Obituary: Jack Mills 1918 – 2010

Jack Mills spent more than sixty years of his life in the study, teaching, development and promotion of information retrieval, principally as a major player in the British school of facet analysis which builds on the tradition of S. R. Ranganathan. He was a signatory to the seminal paper "A faceted classification as the basis of all information retrieval",[1] and he stands as a significant link in the tradition which begins with Ranganathan and which is represented today in research looking for solutions to the semantic web.

Although an inspiring teacher, he is probably best known for his contribution to information science research. In the 1960s he was Deputy Director of the prestigious Cranfield Project[2], supporting Cyril Cleverdon in the first major exercise in information retrieval in the United Kingdom. The results of the work at Cranfield had a major influence on British information science, and the documentation from that project continues to be cited in the professional literature today. A founder member and chairman for many years of the Classification Research Group (1952 –), he was also a passionate advocate for classification theory, and contributed to the development of the *Bliss Bibliographic Classification*, *the Universal Decimal Classification*, and, most recently, the second edition of the *Bliss Bibliographic Classification*[3] which embodies the whole corpus of information retrieval theory developed by the CRG since the 1950s.

From the 1960s he was the driving force behind the revision of the *Bliss Bibliographic Classification* (BC2), chairing the Bliss Classification Association Committee, and undertaking the greater part of the work of revision as Editor of the new scheme. Although relatively little has been written about BC2, its impact on the field of knowledge organization and retrieval has been immense. The statement of principles in the *Introduction* to the scheme is almost

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[1] Classification Research Group "The need for a faceted classification as the basis of all methods of information retrieval" *Library Association record* 57(7) 1955 262-268

[2] Cleverdon, Cyril W. (1962) *Aslib Cranfield research project: report on the testing and analysis of an investigation into the comparative efficiency of indexing systems* Cranfield: [College of Aeronautics], 1962 http://hdl.handle.net/1826/8366

[3] J. Mills and Vanda Broughton, *Bliss bibliographic classification* (2nd ed.) London: Butterworth 1977-

alone in documenting the corporate theory of the CRG as it developed from 1950 and throughout the twentieth century, and is one of the few coherent statements of modern classification theory. Facet analysis is relevant not only to traditional classification and knowledge organization systems. The methodology supports the generation of thesauri and subject heading lists, and the creation of structured vocabularies for metadata. Today facet analytical techniques are to be seen embedded in much commercial retrieval software, in search engines on commercial sites, and in very many research projects both in academic institutions and professional organizations

In 1998 Jack Mills was acknowledged by the Conference on the History and Heritage of Science Information as a 'pioneer of information science', and was among twenty nominees invited to a dinner in their honour at the Conference in Pittsburgh. In 2003 his contribution to the field was marked by the award of an Honorary Fellowship from the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals, and in 2005 he was recipient of the Tony Kent Strix award. He continued to write and research throughout his life, and in 2004 provided a substantial contribution to a special issue of *Library Trends* on the philosophy of information[1]. Jack Mills died on the 9 July 2010, sitting in the garden of his home in London. As usual he had been working on the classification during the day.

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[1] Mills, Jack "Faceted classification and logical division in information retrieval" *Library Trends* 2004 52(3) 373–670 541-570