

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

SESSION 9 – LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

Lecturer: Ms. Patience Emefa Dzandza

Contact Information: pedzandza@ug.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

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Session Overview

- This session introduces you to another major classification scheme; the Library of Congress classification scheme by explaining the principles by which it is developed and its major features

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One : Overview and features of the LCC
- Topic Two : Advantages and disadvantages of LCC

Reading List

- Read Chapter 14 of Recommended Text – Chan, Lois Mai.
(2007) *Cataloging and classification: an introduction* Lanham,
Md. Scarecrow Press

- **Topic one:**
- Overview and features of the LCC

The Library of Congress Classification Scheme.

- In 1814, British soldiers burnt down the capitol of the United States together with 3,000 books.
- Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the U.S. offered his own library of 6,000 books to Congress to replace the books.
- With this library of 6,000 books came a classification scheme, which was the basis of library management to the end of the century.



The Library of Congress Classification Scheme

- The arrangement of the collection was according to size when it started.
- The breadth and coverage of the library increase when Ainsworth Spofford became a librarian in 1864.
- He set out to make the library a national library of the U.S. and towards the end of his 33 years as a librarian, a new building had been provided.



The Library of Congress Classification Scheme

- In 1897, it was decided to develop a new classification on the move to a new building.
- It was realized that Jefferson's classification was no longer adequate for a library of that size.
- The decision to reclassify the entire collection was made.
- The Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC) and the Cutter's Expansive Classification were critically examined.



The Library of Congress Classification Scheme

- The Dewey Decimal Classification was rejected because of its inflexibility.
- Cutter's outline of classes was therefore accepted and reworked by James Hanson(Head of cataloguing) and Charles Martel (Chief classifier)as at that time(FOSKETT,1996).
- It is well suited for large general libraries, especially those that has been established for research purposes including Universities and large libraries.



Main Classes Of the LCC.

- The outline of the scheme is based on Charles Ammi Cutter's Expansive Classification Scheme, which is a discipline-based scheme.
- The scheme makes use of alphabets A to Z with the exception of I,O,W,X and Y.
- The alphabetical notations used to show main classes permits many disciplines to be included.
- The system divides all knowledge into twenty-one basic classes.
- The main classes are divided into sub-classes which are further subdivided into form and subject aspects.



Main Classes of the LCC

- It assigns a single letter of alphabet to a main class and a combination of letters and numerals to a sub-class.
- Provisions are made for future through the use of decimal notation.
- The Library of Congress Classification is enumerative therefore bulky.



Main Classes of the LCC

- The outline of the main classes are given below:

A- General Works

B- Philosophy, Psychology and History

C- Auxiliary sciences of History

D- History: General and Old World

E-F- History: America

G- Geography, Maps, Anthropology, Recreation

H-Social Sciences

J- Political Science

K- Law

L- Education

M- Music

N- Fine Arts



Main Classes of the LCC

- P- Language and Literature
 - Q- Science
 - R- Medicine
 - S- Agriculture
 - T- Technology
 - U- Military Science
 - V- Naval Science
 - Z - Bibliography and Library Science
- The scheme is made up of three parts namely: the Schedule, the Notation and the Index.



Schedule of the Library of Congress Classification Scheme

- The main classes listed above is the **schedule of the scheme**. The schedule lists all subjects and their associated notations.
- It is the heart of the scheme because it determines subjects that are to be covered by the scheme and what relationships are to be reflected by the scheme.
- **The features of the schedule of the LCC are as follows:**
 - It is in a helpful order since it brings related subjects together aiding users to easily access materials on the shelves.



The schedule of the Library of Congress Classification Scheme

- Its coverage is comprehensive. This is because it includes all relevant topics and makes provision for future topics.
- The schedule is hospitable. In the sense that, it accommodates new subjects.



The Notation of the LCC

- The notation is the group of symbols which represents subjects in the schedule.
- The library of Congress Classification System uses mixed notation. That is, it combines the alphabet and Arabic numerals.
- The letters I, O, W, X and Y are not being used right now because they are being reserved for future expansion of the classification system.



Notation of the LCC.

- The scheme starts from general knowledge to the specific and theoretical aspect to the practical aspects of subjects.
- Main classes of the LCC are marked with a single letter: Example: H- Social Sciences,
K- Law
R-Medicine
- An added letter denotes principle subdivisions.



Notation of the LCC

Example:

H- Social Sciences HM- Sociology

K-Law KF- Law of the United States

R- Medicine RJ- Pediatrics



Notation of the LCC

- Classes are further sub-divided by the use of Arabic numerals beginning at one(1) in each sub-division and going as high as 9999 in some classes.

Example: ML- Literature of Music

ML1- Periodicals

ML12- Directories

ML29- Foundations



Notation of the LCC

- Within each class, the classification numbers proceed from the general to the more specific.
- Decimal letters and numbers may also be used to subdivide a subject alphabetically by subject or by form or by state or country.

Example: M - Music

M1627 - National Music

M1628 - National Music-United States

M1629.3 - Music for national holidays

M1629.3.F5- Fourth of July

M1629.3.T4- Thanksgiving Day



Notation of the LCC

- Within each class , classification proceeds from general to specific and the longest numbers belong to the most specialized subjects.
- Hospitality of the notation stands out. Thus, gaps are left in the notation to permit new subjects to be inserted.



The Index of the LCC

- The index serves as a guide to the location of subjects in the schedule.
- Each class has its own index.
- There is no single index to the whole classification scheme.
- The Library of Congress Subject Headings can be used as a general index since Library Of Congress numbers are used in there.



- Topic Two :
- Advantages and disadvantages of LCC

Strengths of the LCC

- Library of Congress Classification Scheme is enumerative and has no need for synthesis
- The notation is very compact and hospitable
- Each main class was developed by a subject specialist rather than a general classifier who cannot be an expert in every field.
- The Library of Congress Classification Scheme is a practical system which has proven to be satisfactory.
- Changes to the scheme are made readily available to the cataloguing community.



Weaknesses of the LCC

- It uses alphabetical arrangement instead of hierarchical.
- It is U.S. bias in emphasis and terminology.
- Very few subjects are treated as compounds.
- As a result of maintaining stability, parts of the scheme are obsolete.
- Keeping an up-to-date set of all the schedules is expensive.

