

Classification

Dewey Decimal Classification Editions

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Abstract

The study approaches the evolution of Dewey Decimal Classification editions from the perspective of updating the terminology, reallocating and expanding the main and auxiliary structure of Dewey indexing language. The comparative analysis of DDC editions emphasizes the efficiency of Dewey scheme from the point of view of improving the informational offer, through basic index terms, revised and developed, as well as valuing the auxiliary notations.

Keywords: Dewey Decimal Classification; the Evolution of Dewey Decimal Classification Editions; a Comparative Analysis

The evolution of Dewey Decimal Classification editions illustrates the contextual actions between the cognitive approach and the operative research which become decisive in the dynamic of the indexing language. Through the brief presentation of each edition of Dewey Decimal Classification we try to illustrate the evolutive dependence ratio of the DDC scheme with on the informational structure and the pragmatic determination of operating in this system.

The first edition was issued without Dewey's name, but having the "copyright", in 1876, in Amherst, Massachusetts: "A Classification and

Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library” having 42 pages: introduction (12 pages), the scheme of 1000 index terms (12 pages) and an index (18 pages), in a number of 1000 copies.

It is obvious that the opinions on the opportunities and the efficiency of the scheme weren't the same, favorable from the perspective of systematizing the collections of some large libraries, but too detailed for a smaller volume of publications.

In spite of the fact that librarians “were given a ready-made scheme and easy to understand” (1), still “the scheme was criticized immediately by librarians because it was too detailed in its subdivisions for arranging other libraries than the very large ones, and the 1000 index terms will never be effectively used, no matter how detailed the classification would be”. (2)

Concerning the quantitative evolution of the classification's index terms, an estimation proves that “the first edition of 1876 has 1,000 index terms (in reality, 932), the fifth edition of 1894 has about 9,400 index terms and it served as a basis for the initial Universal Decimal Classification, the 18th edition of 1971 has 26,141 classification index terms, and the 20th edition of 1989 has about 34,000 index terms.”(3)

It was proved, once again, that many of the observations brought to Dewey's system of classification were superficial because its evolution and flexibility reflected and answered efficiently to the dynamic development of human knowledge.

In 1885, Melvil Dewey issues *the second* revised and improved edition (314 pages): “Decimal Classification and Relative Index for Arranging, Cataloguing and Indexing Public and Private Libraries and Pamphlets, Clippings, Notes, Scrap Books, Index Resums, etc”. The ample title gives the essential data concerning the destination of the scheme: arrangement, cataloguing, indexing as well as the categories of publications that can be classified according to Dewey's scheme.

Starting with the 2nd edition, the work has an author heading and the title includes the concept of “decimal” which, actually individualizes it. Issued in 500 copies through Library Bureau, Melvil Dewey's classification benefited of an efficient distribution to libraries through this specialized office, founded and run by himself in 1876 in Boston. Added to this, the methodological indications from the introductory part become determining factors in using the tables and set the efficiency of indexing in Dewey's system.

Another feature of this edition lies in introducing the auxiliary notations for place and form, which will meet an emphasized development and diversity in the editions to come. Concerning the necessary

modifications and extensions of the tables, although Melvil Dewey, in the introduction to his classification, announces that they will be done coercively, though the scheme has gone through quantitative and functional changes, which actually allowed a dynamic evolution, correlated with the informational system.

Consequently, E. I. Şamurin states: “Starting with the second edition, the users of the scheme were announced that the terms and the main numbers of the scheme would be extended, but they would not be modified in any other way, so that the virtual uniformity of the scheme would be accessible to everybody [...] Also Dewey promised that the notation would not be changed dramatically in the following editions, but this promise was disregarded.” (4)

The main changes that were introduced in *the third edition*, published in 1888, started a protest of the librarians-users of Dewey’s scheme, they imperatively demanded him to guarantee “a policy of index integrity” (5), to assure a homogenous and uniform structure.

Without going into further details, we will focus on *the 5th edition* of Dewey Decimal Classification published in 1894, which developed 20,000 index terms in its tables, because it represented a conceptual and operative basis for the Universal Decimal Classification, elaborated with Melvil Dewey’s consent, by Paul Otlet and Henry La Fontaine.

The following editions reflected endless concerns of amplifying the scheme from the perspective of enlarging the informational offer through developed basic index terms and valuing the auxiliary subdivisions, but one of the major obstacles in efficiently using them was the spelling system suggested and applied by Melvil Dewey: “A characteristic of his work, beginning at least with the 6th edition, was the use of a phonetically emphasized writing which did not look like the common one at all. I am sure that this one contributed a lot to its not being accepted by some of the beneficiaries.”(6)

The 14th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification appeared in 1942 having 1927 pages among which 738 were attributed to the Relative Index, which comprised 80,000 notions. An analytical presentation of this edition can be found in the work: “A Manual of Classification for Librarians and Bibliographers”, from which we will present a long but relevant quotation: “In the 14th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification there has been a considerable extension for almost 30 important topics, as well as other changes; for instance: Psychology has a new short list at 301.15; the statistics scheme 312 was enlarged and better defined; Economy 330–339

was extended from 14 to 38 pages, but the biggest extension and improvement was at 700–770 at Fine Arts where, from 13 pages was reached 147; American history received further space as well. Some sections which uselessly appeared detailed were reduced: the alternative list for Psychology, at 159.9 in the last edition, being shortened as much as possible up to 150. Common writing was reintroduced in the Relative Index [...] This edition contains a long introduction containing in detail: the history and application of the scheme; 3 resuming tables; the main tables; the relative index, with a supplement and indexing tables for the geographic, form, linguistic and philology divisions.” (7).

