SOME ANOMALIES IN THE DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

I N Sengupta

Indian Institute of Experimental Medicine
Jadavpur, Calcutta-700032

Introduction

Till edition 18 of Decimal classification scheme the D.C. Editorial Policy Committee while recommending additions, deletions etc. in the existing edition of the D.C. followed an uniform policy which was based on the principle of subject integrity where both the subject content and notation are hierarchical. But the Committee always faced the problem at the time of publication of a new edition of the D.C. of how to reconcile the conflicting requirements of the principle of continuity and integrity of numbers and of keeping pace with ever growing knowledge. However, in every new edition the former ideas have prevailed over the latter and as a result with the growth of the D.C. scheme during the last century the libraries which have followed this scheme did not have to face any considerable problem of reclassification of a significant portion of their holdings. This is perhaps one of the reasons for the extensive adaptation of this classification scheme in U.S.A., U.K. and other countries, although since the 1950s the D.C. Editorial Policy Committee has realized the need of the latter principle i.e. revision of D.C. following a principle of keeping pace with knowledge.

After careful study of the current issues of the volume 3 of the "Dewey Decimal Classification Additions, Notes and Decisions" published by the Forest Press Division and Lake Placid Education Foundation, it appears that the D.C. Editorial Policy Committee is going to bring out some major changes in the 19th edition of D.C. which will have considerable impact on and practical consequences to libraries that follow the D.C. Scheme to classify their holdings. These changes will alter the standing century old practices and affect classification of many thousands of volumes.

Some of the major changes recommended by the D.C. Editorial Policy Committee for insertion in the 19th edition of the D.C. scheme appear to be anomalous and discussed in detail in this paper.

I. MAJOR CHANGES IN THE APPLICATION OF 900 AND AREA NOTATIONS FOR BRITISH ISLES, UNITED KINGDOM AND GREAT BRITAIN

In the 18th edition of the D.C. the concepts 'British Isles', 'England', 'United Kingdom' and 'Great Britain' are located under Area notation - 42 and that of 'Scotland' and 'Ireland' are under Area notation - 41. However, it is of interest to note that for the Area notations - 41 and - 42 and also for their subdivisions, the D.C. Editorial Policy Committee has recommended an extensive revision. It has been recommended by the Committee in 1975 and later endorsed by the Forest Press to relocate the concepts of 'British Isles', 'United Kingdom' and 'Great Britain' from Area notation - 42 to Area notation - 41 and to shift "England and Wales" from - 41 to - 42 in the forthcoming 19th edition of D.C. scheme. Consequently it is now necessary to classify 'History of Great Britain and United Kingdom' under 941, while that of England and Wales would remain in 942. The general summary of the revised - 411 to - 419 and - 421 to - 429 have been enumerated by the Lake Placid Education Foundation in their publications D.C. & 3:7 and D.C. & 3:6, 1975 respectively. However, before introducing this major change in the main class number and Area notation opinions of the reputed librarians of England and those of British National Bibliography (BNB) and Library of Congress (L.C.) were sought by the Committee and all of them except a few British Librarians, have agreed to this proposal. It may be mentioned in this connection that BNB has already introduced this major change in their 1975 annual volume and the L.C. has also started following these in their own classification scheme with effect from 1975.

II. TOTAL REVISION OF SCHEDULES FOR LIFE SCIENCES

The D.C. Editorial Policy Committee has recommended publication of a Phoenix schedule (involving 80 to 100% change in original class...
number) for the entire life sciences schedules (560-590). From D. D. C. V. 1 p. 60, it may be seen that a Phoenix schedule is "A completely new development of the schedule for a specific discipline. Except by chance, only the basic number of the discipline remains the same as in previous editions, all other numbers being freely reused". It may be mentioned here that the introduction of similar Phoenix schedules by the D.C. Authority is not a new thing as it is evidenced from the publication of similar schedules for Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Psychology and Law, and Mathematics in 16th, 17th and 18th edition of D.C. respectively.

Human anatomy (611) and physiology (612) will be classed in 591 along with general animal anatomy and physiology and as such all of 611 and 612 will be relocated at 591. Further, 572-576 will stand for concepts of biological structures and processes in general, 581 for plant anatomy and physiology and 591 for animal anatomy and physiology. However, in 581 and 591 the same base number will be used as in the existing schedules of 18th edition. Further, the taxonomic portion 582-589 and 592-599 with the exception for mammals 599 will not be extensively revised.

CONCLUSION

From study of the different changes recommended by the D.C. Editorial Policy Committee for incorporation in the forthcoming 19th editions D.C., it becomes apparent that the Committee henceforth may not follow the principles of continuity and integrity of numbers as it did in the past. With the emergence of new concepts, radical changes in earlier concepts and reversal of customary classification order, there may be perhaps no other alternative for the Committee but to shift from their century old principle while revising D.C. according to the new principle of keeping pace with knowledge in order to provide more flexibility to the scheme. But the changes proposed for the entries as indicated in I and II section of this paper do not appear to have been necessitated by such considerations.

