World List of Scientific Periodicals.

By F. W. CLIFFORD.

IT is difficult to conceive a publication which would be of greater value to scientific workers in Great Britain than that which is the subject of this article. Research workers in the realms of science, constantly confronted with references to periodical publications to which they have not immediate access, have often expressed the need for an authoritative list of scientific journals, together with an indication of the British libraries where they can be consulted. In the absence of this information, provincial workers are compelled to spend money and ill-spaced time in journeying to and from London for serials which may perhaps be contained in a library nearer at hand.

Such a project has frequently been discussed and even commenced. The Panizzi Club, composed of senior officers of State, Universities, and Professional Libraries, got well ahead with a Union list in the early months of 1914, but the War intervened and the work so well commenced by Mr. E. W. Hulme, then Librarian of the Patent Office, came more or less to a standstill. This earlier effort was practically forgotten, when, in 1921, the need for such a list was again urgent, and the Conjoint Board of Scientific Societies appointed a small committee to devise a practical scheme for the compilation and subsequent publication of a World List of Scientific Periodicals.

The Trustees of the British Museum were approached, and recognising the importance of this work to scientific research and bibliography, they consented to allow the compilation to be undertaken by the staff of the Museum.

With this very material assistance, and financially fortified by the private guarantees of two well-known men of science, the Conjoint Board felt able to proceed with the proposal. Fortunately, at this critical period, however, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees expressed their willingness to add a substantial guarantee if the original scope could be somewhat widened. This action very considerably smoothed the way, and steady progress was made with the List. When the Board itself was dissolved in 1923, the original Committee was formed into a Limited Company so as to ensure the publication of the completed work.

It is intended that the List shall be issued in two parts. The first part is now in the press and will probably be published during the present year. This portion consists of a list of more than 25,000 scientific serials in existence in 1900, or originating between that date and the year 1921, whether still current or not.

Each serial is arranged alphabetically under its title, *e.g.* the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society will be found under "P" and not under "Academies,

London." The items are numbered consecutively, and these numbers will be used in Part II. to identify the periodical. It will be recognised that in the arrangement of a list of this kind there may be several opinions as to the precise order which should be followed. The fact, however, that Prof. A. W. Pollard, until lately the Keeper of Printed Books in the British Museum, has acted as the editor, should more than guarantee that the final decision has been made in a manner which should meet with the approval of the bibliographer and fulfil the requirements of the scientific worker, whose references to periodicals are so often in a very abbreviated form.

The second part, or Index Section, will indicate in what libraries in the United Kingdom a copy of any of the serials in Part I. can be consulted. Sets of the sheets of the first part are now being circulated amongst important libraries, general and special, both in London and in specified provincial centres, for the addition of this information.

In the provincial centres the aid has been enlisted of certain professors and librarians, who are acting as local secretaries to co-ordinate the information as to periodicals taken in their respective districts. This laborious, but most valuable, work has to be carried out promptly, or otherwise the publication may be delayed. At a later date, perhaps, it may not be out of place to disclose the names of these enthusiasts, to whom scientific workers will always be indebted.

It may be well to mention that the World List is not intended to be a catalogue of the periodicals in any given library. A moment's thought will show the practical impossibility of giving all the libraries containing English journals of considerable circulation. In the case of these, the local secretaries have been asked to exercise discretion as to whether there is any need to indicate the existence of more than one complete set in their town. It would, however, be easy for any centre to use the World List as a catalogue of periodicals in that area by the simple means of stamping with a rubber stamp opposite each periodical possessed by the individual libraries comprising it. Or, as Part I. of the World List is printed on one side only, the entries could be cut and mounted on cards.

The List should also be of service in encouraging co-operation between large libraries in the direction of lessening duplication in their immediate neighbourhood, with the result that funds may be released for the purchase of additional periodicals, and in consequence increase the total number of periodicals contained in that area. At the same time such a survey would

show those responsible, how well, or ill, the research worker is catered for with regard to periodical literature in the respective institutions.

A comparison of the World List of Scientific Periodicals with the "Gesamt Zeitschriften Verzeichnis" shows that the former contains 25,000 whilst the German publication contains but 17,190. The French "Inventaire des périodiques," of which the first number has recently been issued, is not far enough advanced to ascertain the number of periodicals which will eventually be covered by it, but the letter "A" contains 2357 entries as against 2649 in the English production. No conclusion can be drawn from the latter figures, as the arrangement of the entries is not quite the same as that in the World List. Also the information as to libraries refers only to those in Paris itself.

This census of periodicals shows that the scientific journals are steadily increasing in number. Many new

serials have commenced life since the War, and new Academies founded from patriotic motives are commencing to publish printed memoirs. Is it not time that a halt should be called? Would it not be possible for the older Academies to set an example by encouraging the publication of their own communications in the specialised journals? The scientific worker would then have his material more or less collected instead of contained in an academic "mixed grill." The researches would reach without delay those most interested, whilst details of abstraction, etc., would be very much simplified.

In conclusion, whilst no one library can be expected to contain all the periodicals mentioned in this monumental work, every library should at least contain a copy of the World List in order to direct inquirers to the nearest library where a particular periodical may be seen. Scientific research workers will in due time find that it is indispensable to them.

The Library Association's Subject Index.

SINCE 1915, "The Subject Index to Periodicals"¹ has been issued annually by the Library Association in the form of eight Class-Lists, except for the period 1917-19, when the lists were triennial. The Class-Lists are: A, Theology and Philosophy; B-E, Historical, Political, and Economic Sciences; F, Education and Child Welfare; G, Art and Archaeology; H, Music; I, Languages and Literature (Part 1, Classical, Oriental and Primitive; Part 2, Modern and Bibliography); K, Science and Technology; L, Author Index to A-K, and List of Periodicals indexed.

The Index is a classification of articles of reference value selected from an examination of close upon 600 periodicals, English and foreign. The entries are minutely classified under the alphabetical subject headings of the Library of U.S. Congress, and are annotated where it is desirable to define with greater precision the scope of articles. The unbound numbers of periodicals sent for indexing are filed for reference and lending purposes. Any subscriber to the Index can on application obtain the loan of specified articles on payment of the return postage. Further, he can require the editors to furnish him with a list of articles under specified headings in continuation of the last printed Class-List.

Thus subscription to the Index on the part of a small rural or town library raises the status of that library to that of a research institution, for the Index places its readers in touch with the latest developments in thought,

policy, and action in all departments of human life, while it maintains a library of serials for reference which is not only larger than the corresponding collections in the average municipal reference library, but probably also contains serials not to be found in the library of the British Museum itself. This work of the Library Association could not have been carried out without some external assistance. Generous pecuniary assistance has been forthcoming from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, while free quarters have been found for the editorial staff of the Index and its nucleus loan collection in the great National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth.

It should be noticed that "The Subject Index to Periodicals" was planned at a time when "The International Catalogue of Scientific Literature" was still in existence. Hence the Index was to a great extent designed to bridge the gaps which that publication left unfilled. With the discontinuance of "The International Catalogue," however, the question of the co-ordinated publication of indexes to scientific periodical literature once more comes to the front. This subject was brought before the Conference on Bureaux of Information and "Special" Libraries held at Hoddesdon on September 5-8. It may be taken for granted that international co-operation has failed and that the future organisation of scientific literature must be effected on a national basis.

Secondly, it should be remembered that the State has a well-defined interest in this matter, and should be called upon to shoulder its share of responsibility. For example, the principal repositories of the serial litera-

¹ Annual subscription, 4s. 4s. (Agents: Grafton and Co., 51 Great Russell Street, W.C.1.)