Learning Principles of Classification with Dewey Decimal Classification

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Abstract: *Ensuring the unity of building classification numbers is avery crucial requirement for classification of every library. It is necessary for standardization of classification, bringingchances to exchange bibliographical information between library and other libraries. There are some requirements for libraries to get those needs, including improving the qualification of librarians who conduct task of classification, building the process of classification, or building collaboration among libraries that use Dewey Decimal Classification system (DDC).By analyzing the literature review, the paper provides some perspectives of many authors about DDC's principles;thefocus of this paper aims to emphasize the importance of understanding of principles for library's classification, particularly in Dewey Decimal Classification scheme. Another highlight of this paper is some features of librarians who classify books at library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh.*

Keywords:*library classification, book classification, principle, rule.*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of important tasks of librarians is book classification. Classifying books is as the art of assigning books to their proper places in a system of classification in which the various subjects of human inquiry, or the descriptions of human life in its variousaspects, are grouped according to their likeness or relation to one another (Merrill, 1939).

However, ensuring the unity of classificationnumbers is very crucial for classification of library. It is necessary for standardization of classification, as well as chances to exchange bibliographical information between library and other libraries. There are some requirements for libraries to get those, including improving the qualification of librarians who conduct task of classification, building the process of classification, building collaboration among libraries that use DDC. One of those solutions is mastering principles of DDC.

2. FINDINGS

2.1.Principles of Dewey Decimal ClassificationScheme

Principles are terms that can be applied over and over again in similar circumstances with the aim of getting the specific targets. Those who understand principles help them how to interact with the world more effectively. According to Wikipedia (2013),a principle is a law or rule that has to be, or usually is to be followed, or can be desirably followed, or is an inevitable consequence of something, such as the laws observed in nature or the way that a system is constructed. The principles of such a system are understood by its users as the essential characteristics of the system, or reflecting system's designed purpose, and the effective operation or use of which would be impossible if any one of the principles was to be ignored.

From the perspective of life, principles are what allow you to live a life consistent with those values. Principles connect your values to your actions; they are beacons that guide your actions, and help you successfully deal with the laws of reality. It is to your principles that you turn when you face hard choices (Ray Dalio, 2011).

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland(2006) has comparison between principles and rules. A principle as a general statement, with widespread support, which is intended to support truth

and fairness and acts as a guide to action. Principles cannot be replaced by mechanical rules. Sometimes a set of rules may be proposed to guide the observance of a principle, but it will always be a matter of judgments whether following these rules will actually achieve conformity to the principle.A rule as a means of establishing an unambiguous decision-making method. There can be no doubt about when and how it is to be applied. Rules represent specific instructions – like a computer program. Rules are sometimes arbitrary and may not always reflect the underlying principles.

In field of library classification, principles as well as rules play very important role in guiding librarians conduct their tasks of classification. Among classification schemes that used in libraries, there is Dewey Decimal Classification. With the aim of keeping pace with the development of knowledge, Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system is a tool of organizing general knowledge in libraries. This system was conceived by Melvil Dewey in 1873 and first published in 1876.Nowadays, more than 135 countries in the world use the DDD to organize and provide access to their information collections, and the numbers are featured in the national bibliographies of more than 60 countries. It could be seen, the DDC is the most widely used classification system in the world and has been translated into over thirty languages, and one of translations of the full and abridged editions of the DDC is Vietnamese.

In DDC, there are many principles for librarians to adopt. One of these is Mary Mortimer's principle of DDC. Mary Mortimer(1998) provides 24 basic principles of classification by using DDC. Based on 24 principles of Mary Mortimer (1998), the basic principles of classification are grouped into three main groups, including the first group is general principles with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 ones; the second group of principles is aimed to require librarians to conduct in classification; and the last one is principles for classifying materials or books which have more than one subject in content (Vu Duong ThuyNga, 2003).

1. Place a work where it will be most useful: it depends on users' need, a specific number is given suitably

2. Class a work according to the author's intent:

3. Class by subject, then by form, except works of the imagination

4. In works of the imagination, class by original language, then literature form, rather than by subject

5. Class a work in the most specific area possible

6. Class a work which covers two or more subjects with the one that receives fuller treatment

7. If a work includes two subjects in the same discipline which receive equal treatment, and are not used to introduce or explain one another, class the work with the subject coming first in the schedules

8. If a work treats two aspects of 1 subject in different disciplines, class the work at the interdisciplinary number if one is given (provided the work contains significant material on that discipline

9. If no emphasis is apparent, class a work on three or more subjects that are all subdivisions of a broader subject with the first higher number which includes them all

10. Class a work on three of more subjects in different disciplines in the generalities class

11. Class biographies, autobiographies, diaries and reminiscences either with specific disciplines or together in a general biography sections

12. In general, class a work first by subject then by geographical location

13. When there is a further subdivision and there is a choice between subject and geographical location, choose the subject first

