

Introduction

Not the least of the important events in library history occurring in 1876 was the appearance of a (then) anonymous publication entitled: *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloging and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library*. We now know that the author was Melvil Dewey and, through the years, the work has become known as the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (DDC). The twenty-first annual Allerton Park Institute of the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science honored this modest beginning of modern library classification on the eve of its centennial. Forest Press (Albany, N.Y.), publisher of the DDC, served as cosponsor of the conference held from Sunday, November 9, through Wednesday, November 12, 1975, at Allerton Park (the university's conference center) near Monticello, Illinois.

From the first conversations concerning the conference, the intention was that the conference concentrate on classification in general and that it should be critical and objective, and not simply expository and laudatory with regard to DDC. Since Dewey's classification scheme has had a major impact on library classification and subject retrieval systems throughout the world, it was felt that the conference should include papers and discussions from leading experts in the field from the United States, Canada, and England. While the focus remained on Dewey, past, present and future, other major systems were to be noted and compared with DDC.

Only the formal papers can be included in the published proceedings. Missing is the flavor of the give and take of discussions among the speakers, the more than ninety registered participants and the colleagues from the local library community and library school. Since we were fortunate to have most of the speakers with us for the entire conference, there were many opportunities to learn from them as they gave freely of their time and expertise.

In the formal papers that are published here, C. David Batty's keynote address focuses on library classification in general one hundred years after Dewey. He notes the different developments which have contributed to our present philosophy and model of classification as being more similar than dissimilar. The new theories are less a new structure founded on the work of a century than they are a "validation and realization" of the earlier work. He proposes a theoretical model that he finds "at the heart of all fruitful classification and indexing developments of the last one hundred years." Batty traces developments in the works of Dewey, the Universal Decimal Classification, Cutter, Brown, the Library of Congress, Bliss, Ranganathan, and the Classification Research Group.

John P. Comaromi concentrates on the history and development of the first sixteen editions of DDC, giving emphasis to the factors which have affected the scheme and to the persons (especially the editors) whose work is reflected in the various editions but who often have remained unrecognized for their influence. The role of the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee and other advisory committees is also noted.

Continuing the story of the editions of DDC, Margaret Cockshutt analyzes the trends toward facing in the most recent editions of the scheme. She points out the influence of Ranganathan and the Classification Research Group. Cockshutt also explains the organization by which the structure of DDC is molded and maintained as it moves more and more toward an international classification.

But how is the DDC used? To answer that question, Mary Ellen Michael reports on a study sponsored by Forest Press and which she conducted under the auspices of the Library Research Center, University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science. This study attempted to assess the use of DDC by libraries and processing centers in the United States and Canada, as well as to determine the extent of the use of DDC by libraries of different sizes and types; to obtain information about the application of DDC to library collections; to determine problem areas in the scheme; and to ascertain to what extent DDC is a part of the educational experiences of library school students. Results pertaining to all aspects except the last are included in her paper.

Joel Downing describes the growing interest in and use of DDC in Great Britain since the late 1960s and relates the acts of study and collaboration both within Great Britain and in the United States which have taken place since that date. In addition, he briefly discusses the possibility of DDC establishing a foothold in Europe.

Gordon Stevenson compares DDC with the Library of Congress classification scheme (LCC), finding them competing systems even though the competition has never been fostered by those responsible for either scheme. Stevenson fears that LCC's entrenchment in existing network data bases (geared primarily to the needs of university libraries) will be used as a rationale for structuring similar networks for public and school libraries. He feels that those libraries which have adopted LCC have locked themselves into a system "from which it will be nearly impossible to extricate themselves." To Stevenson, an important problem for the future of classification is how we perceive classification as a tool for subject retrieval. He feels that no person should be given the responsibility for choosing between systems until that person has a thorough grounding in classification and knowledge of the dimensions and structure of the systems, a grounding which has often been lacking in the background of the decision-makers of the past.

Peter Lewis served as chairperson of a British Library Working Party which examined the various classification and indexing systems currently in use in the British Library. The main conclusions relating to in-house needs and to services provided for other libraries in Great Britain are discussed in Lewis's paper, while the performances of Bliss, DDC, LCC and UDC are evaluated as to meeting the needs. Although Lewis was not able to be present, his paper was distributed to the participants at the beginning of the conference. During the time scheduled for Lewis's paper, the conferees participated in small group discussions relating to his paper. Following the discussions, transoceanic telephonic communication was established with Lewis. For one-half hour, Lewis responded to discussion, comments, and questions from groups.

Hans Wellisch discusses the debt which the Universal Decimal Classification owes to DDC as well as UDC's reforms and revisions. He notes the work being done toward a Basic Medium Edition in English and the work toward a new class 4. In addition, he speaks of the work being performed on a Broad System of Ordering intended not to supersede existing indexing languages but to serve as a switching language.

