

comprehensive bibliography the value of which unfortunately is considerably diminished by the incompleteness of the bibliographic detail.

The Service of Unified Knowledge

SOME time ago (November 18, 1936) we discussed, under the above heading, Mr. H. G. Wells's "Idea of a World Encyclopædia", a project designed "to hold men's minds together in something like a common interpretation of reality". Six months later (May 29), we published an article discussing Prof. Dobrowolski's scheme for paving the way for such a common interpretation by equipping every university with a "faculty of general knowledge". A full translation of its author's own account of the scheme appeared later in the *Sociological Review* (October 1937), including a description of the organization, subject-matter, time-tables and method of instruction of "Universitas Rediviva", a working model of the proposed faculty of general knowledge in operation in Warsaw. In the meantime, Mr. H. G. Wells has outlined in his address at Nottingham to Section L (Education) of the British Association, his ideas as to the informative content of the kind of liberal education that might be expected to produce minds capable of being held together by his world encyclopædia. The importance of such a "holding together of men's minds" has been clearly seen by the creators of the modern dictatorial regimes. In democracies it is equally important but much more difficult to achieve. Both Wells and Dobrowolski would probably subscribe to A. N. Whitehead's dictum: "There can be no successful democratic society till general education conveys a philosophic outlook" ("Adventures of Ideas". Cambridge: University Press, 1933).

Accessions to the British Museum (Bloomsbury)

AMONG accessions to the collections of the British Museum (Bloomsbury) reported at the June meeting of the Trustees is a remarkably fine spearhead found in the Thames at London, which has been on loan since 1931, and has now been presented to the Museum by the owner, Capt. John Ball. The spearhead, on account of its graceful shape, ranks with the famous Battersea shield and other examples of Celtic art in Britain of the period of high aesthetic qualities. It is of iron with two applied plates of bronze on each side, ornamented with Celtic scroll pattern. It dates from the beginning of the first century A.D. The most important accession to the Ethnographical Department consists of a generous selection of the antiquities from the Bay Islands off British Honduras, which were recently on exhibition in London (see *NATURE*, May 21, p. 932). These have been given by Lord Moyne, by whom the excavations were carried out. The remainder of the collection has been sent to Cambridge for study and distribution among various institutions. The examples of the Bay Islands culture allotted to the British Museum include a number of ocarinas or pottery whistles of various shapes, including a notable specimen in the form of a jaguar, while a remarkable product of the potter's art is a monkey swinging from a bough.

The selection also includes a number of the small carvings in jadeite and soapstone and several of the stone hoes, while a large pottery beaker is especially interesting, as being comparable with one carved in white stone coming from the mainland of Honduras, which was already in the Museum. The Bay Islands culture is thought to date from between A.D. 1000 and 1500.

Recent Advances in Bird-Ringing

BIRD-RINGING in Britain, now organized from the bird room of the British Museum (Natural History), shows an increase not in the actual number of birds marked, but in the number of adult birds 'trapped' and thus marked and released, and a decrease in the number of nestlings marked; the mortality amongst nestlings is naturally high and thus the chances of recovery of ringed nestlings fewer. The statistics for 1937 show that 45,181 birds were ringed in Britain (*British Birds*, April 1938), as against 48,663 the previous year, bringing the grand total of birds marked in the country since the scheme was started in 1907 to 575,914. There was a record total of 'trapped' birds last year of 21,900 compared with 19,235 birds last year, and it includes a number of rarities not marked before, such as the waxwing and little bunting. Skokholm Bird Observatory, South Wales, for example, marked 4,402 birds in 1937, including the valuable total of 1,448 Manx shearwaters, 904 gannets and 603 razorbills. Mr. G. Charteris's list of 3,044 birds marked included 1,396 chaffinches, mostly at a winter roost; Mr. P. Morshead's total of 2,546 birds included 1,272 'trapped' starlings; Mr. A. Maynall's 2,024 birds including 348 nestling nightingales. The Zoological Society of London (through Mr. E. A. Billet) ringed a total of 1,144 birds at Whipsnade last year, these including 333 'trapped' jackdaws. Some of the leading boys' schools again take a prominent place in the ringing returns. Owing to the increased cost of the rings and the organization, there is an appeal for funds in addition to the general charges for the rings used.

Systems of Units

THE February issue of the *Journal of the Franklin Institute* contains a paper by Prof. W. M. Hall, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, on the formation of systems of units, which embodies portions of a 1936 copyright publication on the subject. The conditions for a self-consistent system of units are laid down and for translational kinematics length and time taken as fundamental. Translational kinetics then gives mass and rotational angle. Thermodynamics introduces temperature, light visibility and sound audibility. Electrodynamics admits of two possibilities: permittivity or permeability may be taken as fundamental and give the electrostatic or electromagnetic systems respectively. The questions of the sizes of the units to be chosen for convenience and of rationalizing or subrationalizing the units in which the coefficient 4π appears are discussed. Tables are given in which the units of the following systems are compared. The electro-