Do we still need classification?

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1. **Classification is basic to life**

   The author defined classification as the grouping together of like things according to common qualities or characteristics. This automatically implies to the separation of the unlike (Hunter, 2002). In Australia, every film and video that is legally available in Australia, whether it is produced locally or comes from overseas has to be classified by the Classification Board before it can be made available to the public. The classifications are divided into 5 categories such as:

   - **General Exhibition**
     
     Suitable for all viewers. Parents should feel comfortable that all children can watch these movies without supervision.

   - **Parental Guidance**
     
     This classification indicates that parents’ guidance is recommended for children under 15 years old while seeing the film. Movies classified [PG] will not be harmful to children.

   - **Mature Audiences 15 years and over**
     
     It is recommended that any person under 15 years of age must be accompanied by an adult when seeing this film, as content is considered to be potentially disturbing to those under this age. However, the classification is only advisory and access to [M] rated films is legally unrestricted.

   - **Mature Restricted**
     
     This classification is legally restricted. Children under 15 years of age will not be permitted to see [MA] movies unless in the company of a parent or adult guardian. Cinema staff may ask for proof of age identification, and are entitled to refuse service if this is not produced.
- Restricted to Adults 18 years and over

Access is legally restricted to persons aged 18 years or over. No person under 18 years of age will be allowed into the cinema at all. Cinema staffs are entitled to refuse service to any person unable to prove they are 18 or older.

This classification information is provided by The Office of Films & Literature Classification to help viewers choose the most suitable movies or videos (Classifications for Consumers, 2002). Imagine if there is no classification and children under 15 years of age have access to see adult movies. It would be chaos. Classification not only makes things easier to find, it is basic to our very existence.

2. **Classification in the library or information service**

In most libraries, if we are looking for a particular book about *E-Commerce* on the library shelves, it is common that we might find other books, which are useful for example: *Starting an Online Business for Dummies, Marketing Management, The Great Game of Business* etc. These related subjects had been brought together by means of Classification. Even a very broad subject grouping, can still be looked as ‘classification’. A number of libraries have adopted such an approach for shelf arrangement and it is vital. However, different with the bookshops, they arranged their books based on specific areas/subjects. Let say books are arranged in a broad subject arrangement like: Language, education, business or travel, I am sure all of us would have been frustrated with such an arrangement. Hence, they breakdown the Computer section into: Operating Systems, Windows, Programming languages, Internet etc. The programming languages might be divided again into Pascal, Java and Visual Basic etc. Yet, classification is a very simple tool but definitely important.
3. The library catalogue

A library catalogue is “a register of all bibliographic items found in a particular library or group of libraries” (Wikipedia). A bibliographic item can be books, computer files and graphics. In the past, the card catalogue was a familiar sight to library patrons for many generations, but it has been effectively replaced by the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). More recently, a subject search facility has been introduced by the Dynix system at Liverpool John Moores University.

In The United States, Library of Congress Subject Headings has been used to show relationships and to help with the selection of subject headings. The most recent of LCSH introduces a new format with accepted thesaural abbreviations such as: BT = Broader term, NT= Narrower term, RT= Related term). This thesauri facility is based upon classification principles. See example below:

**Criminology**

UF Crime – Study and Teaching  
BT - Social sciences  
RT- Crime, criminals  
USE Crime in Sociological aspects

4. Full text databases

According to Burton (1997), the use of the internet and WWW is no longer necessary to teach information professionals about classification. It is now possible to search a complete text, even a large work such as an entire encyclopedia through databases as well as online over international networks such as the internet. Burton mentioned that Internet search engines can rapidly find the growing volumes of information created. These search engines are capable of handling complex search strategies with Boolean operators, which is AND and OR. What Burton fails to recognize is that even with Boolean searching involves an element of classification. For example: A
search for ‘Melbourne AND Weather AND Lifestyle’ would find all items contained on these terms and separate the unlike - the basic principle of classification.

5. Notation

Notation is group of symbols or codes, which may be used to sort or locate concepts in a systematic order and to display how concepts have been structured and grouped. The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) is a very good example for notation. The DDC was developed by Melvil Dewey back in 1876 and it is world’s most widely used library classification system, it attempts to organize all knowledge into ten main classes (OCLC website). Moreover, DDC's cleverness is in choosing decimals for its categories. See appendix for list of DDC.

At an early stage, traditional library used faceted classification technique in categorizing books, papers and articles. In a faceted classification, subjects are divided into facets (aspects), and class numbers are created from the classifications (Wikipedia). Here is the example for faceted classification scheme:

**Manufacturer (first digit)**
1 = MasterFoods
2 = Heinz

**Type (second digit)**
1 = Tinned
2 = Condensed
3 = Powdered

**Size (third digit)**
1 = Cup a soup
2 = Bottle

**Flavor (fourth digit)**
1 = Tomato
2 = Minestrone
3 = Chicken
Therefore, from the above scheme, it can be seen that “MasterFoods condensed bottle tomato would be identified as 1221. Notation, then, can solve terminological problem and allow complex subjects to be represented by simpler coding.

6. Conclusion

Nowadays, Classification is essential device not only for library, but for everyone in order to organize material and aiding in its retrieval. In addition, with the advantage which computer provides, this offers the opportunity to utilize classification in other ways. Now, we are entering the 21st century where knowledge growing rapidly, many people still prominent and non-prominent within librarianship and outside librarianship regards classification as a major implement. Hence, a very strong case should be taken to make classification can be used to manage and exploit information explosion.
7. References


Dewey Decimal Classification, <http://www.oclc.org/dewey/> 31 August 2005

8. Appendix

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)

000 Generalities
  010 Bibliographies & catalogs
  020 Library & information sciences
  030 General encyclopedic works

100 Philosophy & Psychology
  110 Metaphysics
  120 Epistemology, causation, humankind
  130 Paranormal phenomena

200 Religion
  210 Natural theology
  220 Bible
  230 Christian Theology

300 Social Sciences
  310 General statistics
  320 Political science
  330 Economics

400 Language
  410 Linguistics
  420 English & Old English
  430 Germanic languages, i.e., German

500 Natural Sciences & Mathematics
  510 Mathematics
  520 Astronomy & allied sciences
  530 Physics

600 Technology (Applied Sciences)
  610 Medical sciences
  620 Engineering & allied sciences
  630 Agriculture

700 The Arts
  710 Civic & landscape art
  720 Architecture
  730 Plastic arts
800 Literature & Rhetoric
  810 American literature in English
  820 English and Old English literature
  830 Literatures of Germanic languages

Source: OCLC website