Do We Still Need Classification?

According to Eric Hunter, that in essence classification simply means the grouping together of like things according to common qualities or characteristics. This automatically implies the separation of the unlike.

By this means we able to argue the fact that classification not only make things easier to find; it is basic to our very existence (Hunter, 2000). In relation to the article as well as realizing the necessity of needs in our day to day lives classification plays a significant role although we try to take less notice of. For the library and the information service classification is a must which cannot be ignored. It is an essential device or a tool for an organization in location of materials and retrieval of the information contained therein.

This relates to what Maltby has to say, that classifications whole object is to secure an order which will be useful to readers and to those who seek information with the smallest complication of search or other effort (Maltby, 1975). For example if you ask a librarian about books on roses, He/she would look under flowers or gardening, to see whether the relevant information is contained. By doing this the librarian is carrying out the process of classification.

However in concerned to a broad subject arrangement the bookshop takes prior to the library collection when it comes to the shelf arrangement. Book shops usually arrange in general sections such as languages, education, history, business, travel etc. for quick access, browsing or searching, for as the library is more precise and detailed in its arrangements. According to the article the author suggests, in a bookshop that it might be adequate for general browsing and goes on the say even this is doubtful, if one is searching for a specific subject one can be forced to scan shelf after shelf (Hunter, 2000).

In regards to this matter one could argue the fact that it all depends on the user need at a particular point of time. One might want broad subject related information and is in a hurry would choose to go to a bookshop and on the other hand if one is looking for in detail and in depth research, might prefer to go to the library instead. This all depends upon the user requirements in regards to the information retrieval where convenience and accessibility of the particular information is concerned.

According to Hunter many researches have concluded that the online catalogue, despite its numerous virtues, has not improved subject access. Some online catalogues offer nothing more than a ‘keyword from title’ facility. (Hunter, 2000) One need to understand that searching under a keyword requires the distinguish title word to reflect the subject clearly, which often does not happen. This causes a problem if one would not know a specific title word to reflect a particular subject clearly when searching, might end up with irrelevant retrieves.

Burton argues that in the age of the Internet and the World Wide Web it is no longer necessary to teach information professionals classification (Burton, 1997). This point can be argued according to different opinions of different individuals, but according to the way that I see this, although classification is not visible around as much as we think it is, it’s a basic of life in our day to day life even though we try to ignore its essential ability. Even though we have the Internet and the Web one would still need to have an understanding even if they be information professionals as to how classification is used. Online systems provide not only citations for work in which information might be found but also contain abstracts or the full text of articles, documents, books, and so on. This could be done through full text retrieval techniques (Burton, 1997). Burton goes on to say that using Boolean operators simply means the
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liking together of terms by means of operators such as AND and OR. In relation to this point one could argue the fact that even Boolean searching involves a minor element of classification which identifies characteristics of a subject in order to bring together of like items and separate the unlike.

Different countries use different classification methods. For example America use the ‘call number’ which consists of the classification number, helps to identify the individual books, is most often used to indicate a specific shelf location. United states have always preferred the alphabetical approach to cataloging and indexing. Dewey Decimal classification, Notations, Boolean operators, faceted classification etc. are some of the other ways which classification tends to use.

According to Maltby & Marcella, classification is far more than application of any scheme or notation: it relates to all our physical or mental attempts to group material or ideas appropriately in order to meet customer needs expeditiously (Maltby & Marcella 2000).

Warner argues that librarians must strive to become involved in the task classification of digital materials (Warner, 2000). Warner further goes on to say that it is most important that the information worker in this field needs to have the ability to comprehend and blend together with a sound understanding of both the theory and practice of classification, to design systems which provide solutions to practical problems of arrangement of subjects and documents to facilitate easy retrieval.

The American Subject headings used in the dictionary catalogs of the Library of Congress (LCSH) is also a list of headings which attempts to show relationships and which is devised to help with the selection of subject headings, but this work has been strongly criticized because of the lack of underlying classificatory principles (Hunter, 2000). In 1998, the library of Congress announced its decision to replace its automated system, and outdate system, in use since 1960’s, with the integrated system Endeavor. This has affect all aspects of bibliographic control at the Library of Congress, including its classification scheme (Chan, 1999)

Classification is used in many ways in the 21st century in information management. It has become a basic necessity though it’s well and truly unsaid and recognized as a very essential information management tool. According to classification research (1994), retrieval rests heavily on the knowledge of classification that a particular organization have. It is best to identify the use classification to its fullest potential to control, manage and utilize the information explosion. To ignore classificatory techniques is to ignore one of the most powerful access tools that we ever possess.
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Bibliography


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