

LIBRARIES: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The Dewey Decimal Classification has become almost universal in British public libraries. In the 1890s, however, most public libraries were arranged using a system of main classes. Gradually this system gave way to more systematic classification schemes, such as Quinn-Brown, Brown's Adjustable, and others. This article examines the spread of these schemes, including the longest lived of the rivals to Dewey, Brown's Subject Classification, which survived into the late 1960s and is still in use in a few local studies collections.

We are so used to seeing the Dewey Decimal Classification in British public libraries, that it is easy to forget that in the early days a variety of other systems was used. The aim of this paper is to look at some of the alternatives, including the longest-lived of Dewey's rivals, the Subject Classification of James Duff Brown. Most comparisons of classification schemes deal with their practical features and discuss their advantages and disadvantages for particular subjects. This paper too will do that to some extent, but the principal focus is on which schemes were used, where, for how long, and, if possible, why.

The Public Libraries Act was passed in 1850, but take-up of the Act was slow. Only twenty-seven libraries were opened before 1868, and it was not until the Education Act of 1870 that an increase occurred.¹ By 1886 there were 125 rate-supported libraries.² In the early years there were very few attempts at systematic classification, the only notable one being that of Edward Edwards, Librarian of Manchester, who devised his own 'scheme of classification for a town library'.³ Apart from this, there was little interest in classification until the 1890s.

The nature of classification in the 1890s

It is convenient to start this survey with the 1890s for two reasons. First, it was during this decade that the long-established closed access system began to give way to open access. Under the closed access system the bookshelves were behind the counter, and readers had to look up each book they wanted in the catalogue and request it individually. For subject arrangement, all that existed was a system of very broad groupings, within which the books were simply numbered as they were acquired. Secondly, in 1897

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Thomas Greenwood first issued his *Library year book*, which gave a list of all the public libraries which had either opened or been given approval. Details for each library include the method of classification used, which means that we have a convenient source of this information.⁴ In some cases it appears that not even broad classes were used: Greenwood mentions eleven libraries whose arrangement is described as ‘alphabetical by authors’, but this is clearly unusual by this time.⁵

As it was impossible for readers to browse, the possibility of a more detailed system was probably never thought of. Indeed, one might question whether even such a broad classification as did exist was really necessary if the readers had no access to the shelves. However, it is a feature of librarians’ annual reports from the earliest days that some kind of subject breakdown is given for issue statistics. Thomas Hand gives the following subject headings for Leeds, for example:⁶

Theology and Philosophy
 History and Biography
 Voyages and Travels
 Arts, Sciences, Law, Politics, Commerce
 Fiction, Prose and Poetry
 Miscellaneous Literature
 Juvenile Literature

For this reason, if for nothing else, it was necessary to have some kind of broad division.

The term used in Greenwood to describe this broad arrangement is ‘numerical in main classes’, and it is by far the commonest system. What it meant in practice is clearly described by Quinn and Brown:

A familiar example is furnished by the class ‘Arts and Sciences’ frequently found in libraries where readers are not allowed access to the shelves. In it the books are arranged in order of accession, and numbered from one upwards. Thus, number five may be a treatise on botany, number six may be Ruskin’s *Art of England*, and number seven a book on coal mining.⁷

Brown, in typical forthright manner, condemned the system:

It is when you come to examine closely this shelf arrangement which is misnamed classification that its defects become obvious. The mere fact that it is a handy and easy method of *finding* books, which any child could understand, is no reason at all why it should be regarded as an absolute and perfect plan of *classing* and shelving. There is positively nothing very clever in gathering two or three thousand volumes on various sciences, arts or trades, calling them class D, and then proceeding to number them higgledy-piggledy from 1 onwards, and finally dump them on to the shelves in that order. This is not classification at all, but simply shelf numbering in its crudest form.⁸

A few years later the same system was described by Edward Green, Librarian of the Akroyd Park Branch of the Halifax Public Libraries, who reckoned that about 95% of public libraries operated in this way.⁹ A little later again, Edward McKnight, deploring the absence of detailed classification, gives some examples of the kinds of main classes used:¹⁰

A Theology and Philosophy
 B History and Biography
 C Voyages and Travels
 D Law and Politics

- E Science and Art
- F Fiction
- G General

'There is, of course,' he says, 'no further subdivision, and the system is little better than a purely numerical arrangement.' He concludes by making a plea for uniformity in classification, which would help assistants who move from one place to another. He was not the first to make such a plea: a few years earlier Andrew Keogh had suggested it as highly desirable.¹¹ It was re-echoed, too, by Richard W. Mould: he describes the situation at Southwark, where a library service was set up from an amalgamation of libraries in several different parishes, none of which used the same system.¹² As a further example he cites the classification schemes in four different (unnamed) London boroughs. They all use letters of the alphabet, but the order of the classes is different (Table 1: the abbreviations are his).¹³

He suggests that the Library Association should make recommendations for the adoption of a single scheme. At this time open access was being introduced in Southwark, and he includes many unattributed comments recommending Dewey.

