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Universe of Subjects and DDC Engineering

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The article examines the viability of various methods used by DDC for accommodating the universe of subjects. It also provides some suggestions for efficacious use of these methods. (Author)

1. Preliminary Observations – Valnes Involved

In order to accommodate new subjects, DDC has been following the golden methods of relocations, expansions and phoenix schedules. The editorial policy of DDC up to the 14th edition was invariably guided by the principle of continuity and the integrity of numbers. Accordingly, up to the 14th edition DDC accommodated new subjects but rarely changed the places of the subjects. Therefore, the users of the scheme had no difficulty in the use of its new edition. However, in the 15th edition the DDC editorial policy underwent a fundamental change when it adopted a new policy of keeping pace with knowledge for the revision of the DDC scheme. This obviously necessitated the relocation of more than a thousand subjects.

In the 16th edition the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee was confronted with the unprecedented dilemma of having to choose one of the two principles postulated in the 14th and the 15th editions. Hence the Editorial Policy Committee declared its commitment to the principle of the integrity of numbers as laid down by its founder Melvil Dewey. Of course relocation of subjects was also to be done sparingly. Despite such formal protestations the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee has made far-reaching modifications and changes in the 17th and the 18th editions of DDC in order to keep pace with growing knowledge. In the 19th edition, however, the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee has come out openly, saying that it would be faithful to the principle of the integrity of numbers where it is useful, and would depart from it whenever the need for change is vital. This has led to fissures in the DDC revision planning policy as the Editorial Policy Committee has not been able to lay down categorically the norms for deciding and determining when to prefer stability to change or vice versa. This study, therefore, makes an attempt to survey the editions 16 to 19 of DDC to find out how the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee has been making bold departures in the revision of the scheme by giving more weight and preference to the principle of keeping pace with knowledge by ignoring the original principle of the integrity of numbers. For this purpose the author has especially examined classes 570 to 590 Life Sciences for which a new phoenix schedule is under preparation for inclusion in the 20th edition.

2. Relocations

Relocations are used in DDC to make adjustments in the schedules, for accommodating new subjects and to adjust a subject meaning which has undergone a change. This necessitates the shifting of subjects from one number to another in successive editions. In the 16th edition, there were 1600 relocations, in the 17th edition 800, in the 18th edition 400 and in the 19th edition there have been 340 relocations which clearly indicate a trend towards a gradual decline in the number of relocations. However, the number of relocations could further be reduced:

- if change is effected only when the Editorial Policy Committee become fully convinced of the places of the subjects which it is going to shift;
- or when the concept has undergone a fundamental change acquiring new meaning and new form;
- if relocations are avoided in cases wherein the class number of a concept discontinued in earlier editions is again reassigned in a later edition;
- if relocations are also avoided in such classes which are going to be replaced by a phoenix schedule in the ensuing edition. Table-I illustrates such instances wherein DDC could avoid relocations.

3. Expansions

The DDC uses expansions for the development of a concept or a series of concepts in the schedules or tables to provide minute subdivisions. However, in making expansions the DDC has not adopted a uniform and consistent policy. In one edition it includes several concepts or their sub-divisions under one class number and in other subsequent edition it may individualise some of the concepts by further expansion of the same class number under which these were included in the previous edition. However, the remaining concepts may be individualised in the future edition or editions. Such a method of expansion is neither in accordance with the policy of the integrity of numbers nor in keeping pace with knowledge. Moreover, such a policy creates several problems for the classifiers who are not sure which concepts are going to be individualised in the next edition. Accordingly, the classifiers are compelled to resort to unauthorised local expansions to avoid any future uncertainty in this regard, and in the interst of a better service for readers. Table-II indicates how expansions are being made in different editions of the DDC.

4. Expansions Vs Phoenix Schedules

Besides individualising the concepts which had been grouped under a class number in the previous edition, the method of expansion is also being used for accommodating new concepts. This all conforms to the policy objective of keeping pace with knowledge. However, such expansions create a piquant situation for the clas-

Table 1

	Ed16	*Ed17*	*Ed18*	*Ed19*
Primitive races	572	572.7	301.2	301.72
Paleoecology				
life sciences	574.5	574.5	574.52	560.45
animals	591.5	591.5	591.52	560.45
plants	581.5	581.5	581.52	561.1
Biophysics				
velocity and speed	–	574.19133	574.19133	[574.19133] Provision discontinued as without meaning in this context
Physiological genetics				
life sciences	–	–	575.21	574.87322
man	575.1	573.21	573.221	611.01816
plants	581.15	581.151	581.151	581.87322
animals	591.15	591.151	591.151	591.87322
Communities				
ecology life sciences	574.55	574.55	574.524	574.5247
plants	581.55	581.55	581.524	581.5247
animals	591.55	591.55	591.524	591.5247
Schizophyta				
(fission plants)	589.7	589.7	589.7	589. Thallophyta class here Schizophyta
Behavior pattern				
animals	591.51	591.51	591.5	591.51
Reptilia	598.1	598.1	598.1	597.9

