System for Filing Technical Literature

A System Chosen by the Writer After Experimenting for Several Years with Different Systems. A Comprehensive Card-Index System. A Cabinet Provided with Filing Drawers for Clippings; Storage Space for Periodicals

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Every man must have at hand the proper tools for his work. Every mechanical, professional or technical man must not only possess, but use, the tools suitable for his particular profession or trade. To the mechanic this means not only the machines at which he works, but the hand tools with which he works. To the professional or technical man it means his books, his magazines, his technical reports, and by no means least in importance and practical usefulness, his file of clippings and similar data which he gathers day by day from whatever source he may, and in these present days of sharp competition of brain work as well as the labor of hands, the wise man will make use of all these agencies in becoming the broad-minded man of practice as well as theory and thereby lay the foundation of success, however much stress we may lay upon the specialization of men as well as machines, of the working of brains as well as hands.

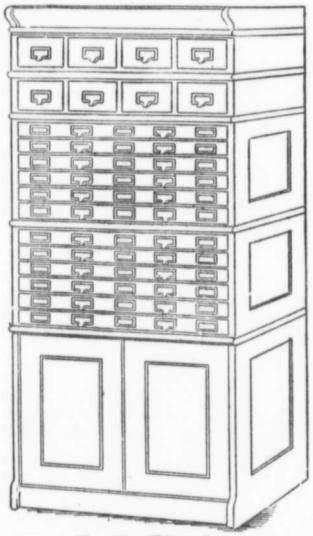

Fig. The Filing Case.

Books give us in a convenient and portable form much of the information which we need from day to day, and to which we must frequently refer. There is a vast amount of this information which does not change or need revision from year to year, and permanently bound volumes are the proper receptacle for preserving it. But in a general way they do not contain recent, and certainly not the latest information upon the live, every-day topics, the information that is fresh and up-to-date. For this we must look to the mechanical and technical periodicals. We find these of excellent quality and full of the much needed, practical information, and the modern mechanical journal has one other great advantage over most books. Its subject matter is the work of many minds, and therefore gives us a far more comprehensive view of mechanical and technical matters than would be possible if it were written by a few writers even though they are specially trained for such duties.

However, we find that with the many excellent periodicals of this nature they are very liable to accumulate rapidly on our hands, and soon we have great piles of them, all containing valuable information, but buried in such a mass that what we want at the moment cannot be found. True, we may keep a detailed index of all this matter that we shall be likely to need in the future, but this would avail but little as a labor-saving scheme, since the handling of the hundreds of magazines and papers would involve so much time as to greatly curtail the value of the information sought.

The solution then would seem to be that of clipping out all the articles we should probably need in our particular line of work and arranging them in some convenient manner, so as to be quickly found by means of a suitable index.

For several years the writer had experimented with one system or another without much success. The old-time scrap book proved inadequate in a short time from very obvious reasons, and was discarded. Folders soon went the same way.

The method of pasting articles on cards of a uniform size and filing these in card board cases, made to resemble books, and having on the back the title of the subject matter contained in each, was a great improvement. But obsolete matter was not readily eliminated, and the cases were soon too full for convenient accessibility. More cases could, of course, be provided, but this soon rendered the whole method unwieldy and complex.

The envelope method came next, but this soon proved cumbersome and inconvenient, and the article desired was not readily found even with the aid of a good index. The envelopes were kept in boxes in which they were filed vertically for as ready access as possible. But this arrangement, while an improvement on the previous methods, did not satisfactorily solve the problem, even with a card index. The contents of an envelope, after it had been found, usually had to be emptied out on a table and the clippings sorted to find the article sought, after which the remaining contents had to be replaced in the envelope and the envelope put back into the box in its proper place.

About two years ago the writer constructed a filing case containing drawers for each subject of the lot of clippings. This case contained thirty drawers 4 inches wide, 3 inches deep and 12 inches long, inside measurements, and four drawers double the width but of the same depth and length. The successful use of this case led to the idea of enlarging its scope and usefulness, which was done in the cabinet shown in Fig. 1.

This cabinet consists of several sections, the lower one being a cupboard with double doors and used for two purposes, first to bring the upper sections up to a convenient height for use, and, second, to furnish a convenient storage space for periodicals from which articles are to be clipped, and for clippings not yet classified and filed.

Above this are two sections, each composed of six drawers, one of which is shown in Fig. 2. These are divided into five compartments each, the spaces being 4¾ inches wide, 13½ inches long and 1½ inches deep, and sufficient to hold a column of matter

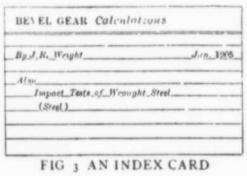

FIG 3 AN INDEX CARD

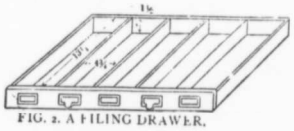

FIG. 2. A FILING DRAWER.

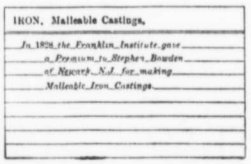

Fig. 5—A Data Card.

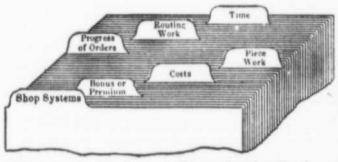

Fig. 4—Subject and Class Guide Cards.

Details of System.

from those periodicals using the wide column, or a full page of either of these or the three narrow column page of others when they are folded once. A separate label holder on the front of the drawer opposite each compartment shows its contents.