Even if a uniform classification scheme had been agreed upon, this would not necessarily have ensured uniformity of classification in all libraries. As T. W. Lyster, the Librarian of the National Library of Ireland, points out:

It is vain to expect all the libraries which adopt a given classification to be arranged exactly like each other. The special circumstances of the library, the idiosyncrasies of the librarian and his staff must modify the arrangement of the books. One of the most delightful characteristics of libraries is the fact that they do differ from each other.¹⁴

There was obviously considerable scope for individual initiative and idiosyncrasy. So at Preston we find: 'Mr Bramwell, the Librarian, published a list of works added during

TABLE 1.

	Library no. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4
A	Theo., Ch. Hist.	Science	Theo., Philos. and Ecc. Hist.	Philos.
B	Biog., Hist.	Useful Arts	Hist., Biog., Corr.	Theology and Ecc. Hist.
C	Voy., Trav.	Fine Arts	Travel and Top.	Sociology
D	Law, Politics, Com.	Social Science	Arts, Sciences and Nat. Hist.	Language
E	Arts, Sciences and Educational wks.	Philos. and Rel.	Poetry and Drama	Nat. Hist.
F	Fiction	Hist. and Geog.	Prose Fiction	Science
G	Poetry	Biog.	Miscellaneous Lit.	Art
H	Miscellaneous	Lang. and Lit.	Juvenile wks.	Poetry and Drama
I	—	—	—	Hist., Biog. and Travel
J	Juvenile	—	—	Juvenile
K	—	Fiction	—	Fiction

1897–98, including a somewhat curious notation which at first we took to be a classification, but afterwards discovered represented author's initials and sizes. Thus, Hall Caine's "Christian" is marked CD, 553.¹⁵ Almost two decades later, in a review of a *List of books on chemistry and chemical technology* published by Huddersfield Public Library (no date given) the *Library World* was able to say 'we do not recognize the classification, but it is serviceable and minute'.¹⁶

The Quinn-Brown system

The open-access system was first adopted on 1 May 1894 at Clerkenwell, under the librarianship of James Duff Brown.¹⁷ Although it was eventually to become universal, its spread was initially slow. Nevertheless, open access made it important to classify books more closely, and if possible to ensure that the general order of subjects was in some way logical. Repeatedly in the following decades one finds references to the rearrangement of libraries on the open-access system being accompanied by reclassification.

Moreover, in the 1890s systematic classification schemes began to be applied also to closed-access libraries, which were still in the majority. Robertshaw states that it was in 1896 'or thereabouts' that systematic classification came into use, but he does not give a specific instance as evidence of this date.¹⁸ Quinn and Brown in 1895 describe the system which they devised, based on the principle of broad classes, but with rather more significant subdivision than had been previously adopted. It obviously owed much to the 'main classes' system, having ten such classes:

- A Religion and philosophy
- B History, travel and topography
- C Biography
- D Social science
- E Science
- F Fine and recreative arts
- G Useful arts
- H Language and literature
- J Poetry and the drama
- K Fiction
- L General works

The innovation was that each of these classes was subdivided further, using arabic numerals and small letters.¹⁹ Here is an example:

A. Religion and Philosophy:-

1. BIBLE. a — Texts. b — Commentaries. c — History. d — Aids.
2. CHURCH. a — History. b — Law. c — Liturgy. d — Rituals, by sects.
3. THEOLOGY. a — Natural Theology. b — Christianity (sermons arranged by authors). c — Non-Christian Systems. d — Mythology. e — Popular beliefs.
4. PHILOSOPHY. a — Schools. b — Mental Science. c — Logic. d — Moral Science.

Further subdivision was permitted by using a second occurrence of the arabic numeral and small letter.