14. If a subject acts upon another subject, class it under the subject which is acted upon

15. If a work has been treated from a particular standpoint, class in the subject unless it has been considerably altered

16. Works on topics "with special reference to" are classed under the more specific subject

17. When a subject has no stated place in the classification scheme, use the number of the subject to which it is more closely related

18. When two headings clash, make a decision as to which is to prevail, and be consistent in its use

19. Works pro and con a subject go together at the subject

20. Avoid placing which are in the nature of criticism

21. Always have a reason for your placing of a work

22. Record all decision

23. Read the introduction to the classification scheme

24. Check the number in the shelf list or catalogue

Similarly, catalogers use the nine general principles when selecting a DDC number (Bloomberg and Weber, 1976), including:

1. Class a book, or any other material, where it will be most useful to the patron. This can usually be accomplished by placing similar materials together. This may also be accomplished by the use of broad or close classification, depending on library needs;

2. Class a book first by subject and second by form, except in the field of literature;

3. Class a work of literature first by its original language and second by its form;

4. Class a book that covers two or three subjects under the first subject treated unless another subject receives more prominent attention;

5. Class a book that covers more than three subjects in a general subject embracing all of the subjects;

6. Class a book in the most specific number possible in the classification scheme;

7. In general, class a book first by subject if there is a choice between subject and geographical location;

8. Class biographies, autobiographies, diaries, and reminiscences either together in a general biography number or with specific disciplines;

9. Class a book according to the author's intent in writing it.

In general, these principles were summarized three basic principles in classification in general and four rules for classifying with DDC (Ngo Ngoc Chi, 2009). Three basic principles are analyzed below. Besides, there are also some specific rules for using DDC, including rule of application, first-of-two rule, rule of three, and rule of interdisciplinary number. Every work has not only unique subject, but also many subjects in the same work. A work may cover multiple aspects of one subject or more than one subject in a single discipline, or there is more than one discipline covered in a work. Besides, some comprehensive works that treated a subject from various points of view within a single discipline. So, there are four basic principles for librarians to build class numbers.

The first rule is rule of application that guides the librarians in classifying a work on interrelated subjects in which one subject can be said to act upon the other. The rule states that such a work should be classed with the subject acted upon. Next, the second one is "first of two rule" is that if two subjects receive equal treatment, and are not used to introduce or explain one another, class the work with the subject whose number comes first in the DDC schedules. Thirdly, rule of three is another specific principles of DDC. It is acknowledged is that class a work on three or more subjects that are all subdivisions of a broader subject in the first higher number that includes them all (unless one subject is treated more fully than the others). The last one is rule of interdisciplinary number related to the books have more than three subjects belong different disciplines. This rule states that librarians should choose the general class number for all subjects as 000 Computer science, information & general works. Another way for this is classifying on an interdisciplinary number or choosing the most treated subject among those subjects. In other way, if there is equal treatment of three or more subjects that are all subdivisions of a broader subject, classify the work at the first highest number that includes them all. In reality, many librarians adopt these principles through using DDC in classifying books of their libraries.

2.2. The Necessity of Learning Principles of Classifying with DDC

Classifying books with the DDC requires librarians to determine of the subject, the disciplinary focus, and the approach or form. It could be spentfour steps for every librarian to build classification numbers. However, with the aim of getting relevant and exact classification numbers of books, every librarian must obey the principles of classification as well as rules of DDC. There are some main reasons for librarians to learn principles of classifying with DDC.

First, standardization of classification in library is the most important reason for learning principles. In recent years, standardization has been regarded as an important element to ensure the quality and effectiveness of any field of activity. In field of Library and Information, standardization has also been recognized as an important element to ensure quality of libraries, information agencies, and leadto promoteintegration over the world. In fact, the usage of DDC in Vietnamese libraries is increasing when DDC is one of three professional standards in bibliographic activities in Vietnam today, including MARC and AACR2.

Secondly, ensuring the unity in classifying books helps in improving the quality of library's classification. Classification is a complex set of actions that includes the interpretation and representation of the subject matter of an entity with an ordinal number to organize and make the product physically accessible. The function of library classification is to identify a sense of position where a user can find all writings on a given subject at one place. The potential of library classification schemes for improving subject access to information results in the development of various schemes (Satija, M. P., 2007).

The last one is bringing chances to exchange bibliographic information for library.At present, DDC is used in most of academic libraries in Vietnam. Obeying principles of DDC helps libraries exchange bibliographic information. For instance, librarians could take advantages of available class numbers or results from other libraries instead of classifying by them. To do this, librarians must to choose the relevant class numbers thatclassified by qualified libraries. In the same system of libraries, when using DDC in classification, libraries could exchange bibliographic information among them. For example, the USSH-HCM could use the results of classification from records of other libraries. They could use available class numbers or even rebuild more relevantly.

