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REPORT OF A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, TO CONSIDER THE FORMATION OF A CATALOGUE OF PHILOSOPHICAL MEMOIRS.

[From the *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, (1856), pp. 463—464.]

THE Committee were appointed—on the occasion of a communication from Professor Henry of Washington, containing a proposal for the publication of Philosophical Memoirs scattered throughout the Transactions of Societies in Europe and America, with the offer of cooperation on the part of the Smithsonian Institute, to the extent of preparing and publishing, in accordance with the general plan which might be adopted by the British Association, a Catalogue of all the American Memoirs on Physical Science—to consider the best system of arrangement, and to report thereon to the Council.

The Committee are desirous of expressing their sense of the great importance and increasing need of such a Catalogue.

They understand the proposal of the Smithsonian Institute to be, that a separate Catalogue should be prepared and published for America.

In the opinion of the Committee,

The Catalogue should embrace the Mathematical and Physical Sciences, but should exclude Natural History and Physiology, Geology, Mineralogy, and Chemistry, which would properly form the subject-matter of a distinct Catalogue or Catalogues. The difficulty of drawing the line would perhaps be greatest with regard to Chemistry and Geology; but the Committee would admit into the Catalogue memoirs not purely Chemical or Geological, but having a direct bearing upon the subjects of the Catalogue.

The Catalogue should not be restricted to memoirs in Transactions of Societies, but should comprise also memoirs in the Proceedings of Societies, in Mathematical and Scientific Journals, in Ephemerides and volumes of Observations, and in other collections not coming under any of the preceding heads. The Catalogue would not comprise separate works.

The Catalogue should begin from the year 1800.

There should be a Catalogue according to the names of authors, and also a Catalogue according to subjects; the title of the memoir, date, and other particulars to be in each case given in full, so as to avoid the necessity of a reference from the one Catalogue to the other.

The Catalogue should, in referring to a memoir, give the number as well of the last as of the first page, so as to show the length of the memoir.

The Catalogue should give in every case the date of a memoir (the year only), namely, in the case of memoirs published in the Transactions of a Society, the date of reading, and in other cases the date on the title-page of the volume. Such date should be inserted as a distinct fact, even in the case of a volume of transactions referred to by its date.

The Catalogue should contain a list of volumes indexed, showing the complete title; in the case of transactions, the year to which the volume belongs, and the year of publication; and in other cases, the year of publication, and the abbreviated reference to the work.

The references to works should be given in a form sufficiently full to be easily intelligible without turning to the explanation of such reference.

The author's name and the date should be printed in a distinctive type, so as to be conspicuous at first sight; and generally the typographical execution should be such as to facilitate as much as possible the use of the Catalogue.

As to the Catalogue according to the authors' names, the memoirs of the same author should be arranged according to their dates.

As to the Catalogue according to subjects, the question of the arrangement is one of very great difficulty. It appears to the Committee that the scheme of arrangement cannot be fixed upon according to any *à priori* classification of subjects, but must be determined after some progress has been made in the preliminary work of collecting the titles of the memoirs to be catalogued. The value of this part of the Catalogue will materially depend upon the selection of a proper principle of arrangement, and the care and accuracy with which such principle is carried out. The arrangement of the memoirs in the ultimate subdivisions should be according to their dates.

The most convenient method of making the Catalogue would appear to be, that each volume to be indexed should be gone through separately, and a list formed of

all the memoirs which come within the plan of the proposed Catalogue. Such list should be in triplicate, one copy for reference, a second copy to be cut up and arranged for the Catalogue according to authors' names, and another copy to be cut up and arranged for the Catalogue according to subjects.

The Committee have endeavoured to form an estimate of the space which the Catalogue would occupy. The number of papers in a volume of transactions is in general small, but there are works, such as the *Comptes Rendus*, the *Astronomische Nachrichten*, the *Philosophical Magazine*, &c., containing a very great number of papers, the titles of which would consequently occupy a considerable space in the Catalogue. Upon the whole, the Committee consider that, excluding America, they may estimate the number of papers to be entered at 125,000; or since each paper would be entered twice, the number of entries would be 250,000. The number of entries that could conveniently be brought into a page 4to. (double columns) would be about 30, so that, according to the above estimate, the Catalogue would occupy ten quarto volumes of rather more than 800 pages each.

It appears to the Committee that there should be paid Editors, who should be familiar with the several great branches respectively of the Sciences to which the Catalogue relates; but that the general scheme of arrangement and details of the Catalogue should be agreed upon between all the Editors, and that they should be jointly responsible for the execution. It would of course be necessary that the Editors should have the assistance of an adequate staff of clerks.

The principal scientific transactions and works would be accessible in England at the Library of the British Museum, and the libraries of the Royal Society and other Philosophical Societies. It would be the duty of the Editors to ascertain all the different works which ought to be catalogued, and to procure information as to the contents of such of them as may not happen to be accessible.

The Catalogue according to authors' names would be the most readily executed, and this Catalogue, if it should be found convenient, might be first published. The time of bringing out the two Catalogues would of course depend upon the sufficiency of the assistance at the command of the Editors; but if the Catalogue be undertaken, it is desirable that the arrangement should be such, that the complete work might be brought out within a period not exceeding three years.

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