This scheme, known as ‘Quinn-Brown’, was adopted by very few libraries. Henry Bond wrote from Lincoln Public Library in 1897 making some suggestions for improvement in the scheme, in particular that pairs of letters that might be confused in pronunciation (such as A and E, G and J) should not both be used, but there is no indication that the scheme was being used at Lincoln.²⁰ Only four libraries are mentioned by Greenwood in 1897: Bournemouth, Clerkenwell, Kettering and Kingston-upon-Thames.²¹ Clerkenwell was Brown’s own library, and at the others there was a personal connection with him. Charles Riddle, Librarian at Bournemouth, had been Brown’s deputy at Clerkenwell until 1894.²² The Librarian at Kettering, Kate E. Pierce, had had some library training at Clerkenwell.²³ The Librarian of Kingston, Benjamin Carter, also knew Brown, for he was another open-access pioneer and they were both members of the librarians’ dining club, the Pseudonyms.²⁴ The scheme was still in use at Bournemouth in 1909,²⁵ but by 1912 all these libraries had changed to other schemes.²⁶ On the other hand, by 1900 the four had been joined by Worcester (also using modified Dewey), where it was still in use in 1923/24, and by Rothwell, Northamptonshire. In the latter case it is plausible to suppose that it spread from Kettering, and it seems that it may have lingered on until at least 1937. The system in that year was described as ‘A to M’, and it may be that by that time its origins were no longer known to the staff working there.²⁷

The ‘Adjustable’ scheme

The spirit of classification was clearly abroad, and in 1898 James Duff Brown published the first British textbook on the subject, *Manual of library classification and shelf arrangement*. In it he included his ‘Adjustable’ scheme.²⁸ This used the letters A–L, but in a different order from the Quinn-Brown:

- A Sciences
- B Useful arts
- C Fine and recreative arts
- D Social and political science
- E Philosophy and religion
- F History and geography
- G Biography
- H Language and literature
- J Poetry and drama
- K Prose fiction
- L Miscellaneous

This time each class was subdivided by ordinal numerals, up to three digits, making 2250 divisions in all, and the scheme took its name from the fact that only the even numbers were allocated, thus allowing for future intercalations of new subjects. A specimen page (p. 109) is shown in Figure 1. In some places, such as the geographic division of England at F 696–780, or the classification of individual sports and games at C 496–656, the topics were arranged in alphabetical order and numbered accordingly.

Usage was very much higher than that of Quinn-Brown. Some version of it seems to have been adopted at St George-the-Martyr Public Library in 1899, though the reviewer

Tables of Adjustable Classification

B 178. Coal Mining	254. Printing. Societies and Periodicals
180. Iron "	256. General
182. Gold "	258. Special
184. Silver "	260. Binding. Periodicals
186. Lead "	262. General
188. Salt "	264. Special
190. Tin "	266. Publishing. Societies and Periodicals
192. Railway. Societies and Periodicals	268. General
194. General	270. Bookselling and Stationery. Periodicals
196. Special (including Tramways)	272. General
198. Steam and Gas. Societies and Periodicals	274. Chemical Trades. Societies and Periodicals
200. History	276. General
202. Theory	278. Chemicals (Acids, Alkalies, Drugs, etc.)
204. Systematic, General	280. Dyeing and Bleaching
206. Stationery Engines	282. Explosives, Fireworks. Fuel
208. Marine Engines	284. Perfumes
210. Locomotive Engines	286. Brewing
212. Gas Engines	288. Distilling
214. Other Engines	290. Wine-making
216. Metallurgy. Societies and Periodicals	292. Oils, Colours, etc.
218. General	294. Soap and Candles
220. Assaying	296. Varnishes, Glues, Rubber, etc.
222. Alloys	298. Clothing and Hosiery Trades
224. Casting and Founding	300. Coach and Carriage Building, General
226. Iron and Steel	302. Special
228. Gold	304. Motor-cars
230. Silver	306. Fisheries. Societies and Periodicals
232. Lead	308. History
234. Copper	310. General
236. Other	312. Special
238. Electro-Metallurgy	314. Food Production, General
240. M a n u f a c t u r e s and T r a d e s. Societies and Periodicals	316. Special
242. General	318. Gas. Societies and Periodicals
244. Book Production, General	320. History
246. Paper Manufacture. Societies and Periodicals	322. General
248. General	
250. Typefounding, General	
252. Typefounder's Catalogues	

