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Remarks on Law Library Classification

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their research work with an eye to what is going on in Europe. So I think the benefit of this discussion is that it has come just in time, and I wish you success in working out a scheme which would be devoid of a fanatic or a dogmatic adherence to one principle, and would combine many of them for the practical purposes of the law library. (Applause.)

CHAIRMAN LATHROP: It seems to me that Dr. Gsovski has set the scene in a most appropriate manner. I hardly know how to continue. We have with us another author of a very valuable classification. As you all know, Professor Hicks has worked his classification out, it has been used and applied, and that is the best test of any form.

Professor Hicks, if you would say a few words, I am sure it would be helpful to those of us who have not classified our libraries in making up our minds as to which would be the most appropriate system to adopt in our own libraries. (Applause.)

MR. FREDERICK C. HICKS (Yale Law School Library, New Haven, Conn.): I am afraid it is too late in the session for much discussion. In order to be brief, I shall read these two pages on classification taken from the “Yale Law Library Manual,” the fifth of the Yale Law Library Publications, which is now going to press:

“Classification, in library terminology, means not only subdividing a collection into appropriate groups, but assigning to each volume an individual, unduplicated call number which indicates the group to which it belongs and the place within that group, in relation to other books, that it should occupy. This call number appears both upon the back of the book and upon the cards for it in the catalogue. That these things may be done, a classification scheme must be in the hands of the cataloguers. Since no generally accepted scheme for law libraries exists, it was necessary to make our own scheme. This was done by the librarian, assisted by the chief of the cataloguing department, members of the department, and the assistant librarian. The schedules, first outlined in January, 1930, have nearly all been completed, and the scheme is now in daily use in this library. It is applied to all accessions, and to old books as fast as they are recatalogued. The process by which a unique call number made up of several symbols is constructed for each book is too technical and complicated to be explained here, but some general description of the scheme of classification, followed by lists of the chief symbols used will assist in the intelligent use of the catalogue.

“Beginning with ‘AB,’ the symbol used for the collection called Association Books, and running through the alphabet to ‘Y,’ which is our symbol for the Yalensia Collection, the classification scheme of the Yale Law Library provides about sixty main groups for arranging its collection. In addition there are 148 country symbols, one for each of the foreign states and political divisions, and for each of the British colonies whose law is represented in the library. International Law is classified according to the Library of Congress scheme somewhat modified, which uses the letters JX as a class symbol.
"A bird's-eye view of the law library's collection shows that it falls naturally into a few large groups according to subject: Anglo-American law, Foreign law (including Roman Law, Ancient Law, Mohammedan Law, and Jewish Law, as well as the law of all modern governments), International Law and the Social Sciences, or fields somewhat related to law, such as History, Sociology, Economics, Business, and Political Science.

"The classification scheme permits books in each group to stand together, providing a notation which suggests as nearly as possible the name of the class. For example, Social Science books are marked SS, Roman Law RL, Jewish Law JL, History H, Business Documents BD, Mohammedan Law, MohamL, and general works of Foreign Law, FLG. FLG, Foreign Law General, applies only to general works on jurisprudence, and to works not limited to the law of a single country.

"The symbols for individual foreign states are simply the names of the countries; e.g., France or Germany or Austria; but if the name is too long and cumbersome to use, an obvious and easily understood abbreviation is adopted, such as Switz for Switzerland. An abbreviated symbol is also used for the British Colonies (BrCol) and for Latin America (LA). With each of these two, an additional symbol is used to indicate any one of various states included in the larger unit. Mexican law books will be marked LA with the word Mexico underneath.

"Subject divisions and country divisions are not the only ones into which these books naturally group themselves. A third method of classification is according to the form in which they are published. Examples of this are dictionaries, reports, statutes, periodicals, form books, and treatises. In the case of Anglo-American works these classes are given the symbols D, R, S, P, Forms and T respectively.

"For foreign law, the same classes are indicated in an entirely different way, by a numerical symbol combined with the country symbol already mentioned.

"The guide, philosopher and friend of the cataloguer, whether confronted with the problem of classifying the latest legal treatise, clean and attractively bound, or a ponderous and dusty volume from some European press of the sixteenth century, is a loose-leaf typed notebook, familiarly known as the 'Black Book.' The 'Black Book' contains a complete schedule of the Yale Law Library classification scheme, with detailed information on the treatment of each class and country. It is constantly being amended and supplemented as the library expands and the increase in work calls for consideration of new problems."

Then there is given a list of the class symbols, running down at the left. For example:

| AB   | Association Books   |
| AG   | Attorney Generals' Reports |
| AP   | Appeal Papers       |
| AncientL | Ancient Law   |
| CC   | City Charters and Ordinances |
| Y    | Yalensia            |
We have also a few of those physical location symbols, like RR or Vault, with which we prefix some of these class symbols.

