Classics in Library and Information Science

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Merrill's Code for Classifiers

The second book under the **Classics in Library and Information Science series** isWilliam Stetson *Merrill's Code for Classifiers*. It is just 128 page book published by the American Library Association in 1928, and it was revised in 1954 (177pages). Originally developed based on a 1911 paper read at the Pasadena conference,Merrill outlined the practical problems classifiers faced.

As the subtitle suggests, the *Code* gives "Principles Governing the Consistent Placing of Books in a System of Classification." These principles are independent of the scheme or system of classification. In other words, it does not depend on notation. Or, simply, the code focuses at 'Idea and Verbal' planes of classification.

The following two examples give an idea of the principles stated by Merrill to resolve the conflicts of classifiers.

- A book on the 'US Election 2020' may be classed under Political Science or History of the US. Merrill's advice is, "Class a book where it is permanently expected." He also gives another principle, "Today's Politics is tomorrow's History."

❖ You may not get a class number for 'Aircraft Tyres' in the scheme of classification. Then Merrill's advice is 'class a part with the whole.

The book gives many such practical insightful suggestions to help classifiers in handling day-to-day dilemmas. Generally book classification is treated as 'Mark and Park'. But, Merrill's code places it on firm principles. Applied carefully, the use of *Code* can be extended to Taxonomies, Ontologies, Pedagogies, Thesaurus, Artificial Intelligence, etc.