

Lib sc. 4; 1967; PAPER N.

**SPECIAL LIBRARY *versus* SPECIALIST LIBRARY.**  
(Teaching in library science. 19).

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This is a report of two classes in DRTC, extending over three hours, conducted by Dr Ranganathan, on 19 and 20 March 1967. Traces the origin of the term 'Special Library'. Shows that the term 'Special Library' is a homonym and thus it does not precisely connote the emphasis on the service of nascent micro documents to specialists. Shows that the term 'Specialist Library' directly and precisely lays emphasis on the service of nascent micro documents to specialists. Incidentally points out the need for and importance of giving a precisely expressive unique name for a concept in a discipline. Annotations are added explaining the educational principles demonstrated by the work in the class.

*Abbreviations Used:*

P1 = Participant 1

... ..

P7 = Participant 7

T1 = Teacher 1

T2 = Teacher 2

T3 = Teacher 3

**1 SUBJECTS IN THE DRTC COURSE**

T1.— Now that you have nearly completed the course in the DRTC, can you tell me what are the subjects you have studied?

P1.— Universe of Subjects: Its development and structure.

T1.—I suppose you know the reason for this change in the name of the subject—that is, 'Universe of Knowledge' into 'Universe of Subject'.

T2.— Yes. We have explained the reason to them.

T1.— Then what are the other subjects?

P2.— Depth Classification.

- P3.— Cataloguing.  
 P4.— Research and Technical Library Method.  
 P5.— Documentation.

## 2 THE LONGEST TERM

- T1.— Of these five terms which is the longest one?  
 P5.— Documentation.  
 T1.— Do you say that the term 'Documentation' is the longest of the five terms mentioned earlier?  
 P5.— No. It is only a single-worded term.  
 T1.— Then which is the longest term?  
 P3.— Universe of Subjects.  
 T1.— No.  
 P4.— The term 'Research and Technical Library Method' is the longest one.  
 T1.— That is right. Is it possible to shorten this term?  
 P6.— It is possible.  
 T1.— Give the shortened term.  
 P4.— Special Library System.  
 T1.— Why do you introduce the word 'System' which is not in the original term?  
 P5.— We can retain the word 'Method'. There is no need for changing it to 'System'.

### 2A ANNOTATION

Very often students do not pick up the question correctly in their mind. In their haste to answer, they give out the term that comes to them earliest. The teacher has to repeat the question. Make them understand their mistake. He should emphasise the term about which the student is making a mistake.

## 3 ORIGIN OF THE TERM 'SPECIAL LIBRARY'

- T1.— Can you trace the history behind the term 'Special' ?  
 P4.— I think it was originated in the nineteenth century.  
 T1.— What makes you to think like that ?  
 P4.— While reading about the FID, I remember to have come across that term.  
 T1.— When did the FID come into existence ?  
 P4.— In 1894.

## 31 ATTEMPTS AT UNIVERSAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- T1.— Can anyone of you tell me something that happened in the same decade which is relevant to the term 'Special' ?  
 P1.— Do you mean the formation of the Special Libraries Association ?

- T1.— When was it formed ?  
 P1.— In 1909.  
 T1.— It is not the same decade as 1890s. I asked you about something relevant that happened in the same decade — that is, 1890s.  
 P5.— Are you referring to the Universal Bibliography ?  
 T1.— You are correct. Who did the first attempt at the Universal Bibliography ?  
 P4.— Gesner.  
 T1.— Where did you get it from ?  
 P4.— We were told in the class. We also read it in the *Bibliographic organisation* by Shera and Egan.  
 T1.— Will you bring that book and show the reference to us ?  
 P4.— (After looking into the book). I do not find a reference to Gesner here.  
 T1.— Then you might have seen it in some other book.  
 P5.— I think it is given in the *Reference service and bibliography*, V 1 (1940) by Ranganathan and Sundaram.  
 T1.— Bring that book and check it up.  
 P4.— (Brings the book). It is given in pages 373-4.  
 T1.— That is very good. Now what is the significant difference relevant to our purpose between the Gesner's Universal Bibliography and the Universal Bibliography contemplated in 1894 ?  
 P1.— Gesner's is an individual attempt, whereas the attempt of 1894 was a collective one.  
 T1.— It is not a difference relevant to our purpose.  
 P4.— Bibliographical techniques, such as Arrangement, etc.  
 T1.— No. Arrangement, etc, is not a difference relevant to our purpose — to trace the origin of the term 'Special Library'.  
 P3.— Gesner's Bibliography included only books; whereas the Bibliography of 1894 was intended to include books as well as articles in periodicals.  
 T1.— There you are. Can you not put it in our own jargon ?  
 P5.— Gesner's Bibliography covered only macro documents; whereas the Bibliography of 1894 was to cover both macro and micro documents.  
 T1.— That is right.