sifier who may have already classified such documents under a broad class number. He is then confronted with the problem of whether to classify such documents according to the new edition, or to wait for the phoenix schedule. In the case of the classifier resorting to expansions provided in the latest edition and undertaking the stupendous task of reclassifying all documents, it would be well-nigh impossible for him to repeat this process in order to be in conformity with the phoenix schedule. If the classifiers do not utilise the expansions and wait for the phoenix schedule in such a situation the expansions are reduced merely to an academic exercise. Therefore, such expansions can easily be postponed in the main class or classes which are to be replaced in the next edition by a new phoenix schedule. For example in respect of 570–590 Life Sciences library community has already been informed of a new phoenix schedule to be included in the 20th edition of DDC (1). Similarly, the 'Proposed Draft Phoenix for Life Sciences, classes 570–590', which appeared on October 17–18, 1985 declares that 'The principle of division upon which this schedule is based is that of Biological Process + Biological Organism. This arrangement reverses the one which has obtained in all previous editions of the classification, where the animal, plant or micro organism has been regarded as the primary factor, whose physiology, ecology, biochemistry, etc., were secondary to the study of the organism itself (2).' This makes abundantly clear that all the expansions included in the classes 570–590 Life Sciences of the 19th edition were an unnecessary, fruitless and pointless exercise both in terms of human and of material resources. Table-III supports this observation.

5. Concluding Observations

Finally, the desire for stability and change for keeping pace with new knowledge is an eternal quest in all branches of human knowledge including library and information science. As long as DDC adhered to the principle of the integrity of numbers, the users of the scheme had little difficulty in changing over to its new edition. However, the radical changes in the scheme introduced by way of expansions, relocations, phoenix schedules as well as the addition of many anxiliary tables had a dampening effect on the libraries using DDC. It is for this reason that most of the Indian libraries (3) are still using the 16th edition of DDC and do not want to change over to a new edition. The suggestion (4) of the Editor of DDC to adopt and use the expansions, relocations and phoenix schedules of every new edition is not a sound proposition. For if it is implemented faithfully in letter and spirit, it would deviate the libraries from their primary function of service to readers as the suggestion involves classification *ad inifinitum*. The Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee should, therefore, be a little circumspect while introducing major innova-

Table 2

Ed16		*Ed17*		*Ed18*		*Ed19*	
574.5	Bioecology	574.5	Ecology	574.5	Ecology Class here adaptations	574.5	Ecology Class here behavior of non-human organism, adaptations
.52	Adaptation to environment Including biological autecology, synecology, biogeochemistry	.52	Adaptation to environment Autecology, synecology, biogeochemistry	.52	Specific relationships and environment Class here migrations, biogeochemisty bioclimatology, paleoecology	.52	Specific relationships and kinds of environments Class here migrations Class paleocology in 560.45
						.522	Interrelations of organisms and environment Class here autecology
.53	Nutritive adaptations Including food chains and cycles	.53	Nutritive adaptations	.522 .5222	Autecology Effects of environment on organisms	.5222	Effects of specific aspects of environment on organism Including bioclimatology biogeochemistry
.54	Biometeorology and bioclimatology	.54	Adaptation to meteorological factors	.5223	Effects of organisms on environment	.5223	Effects of organisms on environment
.55	Biological communities Including consocies, associations, clans, Colonies, mutalistic and antagonistic symbioses	.55	Communities consocies, associations, clans, colonies mutualistic and antagonistic symbioses	.524	Synecology Ecology of communities, groups, populations (social consocies, clans, colonies, symbioses) Including parasitism	.524 .5246 .5247 .5248	Synecology Groups Communities Populations Including socies, consocies, clans, colonies
				[.55]	Communities		
					Class in 574.524	.52482	Symbioses Including commensalism, mutualism
						.5249	Parasitism
574.8734	Cytoplasm Including centrosomes, blepharoplasts, metaplasmic bodies	574.8734	Cytoplasm Centrosomes, blepharoplasts, metaplasmic bodies	574.8734	Cytoplasm Centrosomes, mitochondria, endoplasmic reticulum, ribosomes, Golgi bodies, blepharoplasts	574.8734	Cytoplasm Including, centrosomes, endoplasmic reticulum, ribosomes, Golgi bodies, blepharoplasts
						574.87342	Mitochondria

Table 3

	Ed 18	Ed 19	Ed 20
Specific kinds of environment	574.526	574.526	New Phoenix
Zonal environment	×	574.5262	Schedule proposed
Arctic	×	574.52621	
Tropical	×	574.52623	
Salt water	574.52636	574.52636	New Phoenix
Estuaries	×	574.526365	Schedule proposed
Reefts	×	574.526367	
Seashores	×	574.52638	
Land environment	574.5264	574.5264	New Phoenix
Soil	×	574.526404	Schedule proposed
Tundras	×	574.52644	
Island environment	×	574.5267	New Phoenix Schedule proposed
Urban environment	×	574.5268	

tions in the scheme. The relocations and expansions of new concepts may be postponed in such classes and disciplines for which a new phoenix schedule is being planned for the next edition. It may also change its policy of expansion by individualising the concepts in the same edition in which these are included for the first time, instead of including them first under a broad class number and then individualising them gradually in different new editions. The present policy of DDC in this regard has become counterproductive to its world wide popularity and has created impediments in the wider application and utilisation of successive new editions of DDC.

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(1) Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index, Ed. 19, Vol. I, p. lxxiii.
(2) Proposed Draft Phoenix for Life Sciences, for the Dewey Decimal Classification – Introduction and Schedules. EPC Exhibit 89–14. 1, October 17–18, 1985. Lancashire Polytechnic Life Sciences Project. July 1985, p. 1.
(3) Dhyani, Pushpa: Classification Schemes and Indian Libraries. Metropolitan, 1983.
(4) Editor's Introduction. Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index, Ed. 19, Vol. 1, lxxiii–lxxiv.