

Book review of

Fugmann, Robert: **Das Buchregister. Methodische Grundlagen und praktische Anwendungen.** (The Book Index. Methodological Foundations and Practical Applications) Frankfurt: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Informationswissenschaft und Informationspraxis e.V. 2006. 136p., ISBN 3-925474-59-5

Except for a slim volume of 1964 (1) there has not as yet been published in German a text book on book indexing so far. Therefore this book of Dr. Fugmann fills indeed a much deplored gap in our professional literature. Although there have been many articles and books by Robert Fugmann himself on indexing in German as well as in English, he decided this time to take care of this gap and at the same time he tried to upgrade the art of book indexing by combining it with the science of indexing as used for the extraction of the essence of documents in information science.

Having read this very carefully written, edited and of course also indexed book – which caused me much trouble, I must confess, because the typography is so small that I needed a magnifying glass to read the footnotes on each page - I must, however, state that the result of his endeavor should be regarded as an outstanding textbook not only for German book indexers but also in translations for book indexers on a world-wide scale. So far, book indexing has not been taught at Library and Information Science Schools. With this book of Fugmann one could consider making it a subject to be taught at such Schools. By this, one would also contribute to the recognition of the great cultural value which is contained in the knowledge embedded in textbooks or in similar publications. If indexes present this knowledge in the most concise way, one will be able to utilize such an index, even if one had not studied the source book beforehand. With Fugmann's volume one will learn how to establish the most adequate form of optimal knowledge representation in a really clear, accurate and well-aimed (treffsicher) form.

Fugmann presented his text very logically and numbered each paragraph, so that the index entries would relate more directly to the place in question. He started with a theoretical part in which he shows the difference between word and concept, the search by memory and the one by discovery and tackled also the problematic cases which are caused by natural language in searches. Further he shows the opposition between assignment indexing and extraction indexing and explains also what is understood by indicative and informative indexing. The latter is characterized by its richness in informative subentries. For all cases he gives a maximum of pertinent examples. The book is concluded with an informative alphabetical index and an informative systematic index. For such a systematic index one needs of course a well-structured categorization. With respect to this kind of index in Fugmann's book, however, I must state that the divisions in the first four areas are much too broad. (He used for the entire mass of entries only Information philosophy, Content analysis, Search, Information technology, Persons, Institutions and Subject fields.). This could have been improved by subcategorization, so that fewer entries could be scanned much easier and faster for relevance. The alphabetical informative index of this book is however a masterpiece and very convincing indeed.

A very essential help of the book are also the necessary agreements which need to be settled between indexer and publisher. They include decisions about the kind of index (indicative or informative), its size, timing, etc. There is no word about the price, one would have to follow the conventions which generally are established by the professional communities. Fugmann mentions all of them existing in the different countries.

The list of his cited literature comprises almost 100 sources, of which the majority are in English, only 23 are in German, these, however, relate only in two cases to book indexing.

This shows again the deplorable gap in recognizing the value of professional book indexing in this country!

In his concluding Epilogue, Fugmann turns a.o. also to the treacherous opinion of many newcomers to the field of information science, who think, one would only need a computer and thus one could very easily establish indexes. The results however, are then no real indexes but concordances, mostly consisting only of one word without expressive power to which are added in most cases also a great number of page numbers, which nobody is interested taking the time to search for them. Such „indexes“ are really garbage and a shame for the producer. In a society interested to produce values such a practice should be stigmatized.

Concludingly I would like to congratulate Robert Fugmann for having composed this book in such a short time and - may I disclose it too? – just before his 80th birthday. And I know, it is his desire that by improving the science of book indexing in the way demonstrated in this book, the readers will receive an instrument for making book indexing and index reading a joy for the readers and an adventure in discovering most interesting items of knowledge!

(1) Kunze, Hort: Über das Registermachen. München-Pullach: Verlag Dokumentation 1964.

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