2.3. Some Features of Adopting Principles at USSH-HCM Classification

These general principles and specific rules were used in most of libraries in Vietnam in recent years. One of academic libraries that use DDC in classification is library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh city (USSH-HCM library). USSH-HCM library was established with the aim of supporting training and research activities of faculty and students since 1997. With the open-served-orientation for information users, the library plays an important role in enhancing the quality of education of university through satisfying the diverse information needs of managers, faculty, students, and staff. The USSH-HCM library has function of providing information and knowledge related to field of social sciences and humanities. These information resources could be Vietnamese and many foreign languages such as English, French, Russian, Chinese, Italian, etc. ... The second function of the library is that the library has taken the responsibility of organizing, managing, supplementing, collecting and preserving the materials, books, newspapers, magazines, tapes, thesis and other kinds of materials. Other function of the library is to provide guidance and to manage activities of ensuring the intellectual property rights of the university.

At present, there are five librarians who take responsibility ofbook classification in USSH-HCM. They have graduated from the same universitywhere have been taught DDC as an important subject in Bachelor of Arts' curriculum. Following to the results of survey, four of librarians have the working – time with DDC is under 5 years, and one librarian has worked one year.

The table 1 shows the results of self-evaluation of librarians' capacity impacting on activities of classifying books at USSH-HCM library. Most of librarians rankedat level "good"attheir capacity of professional knowledge, skills of classification and skills of determining subjects of books (80% of respondents). Next, 60% of respondents evaluated their knowledge of classification are "good" while there are lowest percentage of respondents related to foreign language skills (just only 20% of respondents) is good. This requirement of foreign language skills is compulsory for all librarians to determine the subject of books that written in English particularly, other foreign languages in general.

Table1. *Self-evaluation of librarians' capacity of classifying books.*

Level	Exellent		Good		Fair		Average		Poor	
	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%
Professional knowledge	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Social knowledge	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
Knowledge of classification	0	0	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
Skills of classification	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Skills of determining subjects	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Foreign language skills	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
Computer skills	0	0	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0

Another table shows the procedures of classification that librarians conduct. All of five librarians have accessed at OPAC of other libraries when they class books, determining the subject headings of books, and read guides of classification, including principles of classification. Most of respondents spent most of activities related to access at OPAC of library before building classification number for works, access at OPAC of Library of Congress, analyze the contents of works, as well as use the relative index. However, they rarely compared available class numbers, and correct the irrelevant and inexact class number (just only 2 respondents).

Table2. *Procedures of classification*

Procedures of classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Check class number on OPAC of USSH-HCM library	4	10.5
Check class number on OPAC of Library of Congress	4	10.5
Check class number on OPAC of other libraries	5	13.2
Analyze the content of works/ books	4	10.5
Determine the subject headings	5	13.2
Use the relative index	4	10.5
Read guides of classification	5	13.2
Check their own handbook of classification	3	7.9
Compare with available classification number	2	5.3
Correct the irrelevant classification number	2	5.3
Other	0	0.0
Total	**38**	**100.0**

It is shown from the results of table 3 below, all of librarians who working at USSH-HCM could understand totally the structures of BBK scheme (100% of respondents), meanwhile, there are only 40% of respondents said that they understand DDC's structures with full edition. This could be explained that, at present, USSH-HCM library use BBK scheme and DDC scheme at the same time in classification. Moreover, the time of using BBK is longer than using DDC. Furthermore, they just use DDC with abridge edition.

Table3. *Level of understanding of DDC's principles*

Level of understanding	All		Most		Partly		Few		None	
	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%
Structures of BBK scheme	0	0	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Structures of DDC scheme (full edition)	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
Structures of DDC scheme (abridge edition)	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
General principles of classification	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
General methods of classification	0	0	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rule of application	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
First-of-two rule	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Rule of three	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
Interdisciplinary numbers	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0

However, when asking about their understanding about structures of DDC scheme as well as general principles of classification, general methods of classification, rule of classification (just rule of application and first-of-two rule), more than 80% of respondents believed that they understand most of them. Another highlight of this table is that, there is up to 80% of respondents understand partly some rules related DDC (rule of three, interdisciplinary numbers).

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clearly seen that, there are many principles that librarians ought to obey effectively. There are also several of factors impacting on the capacity of adopting principles of librarians in book classification. One of these is qualification of librarians; every librarian has differences in qualification as well as awareness of DDC's principles. Second, the working time of the librarians with DDC has also brought impacts on the book classification. The experienced librarians could build DDC numbers exactly than ones who have short term experienced in classifying books. They have much experience on reading, analyzing content of books and master the DDC scheme. Especially, they are able to apply the principles of DDC scheme more effectively. To what extent, to able to build infinite numbers of subjects effectively, librarians must apply the principles of classifying with the classification scheme that library uses and DDC scheme is one of classification scheme that has many different principles of classification. These principles help the librarians make sure the unity in book classification and enhance the quality of library's classification, especially in the standardization context today.

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