Unfortunately, the manuscript of John Rather's presentation was not received for publication. As Chief of the Technical Processes Research Office, Processing Department, Library of Congress, Rather gave a preliminary report on investigations made at the Library of Congress which attempted to evaluate the relative efficiency of subject searching in an automated system using

Library of Congress classification notation, Dewey Decimal classification numbers and Library of Congress subject headings.

Derek Austin departs from a discussion of classification per se to present the PRECIS system. Austin summarizes his paper as follows:

During the 1960s, the Classification Research Group in England investigated the construction of a faceted, highly articulated classification scheme to serve the dual purposes of (i) library organization, and (ii) the retrieval of relevant items from machine-held files. This research is briefly described, and is seen as evidence that a single classification scheme cannot serve these different purposes.

Nevertheless, it was found that the results of the CRG research could be applied to verbal data. In 1969, the *British National Bibliography* began a research project in this field. This led to the development of PRECIS, the indexing system now used by *BNB* and a number of other agencies.

PRECIS is briefly described from three viewpoints:

- (a) syntax: that is, the writing of coded input strings of terms, and the structure of index entries
- (b) semantics: the creation of a machine-held thesaurus which serves as the source of *see* and *see also* references
- (c) management, including indexer performance.

Paule Rolland-Thomas looks ahead to the future of subject retrieval as she reports on views expressed by library and other classificationists. Her paper provides the vision for the future.

The conference concluded with a panel of reactors to the papers and discussion. Betty M.E. Croft, Catalog Librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, brought her twenty-five years of experience with DDC in one of the nation's largest university libraries into focus as chairperson of the panel. Other members were Grace F. Bulaong, Head of the Cataloging Department, Metropolitan Toronto Central Library, Toronto, Canada; Erma Jean Morgan, Deputy Librarian—Technical Services, King County Library System, Seattle, Washington; and Mary Ellen Soper, Assistant Professor, School of Librarianship, University of Washington, Seattle. The panel members brought a variety of experiences in several different types of libraries using both DDC and LCC schemes. The panel discussion is briefly summarized:

1. While it is agreed that catalogs and automated retrieval systems may be more important to the retrieval of subject information in the future than they have been in the past, the need still exists for some shelf browsing capabilities, especially in public library situations.
2. Many difficulties occur in the local library resulting from the issuing of new editions of classification schemes. Most libraries cannot afford to

reclassify. At the same time, the necessity for the use of cooperative agencies and networks pressures the local library to accept the decisions of the newest edition. The scattering of like or similar subjects causes hardships for library users. A challenge was issued to those charged with revision to find a moderate ground for change that would keep up with new knowledge while remembering the problems of libraries with diminishing budgets.

3. Considering how classification is used in the United States, there is no clear superiority in either DDC or LCC if only the schemes themselves are considered. Each has certain strengths and weaknesses. Reasons for selecting one scheme over the other or for deciding to reclassify from DDC to LCC often have come from factors other than those related to the schemes themselves. Administrative decisions relating to coverage, revision and availability, as well as political reasons such as prestige or following a fad, seem too often to have been deciding factors.
4. In studying the results of developments in classification research in other countries, it becomes apparent that classification is not fully utilized in the United States. Only the surface of its potential contribution has been scratched. The need for browsing capability on the shelf has contributed to the way classification has developed in the United States. The confusion over the function of shelf arrangement and subject analysis needs to be clarified by further study and examination.
5. The needs of library users call us to consider seriously the role of the classification of knowledge as we look to the future.

No conference is the work of any one person; this conference was no exception. Beginning with initial conversations between Herbert Goldhor, Director, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Richard B. Sealock, Executive Director, Forest Press, during the summer of 1974, and continuing through the publication of this volume, two years of work on the part of a number of persons have taken place. Only a few of those persons can be mentioned here, but none of those who contributed and who are not mentioned here should feel excluded from our expression of gratitude.

Forest Press should be mentioned for both intellectual and financial support. Many helpful suggestions were received from Richard B. Sealock. Robert L. Talmadge, Director of Technical Services, University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign, represented Forest Press on the Planning Committee and provided further liaison with the cosponsoring agency. Michael Gorman, Head, Bibliographic Standards Office, Bibliographic Services Division, the British Library, London, England, was serving as Visiting Lecturer at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science and was able, as a

member of the planning committee, to make many suggestions relating to the international scene. Herbert Goldhor also served on the committee, and other faculty and library staff members helped in many ways.

Edward C. Kalb and Sara Nelson, of the University of Illinois Conferences and Institutes Office, assisted in numerous ways that relieved the rest of us of responsibilities. It is difficult to recognize fully their contributions to the conference with just these few words of acknowledgment.

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