## 31A ANNOTATION

The habit of exactness in bibliographical reference will have to be tended incessantly during the course of training. Every opportunity should be taken to make the students realise that they should avoid depending on vague memory in making bibliographical citations without verification.

## 32 HELPFULNESS OF CANONS OF CLASSIFICATION

T1.— I want to bring to your notice, that you did not follow the Canon of Relevance. I had to remind you quite often about it. Do not think that the Canon of Relevance is only for classification. It is also helpful in our thinking and we have to use it in our day-to-day work. Can you mention any other Canon of Classification which is useful in our daily life also?

P3.— Canon of Context.

T1.— That is very good. Can you give me an example?

P3.— If I ask somebody to "Bring the table" pointing to a mathematical table, and if the person lifts the whole wooden table and puts it before me, he will be violating the Canon of Context. (Laughter).

T1.— That is an excellent example. Is there any other Canon that is helpful in our daily life?

P5.— Canon of Ascertainability.

T1.— Give an example.

(Silence for a few minutes).

P5.— Defence Institutes issue identity cards to ascertain defence personnel.

T1.— That is a good example. We find it in some universities also. Is it not?

P7.— We have in the Aligarh University 'Identity Card System'.

P6.— We have it even in the Poona University.

T1.— That is very good. In fact, the defence people ought to be more careful to ascertain the identity. Their names should be embossed on their forehead! (Laughter).

## 32A ANNOTATION

The special canons in a discipline can be made less forbidding and more meaningful and even seized as a permanent part of ones thinking apparatus, if they can be humanised by dwelling on their analogues in life situations.

## 33 HOMONYM IN EXPRESSION

T1.— Now let me come back to the point P1 mentioned about the Special Libraries Association. When was it established?

P1.— In 1909.

P5.— I think it was established in 1926.

T1.— Why the conflict? It is due to the homonymous expression 'Special Libraries Association'?

P5.— I took it to be the Special Library Association in UK.

P1.— I meant the Special Library Association of USA. (Laughter).

T1.— You see how homonyms derail your thought. Now P5, do you agree that the Special Libraries Association of USA was started in 1909?

P5.— Yes.

### 33A ANNOTATION

In this manner, every possible occasion — whatever be the main theme of a lesson — should be used to enable the students to see the need for homonym-free expressions in any communication and particularly in scientific communication.

### 34 BLIND IMPORT OF TRADITION

T1.— Let us take that the year of origin of the term 'Special' to be 1909. The same term was blindly imported in UK. They formed an Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureau (ASLIB) in 1926. In 1956, the same traditional term was blindly adopted and we named our Association as Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC).

### 35 NEW TERM

T1.— But we have now established in our Indian jargon a correct term. Can you give that term?

P1.— Is it 'Technical-libraries'?

T1.— No.

(Silence for a few minutes).

T1.— You seem to be puzzled over this simple issue.

T2.— They are not sure of the term, probably because you mentioned 'Indian jargon'.

T1.— Are you allergic to anything Indian? This was so a few years ago. One person wanted to study the bibliographical techniques. He got deputed to London. In London, the men in charge said that they were using the "Chain Procedure" which is simple and helpful. The Indian said, "Is it? I did not know." Then the British expressed his surprise and said that the Chain Procedure was invented in India. But I know that you young people do not have that mentality. I am rather surprised that you are unable to catch the term which, I am sure, you have heard several times in this hall. (Silence for a few minutes).

T2 and T3 (one after another).— We have told them quite often about the term. In fact, we have also indicated to them why we prefer that term instead of 'Special'.

[At this stage T1 casually mentioned in a low voice the term 'Specialist' while speaking with the other teachers].

P1.— Is it 'Technical Information Centres'?

T1.— You are far away from the correct term.

P2.— Is it 'Specialist'?

T1.— That is the term. How did you get it? Did you pick it up from my casual utterance?

P2.— Yes. (P2 was sitting nearest to T1).

T1.— That is alright. How many of you have heard the term in your classes? [All but P1 agreed that they had heard the term quite often].

P1.— I have not heard the term here in DRTC. I have heard it somewhere else. (Laughter).

