PREFACE

This book has been written primarily for the Indian students of Librarianship. Working Librarians may also find it of some use as a Reference Guide. My long experience in this profession has convinced me that those who are undergoing training in librarianship, as well as those who have accepted it as their profession should have sufficient knowledge about the important reference materials and their uses and also about the method and technique of Library Reference Service. All concerned would agree that the supply of books on the subject falls far short of the requirements, and moreover, they are costly, being of foreign origin. There is, as a consequence, an unhealthy tendency amongst the students to depend entirely on the class-notes, beyond which they do not usually look, for further guidance. Author’s expectations would be much fulfilled if this work can provide for the students at least some guidance to the vast field of reference materials.

Very few have the good fortune of getting access to the important reference books, but in spite of such difficulties, no pains should be spared by the students and the reference assistants to acquaint themselves with the best of them, as otherwise their training would remain incomplete.

Some knowledge, fundamental to the profession, has been offered in this book and I have gleaned the best from Mudge, Winchell, Shores, Roberts, Wyer, Hutchings and others together, as material for this manual. They are the doyens in this field of library science.

Under each category of reference material, some examples, usually the best of its kind, have been cited, followed by typical questions. There would thus be about 150 questions or reference enquiries connected closely to their relevant source materials. In a separate chapter one hundred selected reference tools have been briefly described. In the last one, an attempt has been made to give an idea of the nature and extent of the reference books published in India. Taken together, about 470 reference books have been mentioned or described in this manual. So far
as general reference work is concerned, the coverage is sufficient for any beginner. Special subject fields which are the concern of special libraries only, are beyond the scope of this work. I intend, however, to deal with that matter in a separate book. A short bibliography has been appended for supplementary reading.

My thanks are due to Dr. N. Datta-Majumder, Director, Department of Anthropology, Government of India, who has kindly permitted me to publish this book; to Sri B. S. Kesavan, Librarian, National Library, Calcutta, for kindly writing the Introduction, and to Sri Rathin Ghosh for helping me in going through the proofs.

My labour would be sufficiently rewarded if the students and librarians alike would find this book of some use to them.

Calcutta
January 31, 1957

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