REVIEW OF THE TREATMENT OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS WORKS IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES FOR KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION IN LIBRARIES

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Abstract
This work explored the treatment of major world religions in two major classification schemes, the Dewey Decimal Classification and the Library of Congress Classification. Using literature and the aforementioned schemes' latest editions, the work observed that both the Dewey Decimal Classification and Library of Congress Classification Schemes have a huge bias towards Christianity, while Judaism, Islam, Bahai faith, Zoroastrianism and other faiths are not given such extensive treatment. The situation, which leads to a lack of uniformity and consistency in the placement of some religious works on the sparsely treated religions, is caused by the societal preferences and demographics of the originators of the two major schemes considered in this work. While the work acknowledges that it is an innocuous yet deliberate situation, the negative effects of such situations affect the organization and retrieval of information on the sparsely treated religions in libraries that have adopted the aforementioned classification schemes. To address this imbalance, the work recommends the intervention of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in providing standards for subject cataloguing, and creation of an IFLA-owned universal classification scheme that should address the inherent biases of most globally adopted classification schemes like the Dewey Decimal Classification and Library of Congress Classification schemes.

Keywords: Classification Schemes, Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme, Library of Congress Classification Scheme, Religion, Religious Works

Introduction

The invention of printing and the emergence of the university system massively influenced the growth and spread of knowledge. Over the past two centuries, libraries and information centres have been striving to develop and adopt different standard systems to organize their collections in the most logical, yet simple-to-use manner. This system of organizing library collections is known as classification. In the context of Library and Information Science, Classification entails the systematic approach of analyzing the content of information materials in terms of subject content and then grouping them based on such similarities as expressed by their subject or intellectual content. It has been adapted into the Library and Information Science lexicon from the general, layman's understanding of the term as

the system of grouping things and objects together based on some sort of similarities and shared qualities or features. Classification is the primary instinct of human beings in arranging, understanding, and relating knowledge artifacts (Ullah, Khusro, & Ullah, 2017). A major approach for organizing information resources in libraries and information centres is to classify acquired information according to a pre-defined set of 'classes' and to retrieve relevant information by browsing the list of classes used, as expressed in classification schemes (Yi, 2006).

Several systems have been created to ensure that the numerous information materials available at the disposal of libraries and information centres are organized for easy retrieval by library users. However, none of the systems have been adjudged perfect due to several challenges associated with the objectives and nature of the systems in use and the level of societal exposure of the originators of the systems. Khurshid (as cited in Arianto, 2006) states that the classification systems like Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and Library of Congress Classification are oriented towards Western languages and literature, cultures, custom, and religions. While some subjects have been extensively treated in the systems for organizing information materials in the library, other subjects have been sparsely emphasized. This creates a challenge for the proper organisation of human recorded knowledge and access to information in a world that is becoming exponentially linked and dynamically complex. It is based on these imbalances, and the implications of these biases for the modern information professional, the information user and contemporary library and information systems that this work explored the treatment of some popular global religions in the major classification schemes like the Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LC) and the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC) schemes.

Classification in the Context of Library and Information Science

Classification is generally viewed as the process of grouping similar things in the same place. However, in Library and Information Science and related information professionals, the definition is more technical. Satija and Martínez-Ávila (2017) note that classifications or modern bibliographic classifications emerged in the late 1800s and early 1900s to handle early stages of the print revolution, that is, to organize, store, and retrieve bibliographic materials. According to Marcela and Newton (as cited in Satija, 2000), an extensive and explanatory definition of classification in the context of Library Science can be given thus:

The systematic arrangement by subject of books and other learning resources and/or the similar systematic arrangement of catalogue or index entries, in the manner most useful to those who are seeking *either* a definite piece of information *or* a display of the most likely sources for the effective investigation of the subject of their choice.

Pandita and Singh (2012) submit that library classification is a conscious and calculated approach to arrange documents in a most desired manner having permanent sequence with easy access and retrieval. According to Ferreira, Maculan, and Naves (2013), the term classification was coined by Zedler in 1733 in his Universal Lexicon Encyclopedia; it is the combination of the Latin words *classis* (class) and *facere* (make).