T1.— It is very strange! The teacher using the correct term over and over again, and still making no impact on the student. This is a classic example of failure in communication! It should be recorded. (Laughter).

#### 35A ANNOTATION

This demonstrates the extreme proneness of the students to be mentally absent, though physically present, in class after class. The teacher should not be under the illusion that whatever he says is absorbed by every student. One remedy is to stop one way talk and adopt the discussional method in which each student is made to take part even in discussional method of teaching. If full emphasis is not put on *each* student there is every chance for some stray student totally escaping the teacher's attention in spite of his having been sat in the class and not absorbing the idea taught for the whole year — colossal educational wastage.

#### 4 NEED FOR THE TERM 'SPECIALIST LIBRARY'

T1.— Now, can you tell me why we use the term 'Specialist' instead of 'Special'?

P5.— To express the ideas precisely.

T1.— What else can be meant by the term 'Special Library'?

P5.— 'Special Library' denotes the collection of special kind of documents, such as braille books, audio-visual material, books published in any one language, such as Tamil library, Telugu library, etc.

P6.— It can also mean a library meant mainly for a special group of readers, such as Children's Library, Hospital Library, and Prison Library.

T1.—What do we mean by the term 'Specialist Library'?

P5.— 'Specialist Library' means "a library collecting documents on any one subject".

T1.— Do you say that a library having books exclusively on Mathematics is a Specialist Library? Similarly a library having books exclusively on Telugu literature or Tamil literature is a Specialist Library?

P5.— Yes.

T1.— Do you all agree with P5?

(Silence for a few minutes).

P5.— I want to amend my own definition.

T1.— Yes, do it.

P5.— I would say a Specialist Library is a library that collects documents of interest to specialists.

P4.— More than the collection of documents, it is the type of service to the specialist that makes a library Specialist Library.

T1.— Specialist Library is a library whose services lay emphasis on the serving of nascent micro documents to specialist readers, pinpointedly, exhaustively, expeditiously. What a closely packed jargon! Are you not scared away by it?

P7.— In a science, precision is more important than absence of jargon.

#### 4A ANNOTATION

The indifference, the allergy, and even the positive opposition and even ridicule to the use of precise technical terminology in the several branches of library science exhibited by some senior librarians is traceable to their not having been enabled, during their student life, to realise the importance of technical terminology free of homonyms and synonyms in the study of any science and particularly library science. The term 'Jargon' itself is a homonym. Those unfortunate librarians overlook the positive meaning of that term and catch hold of the cynical meaning of it. While teaching library science therefore every opportunity should be taken to make the students realise the supreme importance of restricting oneself to its technical terminology or jargon.

#### 5 WHAT IS IN A NAME?

T1.— Some of you might be thinking "Why should we bother about the name of a subject at all?" Somebody even said, "What is in a name?" Who said it?

P6.— It is Shakespeare. In *Romeo and Juliet*.

T1.— Does Shakespeare subscribe that there is something in the name? ... Find out whether Shakespeare is for it or not.

#### 5I GUIDANCE FROM VALMIKI

T1.— The same thing was said by the pioneer poet of India.

P4.— You mean Valmiki: in the *Ramayana*.

T1.— In what context did Valmiki indicate this?

(Silence for a few minutes).

T1.— Who was the arch priest of King Dasaratha's Court?

P4.— Sage Vasishta.

T1.— There were three religious functions relating to Rama: His birth, his naming, and his marriage. For the birth of Rama

King Dasaratha performed *Putra-Kamesti-Yaga* (Sacrifice for begetting a son). Who played the primary role of this Yaga?

P5.— Rishyashringa.

T1.— Who played the primary role in the marriage of Rama?

P6.— Viswamitra.

T1.— But it was Vasishtha that gave the name 'Rama'. That shows how much importance was given to the function of naming. When it comes to naming, Vasishtha would not abdicate his prerogative as arch priest. He himself performed the naming ceremony. This indicates the weightage given by Valmiki to name. I think Shakespeare also subscribes to the importance of name. Any intuitive person will believe in it. I have faith in the supreme intuition of the poet Valmiki. I am bred over his *Ramayana*. There is everything in name.

## 6 SPECIALIST LIBRARY

T1.— If there is the right name it will take us like an arrow straight to the meaning. Let me illustrate this to you. Now P2, what is meant by the term 'Specialist'?

P2.— (Reads from the *Concise Oxford dictionary*).

"One who devotes himself to a particular branch of a profession, science etc."

