Gorman, Michael. "Inverting the 'Principle of Inversion.'" *Catalogue and Index* no. 180 (2015): 9–10. Available for free at:
https://archive.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Catalogue%20and%20Index%20issue%20180%2C%20September%202015_0.pdf#page=9.

Fifty years ago, I had the great good fortune to be at library school, in Ealing Technical College (now the University of the Thames Valley), and to learn from two inspiring cataloguing teachers—Eric Stone and Alan Thomas. I had gone to library school with the intention of becoming a public library reference librarian (after working as a junior assistant in Hampstead and Ealing Public Libraries), but exposure to the ideas and literature of cataloguing and classification guided by Mr Thomas and Mr Stone changed that rapidly and determined the course of my working life. The two luminaries whose work inspired me most were the cataloguing genius Seymour Lubetzky and the classificationist S.R. Ranganathan. The latter — the greatest librarian of the 20th century — loomed large in library education and the library profession in those days. As things turned out, my post-library-school work was in the field of descriptive cataloguing and I had the honour of knowing and corresponding with Mr Lubetzky on many occasions up to the end of his long life. The teachings and inspiration of Dr Ranganathan remained with me nevertheless. My first job after library school was a research project for the British National Bibliography (BNB) and the North-Western Polytechnic library school, following which I was the employed by BNB. The presiding genius of BNB was A.J. "Jack" Wells, a friend and disciple of Dr Ranganathan's. Thus, though I worked on the descriptive cataloguing side of that enterprise, I worked in an institution suffused with Dr Ranganathan's ideas and inspired by his ideals.

I mention all this to set the stage for a description of an incident centred on a small, but significant, matter of classification theory arising from Dr Ranganathan's ideas — *The Principle of Inversion* — in the hope that it may be of interest to the (presumably few) people who are still interested in such matters. It may be necessary to rehearse the basic idea of Dr Ranganathan's theory about "faceted classification" here. The classic approach to classification of subjects from Aristotle to Dewey was to arrange complex subjects in an order expressing the relationship between them and assign an artificial language expression (numbers and/or letters) to each complex subject. Dr Ranganathan's mould-breaking idea was that complex subjects had a number of what he called "facets" and to create classification designations by linking those facets in a prescribed order with punctuation indicating each facet. At the time of which I write, his facets — Personality, Material, Energy, Space, and Time (PMEST) plus form designations (encyclopaedias, dictionaries, &c.) — were well known to even casual students of classification. Let us say that you were classifying a book on designing wooden boats in the 19th century. Rather than looking in the Decimal or LC classification schedules for a designation expressing the whole subject (good luck if you did), the classifier using a hypothetical faceted classification scheme would assign the designation for *boats* in the Personality schedule and attach the designation for *wooden* in the Material schedule, for *designing* from the Energy schedule, and for the *19th century* from the Time schedule — thus constructing what could be an entirely new designation (if no book on the subject had been published before). The beauty of the approach was its flexibility in allowing the construction of designations for subjects with no bibliographic warrant, whereas traditional classifications (DC, LC, etc.) consisted, essentially, of solved problems with scant provision for new subjects.

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