Library Classification, Classification, Book Classification or Bibliographic Classification according to Haider (2018) is the process of arranging, grouping, coding, and organizing books and other library materials (for example serials, sound recordings, moving images, cartographic materials, manuscripts, computer files, e-resources and so on, on shelves or entries of a catalogue, bibliography, and index according to their subject in a systematic, logical, and helpful order by way of assigning them call numbers using a library classification system, so that users can find them as quickly and easily as possible.

Importance of Classification in Library and Information Services Delivery

The overwhelming quantity of knowledge requires structuring. Knowledge structuring is necessary for meeting two essential challenges: facilitating an efficient retrieval of the stored contents by providing logical access points, and facilitating a better understanding of the structure of the knowledge domain and the logical relations among its main parts (Zin, & Santos, 2011). Classification creates orderliness in the world of information, in libraries and information centres. It is a very important tool, not just in organization of information materials, but also in evaluation of the strength of the library in terms of subject areas covered.

Classification comes as a reliable tool of selecting and acquiring information materials and matching them with the needs of the library users. It is an underrated mechanism in the Collection Development process. Classification is one of the fundamental functions of which Library and Information Science has its foundation on; and as such gives orderliness and meaning to the collections of the library because it is said that the closest, we will ever come to an orderly universe is a good library (Aragbaye, 2022). Satija (2000) explains that the purpose of classification is to facilitate the optimum use of library resources. It is a tool for information organization and retrieval both in manual and automated retrieval systems. Rafferty (2001) notes that general classification schemes for libraries are concerned with mapping knowledge so that ‘subjects’ are differentiated from each other and the relationships between ‘subjects’ are spatially represented, with a common desire to facilitate access to knowledge in books and a belief in the value of science, organisation and method.

Concept of Classification Schemes

A classification scheme is a method used by librarians to organize the digital, print or electronic material in libraries (Dar, & Razza, 2018). A system of categories and its attendant rules or access methods are typically called a classification scheme or just the classifications (Gluschko, Hemerly, Petras, Manoochehri, & Wang, 2020). Arianto (2006) defines library classification scheme as a major means to organize book collections with various knowledge contained. There are at least three classifications known as the most popular in librarianship world, the Universal Decimal Classification Schemes, Dewey Decimal Scheme and Library and Congress Classification Scheme. Schemes of bibliographic classification reflect the society which libraries serve very clearly, whether this society is a narrowly-defined user group or society at large, and they reflect its development at a given point in time (Curwen, 1978). The primary object of a classification system is to gather similar information together and place it in proximity to related information (Deodato, 2010, p. 83).

A classification scheme, otherwise known as Classification system according to Reitz (2004) is a list of classes arranged according to a set of pre-established principles for the purpose of organizing items in a collection, or entries in an index, bibliography, or catalogue, into groups based on their similarities and differences, to facilitate access and retrieval. General classification schemes for libraries are concerned with mapping knowledge so that 'subjects' are differentiated from each other and the relationships between 'subjects' are spatially represented (Rafferty, 2001). Rafferty further explains that the creative genius of librarians embodied in library classification schemes attempts at one and the same time to map knowledge, to represent 'the order of things' in relation to the ideal, and to organise the material – books on shelves - within the everyday confines of the library building.

Features of Library of Congress Classification and Dewey Decimal Classification Schemes

The development of the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) Scheme was coordinated during the time of Gregory Herbert Putnam as the Librarian of Congress, with major roles played by James Hanson (Chief Cataloguer) and Charles Martel (Chief Classifier) in 1897 specifically established to cater for the needs of the Library of Congress (Library of Congress, 2019). The first outline of the scheme was however published in 1901, with Classes E-F. Not all the entire schedules were published at once. The LC Scheme was published in parts. It is based on Literary Warrant, that is, the existing literature in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. It divides knowledge into 21 main classes using the 21 alphabets of the English language (with the omission of *I, O, X, W* and *Y*) as its main classes. It also adopts the use of numbers as mixed notations with alphabets as subdivisions. It is mostly adopted by large libraries like academic, national and research libraries across the world. It is an enumerative scheme with subject-

specific index for each of the classes. The last print version was released in 2013, commercially. Since then, subsequent updates are provided electronically on the Library of Congress website.