This excerpt then gives the numerical subdivisions to be used with the country symbols to show the subdivisions of foreign law. They are shown by decimal numbers although we do not write the decimal points. I will give you a few of those subdivisions. It begins with Bibliography, Periodicals, General Works, such as Sirey, Session Laws, Statutory Rules and Orders, Collected Laws, and then the various kinds of Codes and Constitutions for some countries, then Court Reports, Digests, Indexes, Treatises, Form Books, and so on, through all of the subdivisions which we have found we might have to use.

This scheme is very much like the Law Library of Congress scheme which was in use a few years ago. We have expanded it. We have perfected it in detail and added to it many more classes.

Our scheme differs wholly in conception from Mr. Dabagh's scheme, in that we have no thought of having a unified system. We see no advantage whatsoever in having a large whole arrangement as between the main classes in the classification scheme. In other words, instead of trying to visualize the whole field of legal knowledge, then dividing it into classes with its proper subdivisions and then putting a notation on them, we begin the other way. We think what kind of books we would like to have stand together, and whether that would be a subject group, a form group or a country group. We then say that is one of our classes, and then we put a symbol on it. Then to subdivide that large group, we use either these decimal numbers to indicate subdivisions, or any device that we think would be appropriate for that class, and then we use the Cutter numbers to give the book numbers. In other words, having once determined upon the main class symbol, we have all the devices that any classification scheme has for making a unique call number for each book. If we find that it would be desirable to have another class that we had not thought of, we create that class, choose a symbol for it, and add it to our list, put it in the "Black Book" and go to work. That means taking the books out of a former classification, or any device that we think would be appropriate for that class, and then we use the Cutter numbers to give the book numbers. In other words, having once determined upon the main class symbol, we have all the devices that any classification scheme has for making a unique call number for each book.

If we find that it would be desirable to have another class that we had not thought of, we create that class, choose a symbol for it, and add it to our list, put it in the "Black Book" and go to work. That means taking the books out of a former classification, of course, sometimes. Or some entirely new group of books begins to be published, and if we wish to, we make a class for it. For example, twenty years ago no one was bothered with loose-leaf services. It is merely a form. We found it desirable to keep all of those loose-leaf services together. So we created a class and gave it a symbol, LS, and then we use a Cutter number underneath that and make a call number without any difficulty.

I would like to say one thing about this matter of a unified logical scheme. Mr. Dabagh referred to a landscape as something that is a unified thing and which you could examine at any point, any portion of it, and find the detail perfectly there, or you could look at the whole thing. As I understand it—I am not trying to be critical here, but it gave a wrong impression to me—no one ever paints a picture with the idea of your looking at it in detail and finding every little corner perfect. In fact, they do not want you to look down in the corner. They want you to look at the main point, the center of interest, and see the rest of it only out of the tail of your eye.
Nobody can look at the classification scheme in the way that one looks at a
landscape, and no one should try to. I am getting at the point that, even though
you have a logical scheme in which the main classes follow each other in something
like a logical order, you usually do not actually arrange those classes in your
library according to that logical scheme. You disrupt the arrangement because
it is convenient to do so. Observing that over a good many years, in getting up
our little classification scheme we thought it desirable not to be hampered in creating
our classification by this thought of unity or logical relation to each other, and thus
we have proceeded in that way and up to the present we have not run into any
unsurmountable difficulty.

Thank you. (Applause.)

CHAIRMAN LATHROP: All of these systems of classification, whatever they
are, are summarized by Melvil Dewey in his Introduction to the Fourth Edition
of his Decimal Classification, when he says:

"The great need was a system which should enable each librarian to stand
on the shoulders of his predecessors, and fully utilize their labors; which should
make the work done today permanent, instead of something to be superseded
within a few years, and therefore not worth doing in the best way; which should
supply the best appliances, instead of leaving the young librarian not only to learn
how to work, but to make his own tools."

This emphasizes the great advantage to law libraries of Mr. Dabagh’s printed
classification.

In an address before the Round Table on Library Problems of the Association
of American Law Schools, in 1935, Mr. Roalfe, prefacing his third suggestion or
recommendation, offered the following:

"No doubt discussions like the one we are having today lead to constructive
action when we return to our several institutions and endeavor to make some
practical use of whatever we may have learned."

I can think of no finer words with which to express my thoughts regarding
this initial Institute, and with them I adjourn the meeting. (Applause.)

[The meeting adjourned at six o'clock.]

JOINT BANQUET WITH THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF STATE LIBRARIES

Thursday Evening, June 24, 1937

The Joint Banquet of the American Association of Law Libraries and the
National Association of State Libraries was held in the Blue Room of the Hotel
Roosevelt, on Thursday evening, June 24, 1937.

PRESIDENT HOLLAND: At the outset I desire to call your attention to the
attractive little favors containing a very tasty candy known as the famous French
praline which our beloved friend has brought to you all the way from dear old New

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