T1.— That is right. Specialist in each branch will have a distinctive name of his own. Can you give a few examples?

P1.— We call a person who specialises in Library Science a 'Librarian'.

P2.— A person who specialises himself in Documentation Work and Service is a 'Documentalist'.

P3.— A person who specialises in Cataloguing is a 'Cataloguer' and so on.

P5.— We can also call a person who specialises in Subject Heading Work a 'Subject Heading Specialist'.

T1.— Can you further narrow it down?

P6.— We can have "Natural Sciences Subject Heading Specialist" and so on.

T1.— Thus it goes on narrower and narrower. In fact, a cynic's definition of a Specialist is "a person who knows more and more about less and less, so that he knows everything about nothing". (Laughter). Now, what is a 'Specialist Library'?

P3.— A Specialist Library is a library which serves the reader with emphasis on nascent micro subjects.

T1.— Do you see how we come direct to the service of nascent micro documents, because we qualified it by the term 'Specialist'?



## 7 SPECIAL LIBRARY

T1.— On the other hand, see whether we directly get at the service of nascent micro document if we take the name given in 1909—'Special Library'.

P3.— The term 'Special' means (Reads from the *Webster's international dictionary*) "Unusual", "Distinguished"; "Particular"; "Peculiar", "Not general".

T1.— Now the term 'Special' may qualify either a reader or a document. Let us take them one after another.

## 71 SPECIAL READER

T1.— Now let us take the meaning of the term 'Special Reader'.

P6.— Taking the meaning of the term 'Special', as Unusual, the term 'Special Reader' denotes unusual reader such as a Blind Reader, a Prisoner, a Patient, an Imbecile, a Genius, or a Child.

P7.— The term 'Special Reader' can also mean a Reader who has specialised in a particular subject.

P4.— You mean to say that he may be a "Subject Specialist".

T1.— The concept of "Subject Specialist" comes only as one of the several meanings of the term 'Special Reader'. On the other hand, if we use the term 'Specialist Library' instead of the term 'Special Library', the only unusual reader that will go with the term 'Specialist Library' is the Subject Specialist and none of the other kinds implied in the term 'Special Library'.

## 72 SPECIAL DOCUMENT

T1.— Now let us take the meaning of the term 'Special Document'.

P2.— A 'Special Document' may denote an unusual document—that is, an unconventional document such as a braille book or an audio-visual book or a micro-film or an undersized book or an oversized book.

P5.— 'Special Document' may also mean a micro document.

T1.— Even then this can be only one of the several meanings of the term 'Special Document'. On the other hand, if we use the term 'Specialist Library' instead of the term 'Special Library' the only unusual document that will go with the term 'Specialist Library' is the micro document and none of the kinds of special documents implied in the term 'Special Library'.

## 7A ANNOTATION

Very often arguments get dissipated when a term with several meanings is used. For, different participants in a class or a discussion group may take the term with different meanings and argue along different directions. A corrective to this tendency is to bring the dictionary into use to expose the

different meanings of the term. Awareness of this problem should be brought home to the student from a very early stage. Then a term, such as 'Special Library' in the place of 'Specialist Library' would not have come into use; nor will it be perpetuated as it is today.

## 8 VALUE OF THE RIGHT NAME

T1.— Do you see how you have to travel round to get to the point of service of nascent micro document to specialist, if you take the term 'Special Library' instead of 'Specialist Library'? If it is 'Special Library' you wander. If it is 'Specialist Library' you do not. Will you say any longer, what is there in a name? If you take the term 'Research and Technical Library', you will not get the full import to the concept which all of you have without being properly expressed. If you take the term 'Special Library', you understand it, but it misleads because of its being a homonym; the term 'Specialist Library' gives the meaning directly. Unfortunately, this correct term had not been brought into use till now. As a result of the wrong start given in 1909, many librarians preferred to be deluded by hugging to the term 'Special Library' even as a slave prefers to hug to his chains.

Now out of the three terms—'Research and Technical Library', 'Special Library', and 'Specialist Library'—which will you choose to be incorporated in our Prospectus?

Ps.— 'Specialist Library'.

T1.— Read the following documents, by Dr S R Ranganathan, in this connection:

Title	Location
Special librarianship— what it connotes.	(Special libraries. 40; 1949; 361-67).
Documentalist and the subject specialist.	(An lib sc. 10; 1963; Paper K).
Documentation: a vital link in communication	(An lib sc. 9; 1962; Paper V).
Documentation and its facets. 1963.	Chap B2.