The LCC is an enumerative classification scheme, often used by American and global academic and research libraries, and it classifies by discipline, i.e. a system that lists numbers for single, compound, as well as complex subjects. Main classes of LCC represent major disciplines which are divided into subclasses which are further divided into divisions. Such a categorization creates a hierarchical display for LCC, progressing from the general to the specific. Levels of hierarchy in the schedules are indicated by indentions (Haider, & Sharma, 2017). The most striking feature of the LCC is the individual schedules developed by a group of experts (Chan, 2004b, as cited in Kumbhar, 2012). The schedules of LCC were developed independently by different group of subject specialists based on the "literary warrant" of the materials already in, and being added to, the Library of Congress. Therefore, each schedule stands on its own with some differences from discipline to discipline; because of their intrinsic peculiarities.

On the other hand, the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) Scheme was devised by Melvil Dewey in 1876 to organize the universe of knowledge unlike the LC Scheme initially meant for and intended for just a particular library. Presently, the latest edition of the DDC is the 23rd Edition, first published in 2011. The scheme is divided into 10 main classes (focusing on disciplines and fields of study) using pure notations of alphabets and decimal numbers for further expansions after the first three digits. It is divided into 4 volumes which include Volume 1 for manual and tables, Volume 2 for schedules (classes 000-500), Volume 3 for schedules (classes 600-900) and Volume 4 for the general/ Relative Index. It is presently in its 23rd edition under the copyright of the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC).

Majumda and Sarma (2007) state that Dewey was the first person to properly expand on and define his ideas concerning a classification that placed books into a relative order based on disciplines rather than an alphabetical order, or one that simply identifies a shelf space for a specific book. The DDC was the first timely modern system that introduced features like relative locations and a relative index. This allowed books to be placed in stacks based on their relationships to one another and freed libraries to begin more freely organizing their libraries. Majumda and Samar (200&0 further explain that this scheme is presently used in libraries throughout the globe due to its cordial virtues viz. universality and hospitality for new subjects, a simple and expandable notation, good mnemonic features, permanent machinery for its revision and updating, availability in full and abridged editions and last but not least an outstanding relative index. Green (2009) avers that historically, the notational system of the Dewey Decimal Classification provided for non-institution-specific, relative location shelf arrangements, thus substantially reducing bibliographic classification effort. Its decimal notation provides the

classification scheme with flexible granularity, hospitality, and expressiveness. It is also reported to interface well with modern retrieval systems, and is internationally understood.

Treatment of Popular Religion and Religious Works in the LCC and DDC Schemes

The LC and DCC schemes both have single main classes for religion. While the LC uses Class **B** for religion, the DDC uses Class **200**. There are several deficiencies associated with the treatment of some religion that are not of Western origin or associated with Western lifestyles. Momeni (1985) states that although these systems are aimed toward international application, they are generally Western-oriented and reveal certain national, religious and cultural biases. Thus, none of these systems has been used without major or minor modifications by Middle Eastern countries.

Dewey's classification system was a product of its time and deeply embedded in the worldview of 19th century America. It was an era of a belief in Universal Reason, with European and American intellectuals across all disciplines attempting to categorize all knowledge. That's the basis of his classification system: he sought a practical application of this ideal. But 19th century ideas of how the world worked were skewed. Their baseline for what was considered both normal and important was Western, Christian, and male. The foundational structure of Dewey strongly prioritizes Western culture, concerns, and traditional identities.
(John, 2017).

Weinberger (2004) states that there seems to be a disturbing message hidden in the Dewey Decimal Classification system, the organizational scheme first published in 1876 and now used in 95% of US schools: Of the hundred numbers set aside for topics concerning religion, 88 — numbers 201-287 — are reserved for Christianity. Jews and Muslims get just one each. But those single-digit religions are still doing better than Buddhists (294.3) who share a decimal point with the Sikhs (294.6) and Jains (294.4), looking up enviously at Christian "Parish government & administration" which gets its whole number (254).

DDC structural examples from 200, the Class for Religion

Religion 200 elaborated from tens position	**290 elaborated on the singles position**
200 Religion	290 Other religions
210 Philosophy & theory of religion	291 [Unassigned]
220 Bible	292 Greek & Roman religion
230 Christianity	293 Germanic religion

240 Christian moral & devotional theology	294 Religions of Indic origin
250 Christian orders & local church	295 Zoroastrianism
260 Social and ecclesiastical theology	296 Judaism
270 History, geography, biography of Christianity	297 Islam, Babism, & Bahai Faith
280 Christian denominations & sects	298 (Optional number)
290 Other Religions	299 Religions not provided for elsewhere

(White, 2018).