FIGURE I Part of Brown's Adjustable Classification of 1898 (from James D. Brown, *Manual of library classification and shelf arrangement* (London: Library Supply Co., 1898) 109)

of their catalogue describes it as being 'considerably altered, if not almost turned upside down'.²⁹ It was quickly advertised in the *Library World* under the slogan 'Classify your library!', this in itself implying that classification was still unusual but was the coming thing. It is described as being the simplest classification in existence, its inexpensiveness being another advantage over Dewey: 'The English system costs 1s. 6d., the American costs 25s.' Eleven public libraries are named as using it, a figure which exactly agrees with information in the *British library year book*.³⁰ It is also probably a modification of this scheme that was used at Mile End Public Library.³¹ In the succeeding years leading up to the First World War there was a considerable increase, so that by 1912/13 we find over sixty libraries using the scheme. In 1907 Southwark is listed as using Dewey only, but by 1913 the reference library was classified by the Adjustable Scheme; if this information is accurate, it was a very unusual change.³² It is in relation to this scheme that we find the first of the geographical clusters of usage which seem to characterize the lesser-used schemes. Did it spread from Darwen to Accrington, and then to Bolton, Radcliffe and Rawtenstall? We can imagine the librarians visiting each other to see this latest thing

in library technique. (Bolton in 1897 had been described as using Edwards' fixed location system, presumably the system he introduced at Manchester.)

One of its interesting aspects is that in 1912, as well as fifty-seven public libraries, two colleges and five learned societies are listed as using the scheme.³³ Brown himself describes it as having had 'considerable vogue in British municipal libraries', and this was evidently true.³⁴ Why was it so successful? One reason must be that it was the first British system in the field. It must also have appealed because its notation was very similar to that of the 'main classes' system, that is, a letter followed by numbers, and it is clear that a similar number of 'main classes' was used. Its appearance would therefore have been very familiar and reassuring, perhaps unlike Dewey's system (see below), which was entirely numeric and probably looked overwhelmingly 'scientific'. The flexibility provided by the omission of the odd numbers would also still leave room for individuality and initiative, which seem to have been seen as desirable at this time. We can be certain that the odd numbers that were left for new subjects would have been used differently in each library. Gradually the scheme started to be replaced by Brown's Subject Classification (see below) and by Dewey. By 1937 it was still in use at Barnet (Hyde Institute), Darwen (lending only), Kettering (where the same Librarian, Kate Pierce, was still in post), Worcester (reference only), and probably Blackpool.³⁵ It survived the Second World War only at Blackpool, Darwen (lending) and the Medical Society of London.³⁶ Amazingly it is still in use at the Manx Museum Library.³⁷

The first uses of Dewey

The Dewey Decimal Classification actually predates the schemes mentioned so far, having been published in 1876. Its use in Britain was not at first very widespread, however. It seems likely that the first library in the British Isles to use Dewey was the National Library of Ireland, founded in 1877, where we are told that the Librarian, William Archer, 'accepted that splendid system of Decimal Notation which has really done away with the practical difficulties of classification by subject'.³⁸ For public libraries, however, one of Dewey's chief advocates was L. Stanley Jast. Writing in 1894 he describes Dewey as being 'widely adopted' in public libraries, and he gives some detail of its use at his own library, Peterborough, which he believed to be the only *lending* library to use it.³⁹ Later he stated that the first public library to use it in its lending department, and possibly the first at all, was Ashton-under-Lyne.⁴⁰ Jast also published a classified catalogue using Dewey order; again, he says he has only seen one other such, and that one 'lacked the index — *the* feature of features of the Dewey scheme — and was in other respects badly arranged'.⁴¹ It must be assumed that this again refers to Ashton-under-Lyne, because their printed catalogue of 1883 survives and is indeed printed in Dewey order. Three-digit numbers are used, and these are then followed by what appear to be running numbers within each class.⁴²

Jast concludes by suggesting that the Library Association should appoint a Commission to look at classification, and he refers to some letters in the *Daily Chronicle* on the subject. It was not for a dozen years that anything else is heard of this suggestion, but in 1907 Thomas Aldred, Borough Librarian of Hackney, proposed the formation of an advisory board on cataloguing and classification.⁴³ There is no evidence that such a commission was ever appointed.

