



A handbook of history, theory and practice of the Dewey Decimal Classification system

My fascination with library classification systems has started when I first encountered them as a first-year student at Vilnius University. As I have chosen a specialization of technical information, the classification we studied was Universal Decimal Classification used then in all technical libraries of the USSR. This was quite different from the Soviet classification system with a clear ideological bias. However, both of them seemed to me a product of some alien mind capable of comprehending the universe of total knowledge. The current book by Prof. Satija and Alex Kyrios has brought back the memory of that wonder felt long ago when facing a tool for ordering the human universe.

The handbook is composed by two connoisseurs of the Dewey Decimal Classification. It is obvious that they not only know it by heart and most probably backwards, but are intimately acquainted with the processes of hard intellectual labour demanded to maintain and improve it as a useful instrument for all information professionals.

The book consists of eighteen chapters that explain the Dewey Decimal Classification in detail, starting with a short overview of its history (chapter 1) and the process and policy of revisions (chapter 2). Chapters 3-7 explain the general principles of the decimal classification and its usage for identifying subjects and building numbers for particular documents.

Chapters 8 to 14 explain in detail the composition and usage of tables of the features of documents (e.g., encyclopaedias, serials) and certain aspects of their content (e.g., biography, historical period or language). I must admit that I have not recognized the indexes, as they differ from the ones in the Universal Decimal or other classifications that I have used before. However, the general idea of application is clear. The text and examples are well presented and the whole text would be handy to the librarians and information professionals involved in classifying of the documents.

The book also includes chapters on WebDewey (which I have immediately explored in addition to reading through the chapter), a very interesting part on local adaptations of the classification, and another one on the on-going and future work with the classification and the trends of its use.

A reader will find in the book several significant appendices, of which I have read the one on other versions of the Dewey Decimal Classification (appendix 2) and the one about its editors (appendix 4). Appendix 5 is something like a useful summary points of the whole book that helps to recap what you have read.

The text is obviously far from trivial and meant for professionals, using professional language. Nevertheless, it is written in a clear and easy to understand way. It also has an appeal of a good educational text with accessible presentation of complicated cases and interesting examples addressing its 'global user base'.

I would recommend this book to all libraries using the DDC, but also those in universities with library and information science or information studies departments. Educators and students can benefit from this very useful text for understanding classifications in general and the decimal classifications in particular. The librarians engaged in classificatory activity are direct addressees of this publication, but even others may find it helpful in their professional practice even if the classification used in their library or national bibliography is different.

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