In 1951 *the 15th edition* of Dewey Decimal Classification was published, which was entitled: “Dewey Decimal Classification & Relative Index. Standard Edition”; New York, 1952. It was published by “Lake Placid Club Education Foundation”, and the editor was Milton James Ferguson.

This classification was modified and adapted for the collections of a library with 200,000 publications. Referring to this, prof. E. I. Şamurin, after a critical and systematic examination states: “When “the standard edition” appeared, both the tables and the Relative Index were sharply criticized. This brought to the situation that the edition issued in 1951 should be republished with the necessary changes and register widening. Thus, this edition was not spared of criticism (see: Telma Faton: “Epitaph to a dead classification. In: “The Library Association Record, 57, 1955, 11 pp. 428–430). In a certain way the librarians’ conservatory attitude, their fear for the difficulties of a new classification were echoed in these critical notes, but many critical indications were sustained. Under pressure of the public library opinion, the Library of Congress, together with the American Library Association took over the publication of a new edition, the 16th.” (8)

The 16th edition was issued in 1958, having 2,439 pages, and the new editor, Benjamin A. Custer decided that the scheme of the 14th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification would be the basic one not “the standard” one, which he considered less significant for the changes he decided to operate. Together with the revision of the main index terms of the Dewey Decimal Classification there have been important changes of the index, where the terminology was updated, and its multifunctional character has become more efficient.

In what follows we suggest a short characterization of *the 17th edition* of Dewey Decimal Classification, published in 1965, having 2,153 pages on which John Phillip Comaroni said: “In August 1958, the librarian L. Quincy Mumford from the Library of Congress and the President of Lake

Placid Club Education Foundation, Herbert Bergamini, signed a contract for the 17th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification. The Foundation Lake Placid Club Education at present having the copyright for Forest Press, paid the Library of Congress 175,000 dollars for the editorial work.” (9)

The methodological contribution of the editor lies in “A Guide to Dewey Decimal Classification” which presents and analyses the situations and the possibilities of using the scheme. We also add the fact that Benjamin Custer also mentioned the determining reasons for the 746 changes made in the scheme:

“a) A static and inflexible classification is of no use in a world where new knowledge has been rapidly assimilated;

b) A more consistent development would offer better solutions to the cases of more difficult classification;

c) Almost all libraries that use Dewey Decimal Classification didn’t totally follow this classification;

d) The librarians should be able to manage the new changes of the index terms because they are not difficult to understand and assimilate.” (10)

However, this criteria interfered, often giving a practical value to Dewey Decimal Classification scheme, this leading to a certain restraint from the users. Thus A. G. Wels specified: “The 17th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification did not represent a movement in any direction and it certainly does not represent an important stage in the transformation process of the scheme in one that could be similar to the requirements of the present literature”. (11)

The 20th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification that appeared in 1989, in four volumes under the coordination of John Comaroni, was given the title of “reference edition” thanks to a very good administration of the scheme. Thus, we find organizational structures of the index terms concerning sociology, informatics and music, better defined, synthesized and expressed in accordance to the evolution of domains. Also, the diversity of the informational offer is efficiently supported by many explaining notes that help the user in the classification activity.

In a superior qualitative way, the 20th edition integrates a very good methodology for pluridisciplinary classifications and offers representative changes for the evolution and optimization of Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme. We will exemplify these determinations through a comprehensive quotation which synthesizes the general picture of the reorganizations done in the 20th edition, taken from: “Abrégé de la Classification Décimale de Dewey”, written by Annie Bethery: “...the classification considerably

developed in order to index the specialized documents, this tanks to different methods:

– The extension of the main index terms (theatre = 792, amateur theatre = 792.022 2; 619.97 = illnesses of the immune system; 616.9792 Aids; 384 communication, telecommunication; 384.3 telematics; 384.35 video-text)

– The development of the auxiliary tables and the possibility of combining more auxiliary index terms (in the Auxiliary Table 1, -08 history and the description of a subject at different categories of persons; -089 = the history and the description of the subject at different ethnic and national groups; one can add at -089 the notes of the Table 5 (national and ethnic groups) [...].

– The possibility of combining main index terms (specialized bibliography =16; French literature = 840; French literature bibliography = 016.84 or 840.16).