Just felt that Dewey was superior to Quinn-Brown, even though that system had been specifically designed for open access libraries.⁴⁴ At this time he had had no experience of open access. Looking back later, he described the effect that Dewey had had on him at that time. He had just been appointed to Peterborough and had to organize the library from scratch:

The D.C. was like the opening of a new world. For the first time librarianship seemed to me a science and an art, even a fine art, for is it not one of the definitions (one of, oh! how many) of the fine arts that they reduce chaos to order.⁴⁵

On examination Just's assertion that Dewey was 'widely adopted' proves to be something of an overstatement. A note in *The Library* in 1896 says that it is 'coming strongly into favour', and gives three pieces of evidence: the International Conference of Bibliographers at Brussels had adopted it; Manchester Free Public Reference Library had been rearranged by it; and it was being urged upon the Royal Society.⁴⁶ Just, speaking in 1896, was able to say that the system had 'forged ahead', and was now being used in many public libraries in their reference departments.⁴⁷ In fact this seems to have been wishful thinking, for if we turn to *Greenwood's library year book* we find only thirteen libraries using Dewey: Aberdeen (reference), Carlisle, Chelsea ('numerical in main classes of Dewey system'), Chester (reference), Croydon (central), Lambeth (reference), Manchester (reference library 'being classified on the Dewey method'), Oldham, Peterborough, St George's Hanover Square (reference, 'chief divisions of Dewey system'), Wigan (modified), Workington, York (reference). (The references to 'main classes' and 'chief divisions' may mean either that just the ten classes 0, 1, and so on, up to 9, were used, rather than three digits, or that the main classes were adopted but using a letter notation, as seems to have been the case in Mould's library no. 4 referred to above.) Where was Ashton-under-Lyne? It is not shown in the year books as using Dewey again until 1912: is the information wrong, or did they change back from Dewey to 'numerical in main classes'? Open access was not introduced at Ashton until about 1907.⁴⁸

It is noteworthy in the list just given that in some cases Dewey was used in the reference library only. One might expect that at this time reference libraries were more likely to be open access than lending libraries, and that this might predispose the librarians to introduce a systematic classification scheme there, but there is not enough evidence in this small number to substantiate this. Of the libraries mentioned here as using Dewey in the reference library only, only Chester was entirely on open access.

Dewey in practice

The novelty of a systematic classification was such as to cause librarians to write in considerable detail about the ways in which they applied it. Just describes the system used at Peterborough, which involves having two labels ('tags', in the parlance of the day) on the spine of the book: the first for the Dewey number and the second for the accession number.⁴⁹ Within each Dewey number the books are shelved by accession number. He mentions that at one time at Peterborough only the first two digits of the Dewey number were used. Open access was not yet in operation, and the books had to be asked for by the public. To do this they quoted the accession number; the librarian

then consulted the indicator ledger to obtain the Dewey number, which was used to retrieve the book. Books of unusual sizes had their Dewey numbers prefixed c (octavo), q (quarto) or f (folio). Other prefixes were used for Juvenile, Reference, Ephemeræ and Pamphlets, culminating with X for 'a collection of books not issued without special permission'.

Clearly when open access came in it became unhelpful to include accession numbers on spine-labels, but nevertheless it was often necessary to include some kind of what we should now call a 'filing suffix'. By the time Jast wrote again about Dewey at Peterborough he had changed from using accession numbers to the system (which has since become normal in Britain) of using the first three letters (in capitals) of the author's name.⁵⁰ At Brighton too we hear that 'the first three letters of the author's name are added to the class mark'.⁵¹ The system was developed in a much more sophisticated way, perhaps unnecessarily so, by Jast, who a few years later described the system in use at Croydon, where he had moved in 1898.⁵² The various systems of sub-arrangement are described in detail by George Stephen, of St Pancras Public Libraries.⁵³ Of these, he says that although chronological order is the only scientific or natural one it is hardly suitable in a public library. He discusses various alphabetical systems, but recommends that in a library of 20,000 or 30,000 volumes nothing is necessary apart from the numbers themselves, the authors' names already existing on the books being sufficient to arrange them.

The spread of Dewey

We can trace the spread of Dewey little by little. For example, in 1900 it was in use at Waterloo-with-Seaforth:

Miss Edith G. Taylor, the Librarian, has issued a very carefully and intelligently compiled catalogue, arranged according to Dewey's classification. This is the first systematically classified catalogue compiled by a woman librarian we have seen issued in this country in connection with a Public Library, and it is not only an excellent example of its class, but fairly puts to shame many much more ambitious dictionary catalogues sent forth by male librarians with infinite blaring of trumpets.⁵⁴

