subject Analysis**. A **Source Book**. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited 1985. XV, 419p. ISBN 0-87287-489-3

This multiple-author anthology collects classic, seminal, and trail-blazing writings on classification, indexing, and related areas, written between 1885 and 1982. This is a period during which classification grew from infancy to the maturity of a full discipline and