The diagram above according to White (2018) depicts a large disparity in the treatment of religions especially as Western views of the world are privileged in Dewey with all numbers 200 to 289 focusing on Christianity. It is also noted that non-Western religions are not even mentioned until 294. Buddhism is number 294.3 under Religions of Indic origin. The Bible, the major scripture of Christianity has its major subclass of tens, Christianity has one subclass of tens, Christian moral and devotional theology has its subclass of tens, the History of Christianity has its subclass of tens, the Christian denomination has its subclass of tens, and Christian order and local church has its subclass. Meanwhile, Islam, Babism, and Bahai Faith, all separate religions like Christianity are placed under a subclass of singles, 297. All other religions practiced by humans are placed under 290. For a classification scheme that is said to be hierarchical, this is biased and imbalanced.

The 200-219 represent a range of numbers about religion in general. 220-229 are about the Bible, which is a fundamental document for religions like Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other groups such as the Samaritans. To put it roughly, 65 of 100 of the standard DDC hundreds of classes are devoted to Christianity and the New Testament alone (Fox, 2019).

This disparity could be excused in the LC Scheme which is based on Literary Warrant, but it puts to question the essence and objective of the DDC in organizing the universe of knowledge and not the collections of a particular library as in the case of LC Scheme. As Olson (2004) notes, Classifications may be deemed good or bad based on any number of characteristics, but the justification for their choice and order of classes or concepts is one of the most fundamental.

Picture 1 above is taken from the Library of Congress Schedules at the *Cataloguing and Classification Laboratory of the Department of Library and Information Science, Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana, Ebonyi State, Nigeria*. Without much introspection, it clearly shows the depth and wide coverage of Christianity and the Bible as against the contracted treatments of other religions like Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism.

Problems, Possible Causes and Effects of Bias in the Treatment of Popular Global Religions in the LCC and DDC Scheme

Of the three major general schemes, that of the Library of Congress is unique in that it was originally designed, and is still primarily maintained, for the use of one particular library, the Library of Congress itself. Although the scheme can be faulted on many counts, to lose sight of this basic fact and to indulge in the kind of criticism that consists, if not in so many words, of blaming LCC for being the classification of the Library of Congress, is one of the most futile exercises imaginable. Since the scheme is devised, applied and constantly amended within one institution, small changes can be made quickly and frequently in response to the needs of the literature received (Curwen, 1978). Deodato (2010, p. 83) supports the above argument by stating that "like subject headings, classification schemes tend to construct information in ways that reflect the biases of the cultures that produce them." For instance, according to the Pew Research Centre (2019), 70.6% of Americans are Christians, while non-Christian faiths (Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, and other world religions) account for 5.9% of the population. The study further reports that non-faith beliefs, i.e. those without religious affiliations account for 22.8% (with atheism at 3.1 and Agnosticism at 4.0%, "nothing in

particular" 15.8%, and those "who do not know", 0.6%). This demographic distribution of religions in the US points to the fact that most Americans are Christians, with those without religious affiliations having more population than Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, etc.

In consonance with the above, Fox (2019) gives reason for the biases inherent in the DDC by stating that Melvil Dewey's approach was shaped by his early experiences in library work at Amherst College, where Melvil Dewey was employed as a student in the library (and where he was working when he developed the DDC). The College was founded in 1821 with the goal of the "classical education" of young men interested in the Christian ministry. While Dewey was working there, the Amherst College library's collection was heavily skewed towards books about Christianity, as was the first edition of Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification.

Similarly, Tomren (2003) argues that equal access to library materials is hindered by bias in subject cataloging, both in major classification schemes (Library of Congress Classification and Dewey Decimal Classification) and major controlled subject vocabularies (Library of Congress Subject Headings and Sears Subject Headings). These classification systems and subject headings reflect the Eurocentric, male, Christian orientations of their originators as well as the period in which they were constructed. However, these imbalances should not be seen as a deliberate ploy to marginalize Muslims and adherents of other faiths as held in some quarters. It has always been established that classification schemes and subject headings are constructed based on the understandings, orientations and perspectives of their originators and the immediate societies of the originators or the users they are meant to serve. Kua (as cited in Love, n.d) agrees with the above statement by stating that a classification scheme reinforces the social systems that were in place at the time the system was devised, and projects, no matter how subtly or ineffectively, the social, moral and intellectual values of that system. How we arrange books on a shelf both reflects and shapes our perceptions about the proper order of things.