At Bristol reference library Dewey was being introduced by 1900.⁵⁵

Thomas Aldred suggested that annotated lists of new books should be published, with Dewey classification symbols or some other standard classification symbol added.⁵⁶ This suggestion was indeed taken up, and from January 1901 the *Library World* started to include a new 'Monthly list of new books'. These are arranged according to the main classes of the Adjustable classification. The items are then subarranged by author rather than class-number, but they show both Adjustable and Dewey numbers for each entry. The *Library Association Record* also started listing 'Noteworthy books of the month': these lists were alphabetical, but each item had a Dewey number.⁵⁷ Later annual lists of 'The best books of 19-' were included, and these were sometimes arranged by Dewey, sometimes not.⁵⁸

Some librarians adopted an imaginative approach to helping readers use the new scheme. In 1905 the central library in Bromley (Kent) moved into a new Carnegie building, and it was classified by Dewey. 'To the usual keys to the classification an

atlas-key is being added. This consists of a large atlas, on the maps of which the class numbers in history and travel are being hand-printed in bold numbers.⁵⁹ In 1910 the scheme was described as 'modified to suit requirements'.⁶⁰

During the period leading up to the First World War the use of Dewey spread more quickly, mainly in large libraries and in the London metropolitan boroughs, such as Battersea, Dulwich, Finsbury, Fulham, Hammersmith, Hampstead, Holborn, Kensington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Paddington, South Hornsey, Southwark, St Pancras, Stoke Newington, Walthamstow, Westminster. Others to adopt it included Bradford, Bristol, Burnley, Eastbourne, Gateshead, Glasgow, Halifax, Leeds, Leicester, Luton, Newark, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northampton, Norwich, Southend-on-Sea, Worthing. In several places it was adopted in the reference library only: examples include Birkenhead, Blackpool, Bolton, Edinburgh, Kidderminster.⁶¹ In 1907 we find what is apparently the first use of Dewey by a British university library, namely Aberdeen.⁶²

Even if not widely used, it could be assumed that the scheme was well known. Anderton makes this assumption in 1905, saying that we can look at it as 'our legitimate common language, as our sufficing Volapük'.⁶³

Early modifications of Dewey

It is hardly to be expected that Dewey would be adopted and used unchanged, and it is likely that most early uses of it involved some adaptation. Sometimes this is explicitly stated, as, for example at Lewisham,⁶⁴ Glasgow⁶⁵ and Walthamstow,⁶⁶ and undoubtedly it happened widely elsewhere. Croydon is described in 1908 as using Dewey modified in the lending libraries and less modified in the reference library.⁶⁷ An unusual instance is Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where letters were added to the numbers in the catalogue for further subject division:

Thus, in 699, Car and Shipbuilding, the subject is divided into 699A, Car-Building, and 699B, Ship-Building. The latter is still further sub-divided by the use of Roman numerals, as 699Bviii., Speed of Ships.⁶⁸

It is clear, however, that these extensions were for the catalogue only, and were not added to the books themselves; they were merely a way of subdividing what would otherwise be large numbers of records.⁶⁹

In some cases the 'Brussels expansion', which later developed into the Universal Decimal Classification, is referred to, as at Cardiff in 1909.⁷⁰ Aberdeen University also made modifications based on 'the notation of the Institut International de Bibliographie'.⁷¹

Looking back after the scheme had been in use for thirty years Sayers, Sub-Librarian at Croydon, summarized the various criticisms of the scheme and said that 'every second librarian who uses the scheme has modified it in some way or other'.⁷² One of the most pervasive modifications, which persisted for many years, was that of bringing history and geography together. Anderton, discussing local collections, also says that there is a tendency to do this, and that some libraries use T for Topography and D for Description. 'Mr Brown has wisely recognized this in his Subject Classification.'⁷³ This kind of modification persisted for many years, and is mentioned by Corbett as late as 1963, though there is no mention of the ensuing shelf arrangement.⁷⁴

Criticisms of and suggested changes to Dewey

It was inevitable, particularly in a time when classification was in such a state of flux, that there would be many suggestions for improvement to Dewey. Lyster, predicting that 'in fifty years' all the world's libraries would be classified by an arrangement based on Dewey, suggests that it is all the more important to make improvements now. His suggestion regarding Literature is rather obscure, but in Philosophy he proposed having numbers for the main individual philosophers.⁷⁵ These suggestions, however, were countered by Jast, who supported Dewey's arrangement.⁷⁶

A problem which was early recognized and which is still with us today is the uneven allocation of numbers resulting from the arbitrary division of all knowledge into ten main groups. Franklin Barrett, Librarian of Fulham, draws attention to the fact that Mormonism and Mechanical engineering are equally represented by three-figure numbers, 298 and 621 respectively.⁷⁷