As for the innovations concerning music 780 it is possible to index documents whose content lies in relationships of music with other domains or subjects, completing 780.0 with the significant figure of the secondary domain. Also, the relation between music and literature will be expressed through 780.08.” (12)

In what follows, the interest lies in the synthetic analysis of *the 21st edition* of Dewey Decimal Classification: “Decimal Classification and Relative Index. Edition 21. Edited under the Joan S. Mitchell. Albany: Forest Press, 1966”, appeared in 4 volumes, in the United States of America, and also, a French edition was issued in Canada. We consider that this edition shows an obvious permeability towards the methodological means which refers to the flexibility of the operational variables through: the simplified structuring of the specific notes; multiple and essential exemplifications for the interdisciplinary indexing; detailed remarks of using the Auxiliary Tables. The introductory part operates in the same way, which establishes finding marks concerning the principles of Dewey Decimal Classification, operational indexing means and the order of constitutive elements.

Also the Guide to Dewey Decimal Classification is detailed, but sharply systematized, and the methodological indications are suggestively exemplified both for the main and auxiliary tables. The information of the Guide is clearly and concisely presented, and the approach is pragmatic, orientated towards the operational support of indexing in the system of Dewey Decimal Classification.

Summing up, it could be said that the 21st edition of Dewey Decimal Classification, mainly operates: *changes* for the index terms in religion, public administration, scientific life; *developments* for groups 296 Judaism, 297 Islam; the introduction of *new subjects* in the scheme: Internet, virtual reality, rap music, etc. and resizes the geographic notations for the ex-soviet area. Thus, the publisher of this edition, Joan Mitchell specifies that the main changes: “were induced both by the evolution of some domains such as: Public Administration 350/354; Education 370, as well as by the new socio-political reality (the modification of the table 2/42 for the ex-soviet states, for instance) or for diminishing the present lack of balance between different cultures (the modifications of Classes 200 Religion; 296 Judaism; 297 Islam) “. (13)

We mention, without going into further details that *the 22nd edition*: “Dewey Decimal Classification” was published in 2003, and the first edition of *Electronic Dewey* (ED), version 1.00 for MS-DOS was issued by OCLC Forest Press in 1993. This transposes the 20th edition of Dewey Decimal Classification (1989) into the digital world, in which there were operated the changes published yearly in the speciality journal: “The Decimal Classification: further notes and decisions.” As for the efficiency of the electronic edition, Ross Trotter states: “ED offers by far a more efficient and flexible approach of the searching and retrieving procedure of index terms than the printed edition. The basic index can be accessed through key words, sentences, numbers of Dewey decimal classification. All these can be combined in trying to identify the proper classification number. The CD also contains a search history module, which keeps the history of the user’s searches. This module allows the modification of the search syntagm without being necessary to type the same terms in a refined search of the main index.” (14)

Analyzing the configuration of Dewey Decimal Classification typologies in electronic environment, there can be noticed the following versions: Dewey for Windows; Web Dewey; Cyber Dewey; Web Dewey in Corc; Dewey Classification in view-based searching; Dewey Search.

Referring to the advantages of electronic administration of Dewey Decimal Classification, the publisher Joan Mitchell specifies that it: “offers online access to classification data, it offers him LCSH statistics terms, as well as examples of bibliographic entries.” (15)

Dewey for Windows, created by OCLC Forest Press in 1996, used until 2001, included all the characteristics of Electronic Dewey, and it was improved by LAN (local networks) compatibility and the possibility of including local annotation. (16)

Web Dewey represents the online version of the 22nd edition of D.D.C. including the changes operated in the scheme, a detailed relative index, the main subjects of the Library of Congress and also many other facilities for the users. (17)

Cyber Dewey gives the possibility of retrieving the electronic information according to the index terms of Dewey Decimal Classification. “The advantage of this new application of Dewey Classification lies in the browser that uses the codes of Dewey Decimal Classification. Apart from the searching based on key-words, that order things in the lexical space, Dewey codes organize the subjects in a conceptual space. Browsers such as Cyber Dewey allow the user to surf this conceptual space.” (18)

Web Dewey in CORC – started as a research project having as an initial goal, to include Dewey’s system in CORC (Cooperative Online Resource Catalog), and in the end becoming a database of Dewey Decimal Classification, which includes schemes, auxiliary tables, the user’s guide, the relative index and the latest changes or the latest news in the system.

The access points of Web Dewey in CORC are through the six surfing indexes, eight search indexes, all having boolean possibilities, as well as links to the Library of Congress’ authority files. (19)

In this context we mention the point of view of Diana Vizine-Goetz concerning the use of Dewey Decimal Classification in organizing the electronic resources: “we have improved the ability of CORC users to use the classification for metadata entries. The accessible vocabulary is used in the following cases: to improve the access to Dewey Decimal Classification by extending the indexing vocabulary; in establishing the subject while creating the metadata; to supply additional terminology for the automated classification; to supply mechanisms of alternative or simultaneous access to CORC database”. (20)

Summing up, we can say that the electronic versions of Dewey Decimal Classification:

- contributes efficiently to the flexibility of operational indexing versions in Dewey system;
- enables an alert informational exchange;
- quickly includes the changes, the news, and the revisions of D.D.C. scheme;
- initiates and creates skills of retrieving the information by the users;

- establishes dynamic relationships, practical connections in electronic information networks;
- participates and contributes to the future projects, referring to indexing the electronic resources.

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