THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

SESSION 3 – The role of classification the library

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Session Overview

• Have you ever thought of what libraries will look like if materials were kept in boxes and users were required to search boxes for the materials they need, or all electronic resources from all databases were listed alphabetically?
• That would have been a very chaotic situation.
• This session will help you understand why there is no chaos in libraries.
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One: The role of classification the library
- Topic Two: Limitations of library classification
• Read Chapter 1 of Recommended Text: Batley, Sue. (2005) Classification in theory and practice Oxford: Chandos
• **Topic one:**
  • The role of classification in the library
The role of classification the library

• Prior to the 19th century libraries operated a system called closed access.
  – Readers were not allowed to browse the stock
  – They had books fetched for them by library staff.

• Identification of books depended on the librarian’s knowledge of the book stock
The role of classification the library

• Around the 19th century libraries increasingly moved towards a system called open access.
• Users were able to go to the shelves and select books for themselves.

• How will users locate a material?
• Subject approach was thought to be the best.
The role of classification the library

• We have identified that classification helps to
  – organize
  – Make sense of things
  – Locate things
The role of classification the library

• Library classification organizes in two ways:
  • First it organizes information itself by recognizing similarities between areas of knowledge.
  • Classification schemes does this by listing the main and subsidiary branches of knowledge.
The role of classification the library

• Second, library classification organizes books materials on shelves by keeping same subjects together and placing related subjects nearby.

• It can show the distance between separate subjects by the distance between materials on those subjects on the library shelves.

• The library becomes a physical embodiment of a knowledge structure.
The role of classification the library

• Classification of library materials helps to arrange items in a logical order on library shelves,

• to provide a systematic display of bibliographic entries in printed catalogues, bibliographies and indexes.
The role of classification the library

• Classification is used for shelf ordering:
  – it assists in the provision of a subject arrangement of materials in physical storage.
  
  – provides a physical and linear subject arrangement in order to facilitate the library user’s ability to browse (among) the materials in the collection.
The role of classification the library

• Classified catalogues: used in arranging library catalogues

• For arranging bibliographies: classification is used for the arrangement of entries in a large number of published catalogues and bibliographies. Eg. BNB uses DC
The role of classification the library

• Classification is used as a tool for collection development:
  – facilitating the creation of specialized branch libraries
  – the generation of discipline-specific holdings lists.

• In online public access catalogues (OPACs), classification also serves as a direct retrieval function because class numbers can be used as access points in MARC records.
The role of classification the library

• When materials are classified or arranged by class order, it provides the following advantages:

• It helps in the easy location of materials and saves the time of the user and the information provider

• It enables information carriers to be inserted into organized group and it is a means by which information carriers may be retained in their formal relative position.
The role of classification the library

• It facilitates document display and the withdrawal of certain materials from the main stock for any special purpose

• It provides a control order of academic discipline which fosters direct and efficient searching at either catalogue or shelf for those users familiar with the classification system.
The role of classification the library

• Classification offers extensive opportunity for in-depth searching and helps in browsing.

• Classification helps the user to search in two directions:
  – from the general to the specific
  – and from the specific to the general
• Topic two:
• Limitations of library classification
Limitations of library classification

• Scattering of information resources:
  – No bibliographic classification assembles at one place all that a reader may require on a topic

• Classification is complex: it is more complex than alphabetical order or chronological order.
  – The user of information resource may find it difficult to understand classification.
Limitations of library classification

- The changing frontiers of knowledge make it difficult for classification to cope fully with changes in subjects.

- Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies are emerging and these make it difficult to apply systematic classification satisfactorily.