Arthur J. Hawkes published several proposals for improvement. In 800, for example, he suggested following Brown's Subject Classification (see below) and replacing the primary division by nationality with one by literary form. The reviewer of his pamphlet suggested that it would have been better if he had also incorporated 400 into the same scheme. In 900 the principle was to keep together everything relating to each country instead of splitting it up into history and geography.⁷⁸ A little later Hawkes published suggestions for 760-779.⁷⁹ T. Warburton Wright and H. Hamer of Bolton proposed that more detail should be provided in 790-799, but it is not clear whether their modification was actually in use at Bolton.⁸⁰

Sayers also makes several proposals, perhaps not serious, for the improvement of Dewey. Nevertheless, he says, it was a pioneer scheme, and as such was bound to be surpassed by others. We should, he says, remember that 'Dewey is responsible for the excellent order prevailing in many libraries today'.⁸¹ J. E. Walker, of Tottenham Public Libraries, made some proposals for a rearrangement of 100 and 200, and some more minor criticisms.⁸²

Ernest Savage was typically forthright, though unspecific, in his criticism of Dewey, saying that 'the day will come when with much labour and at great expense we must apply another classification in its place; indeed, until we rid ourselves of it I do not think classification will be improved in England'.⁸³ That day has not yet come, and it is unlikely that anyone would nowadays predict such a thing, but it is clearly a view that remained with Savage all his life. Much later he was to say that 'Dewey, strictly applied, fails to do this [put books on like subjects together] for one out of every three books'.⁸⁴

Occasionally one finds a librarian specifically advocating using Dewey as it stands. Such a one was William Gifford Hale of Truro Public Library, who seems to have run the library single-handed. His main purpose is to advocate the use of Dewey even in small libraries, which many others might think did not need such detail.⁸⁵

Persistence of older systems

Not all libraries adopted new schemes. Brentford in 1901 issued a classified catalogue, but it was based on eleven main classes.⁸⁶ Later, however, we find that the library has

been 'classified and re-catalogued',⁸⁷ so that in 1904 a classified catalogue was arranged according to the main headings of the Adjustable system.⁸⁸ Kilburn Public Library catalogue is described in 1905/06 as being arranged under eight divisions, with each division subarranged alphabetically.⁸⁹

Even some of the larger municipal libraries, which one might have expected to be the more likely to adopt one of the systematic schemes, persisted with an old system for some years. Liverpool, for example, is described as using 'main classes (specially sub-divided)' as late as 1910.⁹⁰ In some smaller libraries the 'numerical in main classes' system persisted until long after the First World War. As late as 1937 Arlecdon & Frizington, Cromarty, Davyhulme, Kilbirnie, Limerick and Middle Claydon are shown as using this method, as well as others having subject arrangements which are unclear. Dalton-in-Furness and Newtownards are still shown at that time as 'alphabetical'.⁹¹

On the other hand, many could see that the spread of open access would necessitate much better classification: 'The advance of classification is so marked, and has been so general during the past three or four years, that one has a certain amount of confidence in saying that within the next few years the old-fashioned, unsystematic and haphazard unclassified library will be practically extinct, and with its extinction and the rise of the classified library will go all kinds of barriers, including indicators.'⁹² And it was a sign of the times when in 1905 Islington advertised for a librarian who 'must have had at least seven years' experience in the management of libraries in which systematic classification is employed'.⁹³ The successful applicant was James Duff Brown.⁹⁴

The Expansive Classification

The Adjustable and Dewey were not, of course, the only schemes which came into use as a replacement for the broad arrangement in main classes: another was Cutter's 'Expansive Classification'.⁹⁵ When Brown published his *Manual of library economy* in 1903 these were the three systematic schemes to which he gave consideration.⁹⁶ An anonymous obituary of Cutter described the Expansive as:

the most philosophical, logical and closely co-ordinated system in existence. It suffers from a notation which renders it unsuitable for general public use, but in regard to completeness and consistency it is far in advance of the somewhat empirical Decimal system.⁹⁷

The question of the notation's making it unsuitable is raised also by Peddie, who says that the combination of letters and numbers 'makes it undesirable, for, at any rate, an open access library'.⁹⁸ He also compares it unfavourably with the flexibility of notation in Dewey. One difficulty was that it existed in several degrees of expansion, and that changing from one to another involved considerable alteration. Hulme mentions it, but states that it is 'being studied rather than followed in this country'.⁹⁹ It is described in some detail by Aldred in a paper originally read to a meeting of the Library Association in 1905.¹⁰⁰ Aldred was at this time Librarian of Southwark, and it does not appear that he had personally used the scheme; he states that the subject was chosen for him. It would have been in use in at least one of his libraries, because one of the parishes which became part of Southwark, St George-the-Martyr, was described as changing to it in 1900/01.¹⁰¹ He gives a very good account of its advantages, in particular the shorter

class-numbers which were obtained by using a mixture of letters and numbers, and he instances some Dewey numbers, which even by this time had reached four decimal places.