In regard to the major changes proposed in the area notation for the British Isles (as discussed in I) one cannot help observing that the opportunity for revision could have been utilized to make the classification more rational by assigning either of the Area notations - 41 or - 42 to (a) Ireland or (b) the Republic of Ireland with the other one assigned to the single political entity Great Britain or United Kingdom and subdivided to cover the different parts of namely, Scotland, England, Wales and in the case of (a), Ulster. It is desirable from the points of view of both rationality and practical convenience that in any system of classification, the component parts of an entity, whether political or geographical, should be classed as subdivision of the notation for the entity. But in the proposed revised scheme, England and Wales, which are component parts of the political entity United Kingdom or British Isles (- 41) are placed under a different notation - 42, or taking the main island as a geographical entity, component parts of it namely Scotland and England and Wales respectively are placed under separate notations.

Apart from this, the implementation of a change in the standing century old class number viz. 900s and Area notations for British Isles will lead to a serious consequence causing great hardship to the followers of the D.C. scheme who may have to undertake arduous reclassification job of thousands of volumes which is really unfortunate. The success of a classification scheme generally depends on the unchanging feature of its basic structure of the schedules, notations, connecting symbols, etc. If the Committee, like the Colon Classification scheme, henceforth indulges in frequent major changes as indicated in this paper, the popularity of the scheme may perhaps diminish as it has happened in the case of Colon.

The total revision of the schedules for Life Sciences (560-590) by publication of a Phoenix schedule as discussed in II and shifting of all concepts from the schedules in 611 and 612 to 591, is really unfortunate. The arguments advanced in support of the shifting of all concepts from 611 and 612 to 591 appear unconvincing. The shifting is sought to be justified on the basis that the present trend is to class the anatomy and physiological processes of specific organisms with the processes rather than the individual organisms. But under 611 and 612 as well as 591 classification is already in terms of processes and not in terms of species. The editors and committee have further set a limit to the preparation of this principle, that it will be applied only up to the Kingdom level. Thus processes and structures relating to plants will be classed under 581 and those relating to animals under 591. It should have been logical to extend this criterion to processes and structures relating to man, as distinguished from other species of animals, in other words to treat man as belonging to a separate kingdom. This would have been amply justified by the very large volume of knowledge existing and continuing to grow in the fields human anatomy and physiology as compared to animal anatomy and physiology and also the unique practical interest of such studies relating man. The present recommendations are all the more difficult to comprehend because it appears Veterinary Anatomy will continue to be classed under a separate notation, 636.089 with the appropriate numbers following 61 in 610-619 added and not under 591 like human anatomy and physiology. It is of interest to note that veterinary physiology used to be classed under 591.1 till it was assigned the 636.089.1 and 636.089.2 notations in the 16th edition. Another argument for the proposed shifting of concepts under 611 and 612 to 591 is that anatomy and physiology are pure "sciences" and should not be
classed under medicine which is an applied science. The distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' sciences is at best a tenuous one and such classification serves little purpose because ultimately all scientific activity is directed to practical ends, whether immediate and foreseen or remote and unpredictable. In the study of human anatomy and physiology, the motivation has always been their relevance and potential application to medicine. Conversely, even granting the feasibility of the exact demarcation of "pure" and "applied sciences", it can be argued even more convincingly that pharmacodynamics is now a pure science, but it is proposed to continue its classification under 615.7. The editors would have done well to avoid so far-reaching a change, bound as it is to affect extensively the existing classification of the holdings of numerous libraries, particularly medical libraries.

However, it is not correct to expect that the D.C. Schedule, being an enumerative one will provide suitable numbers for growing subject like Life Sciences where newer concepts and areas of knowledge keep emerging all the time. The impact of ideas in the newly developed frontier disciplines like biochemistry, biophysics, molecular biology, bacterial genetics, molecular microbiology, cellular and subcellular biology, molecular and biochemical pharmacology on both scientific knowledge and society is of the greatest significance. Considering the enumerative nature of D.C. and also its inability to construct numbers for new concepts as in other analyticosynthetic schemes, it is suggested that the committee should keep sufficient provision in their newly recommended schedules to accommodate newer ideas and knowledge that will continue to emerge in the Life Sciences, either by keeping gaps in the notation or by any other means in accordance with their policy, so that the committee in their future edition could construct new numbers for concept that have acquired significance in between editions.

It may be further concluded that if this trend of revision and complete relocation of main schedules continues in future also, there is every likelihood that D.C. scheme may lose much of its popularity which at present it is enjoying. This is obvious, as because no library can afford frequently to undertake an extra burden of reclassification job of a significant portion of its holdings which have already been classified earlier according to an older edition of the scheme. Reclassification will be necessary as without which books on the same subject will be scattered at different shelves due to change in the main schedule of a subject causing great inconvenience, embarrassment and hardship to the readers and as well as to the librarians causing great inconvenience, embarrassment and hardship to the readers and as well as to the librarians. However, the reactions of the readers and that of the librarians who follow D.C. scheme in their libraries can only be known as and when the forthcoming 19th edition of D.C. scheme comes out with these proposed modifications and changes in the printed form.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is grateful to Prof B.K. Bachhawat, Director, Indian Institute of Experimental Medicine, Calcutta 700032 for permission to publish this paper.

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