Furthermore, the fact that the LC Scheme is based on Literary Warrant, i.e. collections in the Library of Congress makes it logical and natural that an enumerative classification scheme like the Library of Congress scheme is having bias for literature that interests Americans and Westerners. However, there remains an existential threat and challenge to the organization of information materials on these marginally treated religions in the LC and DDC Schemes, especially in libraries that adopt the LC and DDC schemes and libraries serving users with interests in religions collections not extensively treated in the LC and DDC schemes. The DDC is considered to be *WASPish* (Western Anglo-Saxon and Protestant) in nature, and this was cited as one of the reasons for the creation of a more scientific system like the Colon Classification Scheme (Camarmi, & Satija, as cited in Satija, 2017).

Tomren (2003) using the example of native Indian literature states that both systems (LCC and DDC) also exclude numerous Native concepts, lack specificity within Native topics, fail to organize Native material in ways conducive to retrieval, and at times use offensive or outdated terminology. The effect of this in library services delivery leads to a perceived lack of relevance, but more importantly, a lack of recognition of the sovereignty of American Indian nations. This results in hindering access to American Indian materials to all users, discouraging Native people from using libraries by reinforcing the image of the library as a non-Native institution, and reinforcing to the outside world the stereotypes that American Indians are part of the past and do not contribute relevant knowledge to contemporary society.

Scholars like Deodato (2010) have argued that this bias should not be justified in the context of Librarianship because the essence of general and universal classification schemes should be the structuring and organization of the universe of knowledge, not for preferential treatment for some areas of knowledge. Olson (as cited in Mai, 2016) is adamant that the challenges of systemic biases in library classification can be changed, and need to change. She further argues that not only do library classifications need to change and become inclusive of the world's diversity but library classifications can lead to a cultural change in mainstream culture. Once library classifications have changed and become inclusive and accommodating to diversity, library classification might serve as agents to affect society and culture, "a mainstream tool such as a standard library-controlled vocabulary is potentially an agent of cultural change". This is why it is often suggested that classification systems do not just organize the universe of knowledge, they construct it. Olson (2004) further suggests that perhaps we should also follow Francis Bacon's epistemological warrant and let our classifications not only reflect knowledge but also have a role in directing the creation of new knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Classification schemes and their respective associated subject headings are meant to help in organizing information materials in libraries and information centres for easy accessibility. However, the perception, orientation, and societal influence of the creators of the popular classification schemes leave so much to be desired in terms of adequate provision of subject headings and classes for subjects that are not of high interest and value to them as at the time of preparing the schemes and subject headings. This influence of space and time has resulted in several academic debates as to the acceptability and applicability of popular general classification schemes like the LC and DDC.

While Christianity, a predominant religion in the societies where the DDC and LC schemes were created enjoys adequate treatment, other Abrahamic faiths like Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, etc., and other non-Abrahamic religions do not enjoy such extensive treatment.

However, it would be almost impossible to eradicate biases in the classification schemes because societal influences can never be taken away from the way individuals see the universe. This does not mean that librarians, especially classifiers should succumb to biases in classification schemes. Doing so will affect standardization in the structuring, mapping out, and organizing of the universe of knowledge.

To this end, this work proposes the suggestions below:

i. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) should prepare a universally acceptable classification scheme that will have the input of professional librarians and subject specialists from all societal backgrounds. This will help erase the suspicious feeling of deliberate bias among librarians and classifiers. Leaving classification standards to the whims of national bibliographic agencies and independent individuals will keep widening the gap between standardization and universal acceptability. It will also deny librarians the opportunity to see concepts from other perspectives beyond their immediate environments. National agencies cannot always be accused of bias when in fact they are only focusing their attention on what is more beneficial to their clientele within their geographic jurisdiction.

ii. IFLA should engage library associations and institutions in drafting a universal policy that governs the creation of classification schemes and subject headings, be it general or subject-based. The need for individual bibliographic agencies to always devise separate classification schemes cannot also be overlooked or discouraged.

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