

Thesaurus of Textile Terms Covering Fibrous Materials' and Processes. Second ed. Stanley Backer and Emery I. Valko, Eds., M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1969. pp. 448 + xv. \$25.00

Several years ago, the U. S. Department of Commerce sponsored a study in the Fibers and Polymers Division of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop a comprehensive thesaurus which would be suitable for use in the textile field. This field, in its broadest sense, is an extremely diverse one covering aspects of mechanical engineering and machinery development, specialized processes used in the primary and secondary branches of the industry and the associated trade jargon, materials properties defined in physical, chemical, and engineering terms, the chemistry associated with the raw materials, and the dyeing and finishing of the manufactured products.

The first edition of the *M.I.T. Thesaurus of Textile Engineering Terms* appeared in 1966. The scope of this edition was restricted to the field of textile mechanical processing and the mechanical behavior of fibers and fiber assemblies. The second edition has added terms relating to so-called wet processing. This new volume contains 8,000 key words and 72,000 relationships between them. In its new form, the thesaurus can be said to represent all aspects of the textile industry. It is the culmination of a monumental task, and Professors Backer and Valko and their associates are to be congratulated for having produced a remarkably comprehensive, logically ordered array of terms which will prove to be of immense value to all those interested in the storage and retrieval of textile information.

The development of such a thesaurus involves the establishment of ground rules and the making of countless decisions which are consistent with these ground rules, but which at the same time must often be arbitrary. It is inevitable that everyone will not agree with all of these decisions, but at the same time one must realize that there would be no thesaurus unless such decisions had been made. The effect of these choices on the thesaurus will quickly become apparent to the user, particularly when they relate to the inclusion or exclusion of a term and, if it is included, what its relationship to the other terms is. While one can easily find specific entries to question or to disagree with, one can only applaud the general approach taken to the selection and structuring of terms, which seems in general to be sensible and consistent with normal usage.

The thesaurus does contain some inconsistencies, however, which, if intentional, are puzzling. For example, cotton fibers are assigned a "cotton grade" by a process called "cotton grading." Wool fibers are also assigned a "wool grade," but the process of wool grading is specifically excluded in the notation "wool grading (use wool grade)." The term "socks" is included as a narrower term under "athletic clothing," but conventional dress socks, which surely form a much bigger part of the sock market than do athletic socks, are not included under the broad term "clothing (use garments)." Both "cotton fabrics" and "wool fabrics" are specifically included, but not cotton yarns and wool yarns nor, for that matter, fabrics made from any other fiber. These latter word associations are apparently left to be specified in link designations which the user must provide for himself. It is hard to believe that such inconsistencies are the result of anything but the complexity of the task which was completed in a remarkably short period of time. It is to be hoped, however, that provision can be made for reducing their number in future printings.

The criticisms which can be leveled at this thesaurus are surely minor in relation to its tremendous overall value to the ordered storage of textile information and, therefore, to everyone associated with the textile field. The usefulness of the volume extends beyond the thesaurus itself, for in addition to the structured listing of terms, there is an alphabetical list of key words, a list of references used in the preparation of the thesaurus, and three appendices. The first appendix discusses in 50 pages the problems of textile information retrieval. The second outlines a set of ground rules for the use of the textile

thesaurus in indexing and searching. And the third appendix lists several tables of hierarchical relationships under a variety of broad subject headings.

This thesaurus certainly belongs in every library that contains textile information. In addition, anyone concerned with the use of textile information would benefit greatly from studying its content and the principles on which it is based. The publication of the second edition of the *Thesaurus of Textile Terms* represents a major step forward toward attaining the goal of making the information available in the published textile literature easily accessible to all branches of the textile industry.

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