

Catalogue of library holdings, 1986

National Library for the Handicapped Child

Lynton House, 7-12 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9LT. x + 677 pp.

The National Library for the Handicapped Child was established under the sponsorship of the Enid Blyton Trust in 1984. It offers a reference and advisory service to anyone who cares for or educates children whose handicap affects their ability to read and enjoy books. It currently holds over 5000 children's books, and about 1000 reference books, as well as a variety of periodicals and other materials. Nothing can be borrowed, but enquirers are encouraged to use the collection as an aid to selecting materials for use with their children. Enquiries can be made by phone, post or personal visit. Apart from certain holiday periods, the library is open Monday to Friday, 10.00 am to 6.00 pm. A termly newsletter is available on subscription.

This catalogue contains entries for all books and other materials placed in the library between January 1985 and June 1986. It includes information about computer software, sound tapes, slides, film strips, 16 mm film, videos, pictures, jigsaws, and multi-media packs. The reference collection contains books on the education and care of children with handicaps, and on reading development and reading problems. The books come from all parts of the English-speaking world, and cater for both specialist and lay readers.

The catalogue entries give relevant information about author, illustrator, title, year of publication, pagination, publisher, series, size, library classification, edition, price, binding, whether illustrated, age interest (2-yearly intervals), whether in a foreign language, reading age (2-yearly intervals), language level (subclassified into simple construction, complex construction, sign language, and braille), type size (subclassified into easy, normal, and large), and relevant handicap (hearing, sight, mental, emotional, language, and physical dexterity). The main classes of book are: young (under 2 years), picture book, easy reader, older picture book, fiction, older fiction, and reference. All items are also alphabetically listed by title and by handicap, at the back of the catalogue.

This is an eminently laudable exercise; but it presents the compiler with many problems, and not all have been satisfactorily solved. Take a book I know: Crystal and Foster's *Newspapers*, a 24-page information book with simplified syntax for early secondary children with reading difficulties. This is called a picture book—but while it does contain many pictures, these are not the major content, nor does this classification make clear its status as an information book. In language level, it is said to be 'complex construction', which may be true compared with very simple books, but this description completely distorts the purpose of the *Databank* series, where all the linguistic effort was devoted to syntactic simplification. And it is said to be suitable for children with hearing and sight problems, no reference being made to the language-impaired (including reading-handicapped) children—which was in fact the primary group the authors had in mind. Lastly, it is said to be 'fiction', whereas it is in fact a reference work. This is a very worrying error. The same misclassifications also appear in the adjacent item, *Roads*. Just two of the 30-odd books in the *Databank* series are listed.

I do not know how typical these problems are, in the catalogue as a whole; but I would advise caution in taking the qualitative categories too literally. The basic information the catalogue contains—names, ranks,

numbers—is well worth having, though, and it is very clearly presented—a worthwhile investment at £7.50 per copy (including postage).

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