THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

SESSION 5 – HISTORY OF LIBRARY CLASSIFICATION

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Session Overview

• This session will help you to understand the different attempts that have been made to help organize library resources.

• Major contributions by specific individuals will be highlighted
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One: History of library classification
- Topic Two: Ancient and medieval schemes
- Topic Three: Schemes without philosophical basis
- Topic Four: 19th Century Schemes
Reading List

• Topic one:
• Information Carriers/ Materials
• Philosophers have been interested in the classification of knowledge for four to five thousand years.

• Early philosophers were the first to study the problem of classification of knowledge.

• Each school of philosophers made an attempt to provide a philosophical system of knowledge of its own (Kumar, 2006).
These philosophers were greatly interested in studying the mutual relations between ideas and also the sequence of these ideas.

This led to the creation of large number of schemes of knowledge classification which were mainly prepared for their mental satisfaction without considering its application for arrangement of documents in a useful sequence.
• Not much detail was provided to serve the purpose of libraries then.
• They came out with systems of thought in which the territories of knowledge were placed in relation to one another.
• These systems were called classification of knowledge, philosophical classification, classification of science or metaphysical classification.
• These schemes came mostly before the nineteenth(19th) Century.
Some of the earliest classification systems were developed by:

- Plato, who segregated thought into physics, ethics and logic.
- Aristotle also separated knowledge into ethic, productive art and theoretical.
- Later, a number of philosophers most of whom were scientist also came out with thirty different worthy schemes prior to that of Francis Bacon in 1605.
History Of Library Classification

• As librarians our major concern on these medieval schemes is in their ability to throw more light on the contemporary schemes used by libraries.

• The history of library classification can be studied in three lines or streams;
  – ancient and medieval schemes,
  – schemes without a philosophical basis
  – and schemes with such a philosophical basis.
• Topic two:

• ancient and medieval classification schemes
History of Library Classification

• Ancient classification system:
  • Stores for documents (libraries) as managed by librarians in recent times, were in the ancient era managed by priests, physicians and statesmen who ensured that these collections were well arranged and classified.
  • Review shows that in one Assyrian library, poetry was separated from other works.
• In another were found twenty-five tablets of which fourteen dealt with terrestrial and eleven with astronomical knowledge.

• The astronomical were sub-divided into such divisions as Venus, the Planets in general, the moon and the comets.
• John Willis Clark makes us aware that the clay tablets in the library of Assyrian ruler King Assurbanipal were stored under the following heads: History, Law, Science, Magic, Dogma and Legends.

• These were arranged carefully in series and in sequence.
Callimachus, who was a Greek scholar, poet and the librarian at the library of Alexandria was credited a pioneer in the preservation of knowledge in ancient literature.

He achieved this through the cataloguing and classifying of the books in the library.

He later published the result in the great work called *Pinakes or the Tablets.*
Medieval and Scholastic classification system:

The classification of Konrad Gesner in 1548 which is considered an interlude between the ancient and modern classification was noted as the first bibliographical scheme by Edward Edwards.

This scheme was published with its use in view rather than the sale of books.

Gesner divided knowledge into two categories which are **praeparantes** and **substantiales**

He also published the *Bibliotheca Universalis*, which was designed in three parts.
• Topic three:
• Classification Schemes without philosophical basis
History of Library Classification

Classification with no philosophical base; utilitarian system:

- This system of classification makes no references to any philosophical or scientific basis.
- It deals with the arrangement of fewer subjects in a convenient practical order.
- This scheme aimed at sorting one kind of book from another. Which makes it a less classification system in any general sense.
History Of Library Classification

• The French Classification System:
  • Most of the schemes including that of the British can be traced from this system.
  • This classification system was also called the scheme of Paris by booksellers.
  • The author of this scheme was unanimous however, some French opinion credit it to Ismail Bouilleau.
History of Library Classification

• Arrangement of subjects in this system was well outlined according to main subject, followed by division and sub division.

• It was later adopted by Jacques Charles Brunet.
History of Library Classification

The British Scheme of the British Museum:

• This system dates to about 1836-1838.
• It has a broad and practical scope but lacked refinement. It was purposely created for students and readers who visited the museum but not for the classification of books in libraries.
History of library Classification

• In summary, from the middle of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century to the middle of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, the decimal integer notation was used.

• The following classification schemes were also developed:

  ➢ The Brunet Scheme\textsuperscript{(1809)} was one such scheme based on the decimal integer notation.
• Topic three:
• 19\textsuperscript{th} Century schemes
History of Library Classification

- In 1876, when the first edition of Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC) came out, it adopted the decimal fraction notation and used the relative location system.

- Expansive classification (1893) was an enumerative classification, but used the mixed decimal fraction notation, which gave it broad base.
History of Library Classification

- Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) started coming out in parts from 1899. It is an almost faceted scheme.
- The subject schedules of the Library of Congress classification have been published since 1901.
- The first edition of Raganathan’s Colon Classification appeared in 1993. It broke new grounds, providing for a faceted approach.
- The first edition of Bibliographic classification appeared in 1935.
History of Library Classification

- In order to meet the growing demand of the universe of subjects, different types of library classification have evolved.
- Various stages of development have been seen from the purely enumerative classification scheme to freely-faceted scheme.