Sayers studied the scheme for his Professional Diploma of the Library Association and wrote a detailed account of it.¹⁰² He mentions that the scheme had 'few devotees in this country — the best known is probably Mr. Thomas Aldred of Hackney' (Aldred had by this time moved from Southwark to Hackney). How much of a devotee he was is unclear, because in 1913 Hackney library is described as using a 'modified combination of several systems'.¹⁰³

It is presumably the Expansive that is referred to at Southwark, where a class-list is described as being based on Cutter's classification.¹⁰⁴ The scheme does not loom large in the British literature, though there is a note in the *Library World* in 1912 about additions to it having been published.¹⁰⁵ By 1901 it was in use in the reference library at Bootle,¹⁰⁶ and by 1907 at Chelmsford,¹⁰⁷ but they changed to Dewey in 1929 and 1924 respectively.¹⁰⁸ It also makes an isolated appearance at Oadby in 1913.¹⁰⁹ There is a late reference at Chatham in 1937, but this is presumably an error for Adjustable, which appears there in earlier years.

Brown's Subject Classification

James Duff Brown's Adjustable scheme has already been mentioned. In 1904 Brown, by now Librarian of Finsbury, announced that he was producing a new classification, and called on librarians who had had difficulties in classifying obscure topics to get in touch with him.¹¹⁰ In 1906 he published the first edition of his Subject Classification.¹¹¹ It was reviewed by T. W. Lyster, Librarian of the National Library of Ireland, who said that, although it showed 'in several points superiority to Dewey', no one who was committed to Dewey should feel any need to change.¹¹² Savage on the other hand is fairly critical, though his criticism turns to praise of some of its aspects, and he says, 'the simplicity of the index and its extent, are strong inducements to librarians to apply the scheme to their libraries'.¹¹³ Interestingly, he was impressed enough by it to adopt it with modifications at Wallasey, where he was Librarian. He rearranged some of the classes and devised a scheme which remained in use for many years; writing in 1977 Ollé stated that it had continued until 'a few years ago', presumably at local government reorganization in 1974.¹¹⁴ In the local history collection it persists to this day.¹¹⁵

Although it never attained the level of usage of Dewey, the Subject Classification is the longest-lived scheme to achieve anything like widespread popularity, and I shall therefore look at it and its use in more detail.¹¹⁶ It is well known now that Dewey classifies chiefly by discipline, which means that there is hardly any subject in existence which would not find more than one place in the scheme, depending on the aspect from which it was being considered. At the time of which we are speaking, this would probably have been much less obvious than it is now, because the scheme was much simpler. Brown's system, by contrast, was essentially a 'one-place' scheme, the idea being that anyone interested in a subject would want all aspects of it, and that it was therefore more convenient if they were all brought together in one place. Unlike in other schemes, we therefore find F810 Horses followed closely by F814 Horse racing. A corollary of this,

which was also unusual, was that throughout the scheme the theory and practice of a subject were linked, so that C200 Heat was followed in due course by C231 Fire engines. A particularly unexpected result was that Music at C400 appears immediately after Acoustics at C300, and this led to some criticism. The order of the main classes is as follows:

A	Generalia
B–D	Physical sciences
E–F	Biological science
G–H	Ethnological and medical science
I	Economic biology and domestic arts
J–K	Philosophy and religion
L	Social and political science
M	Language and literature
N	Literary forms
O–W	History and geography
X	Biography

It is perhaps surprising that I and O, always liable to confusion with numerals, were used, when Y and Z were not, but the latter were intended for local usage by individual libraries. It is noticeable that the class History and geography occupies a large range of letters.

The notation was mixed: three digits were added after the initial capital letter (if they wished, libraries could add fewer digits). Brown also provided ‘categorical tables’, which allowed a separate series of numbers to be added to any of the main numbers to specify other aspects of the subject. These were a mixture of forms and other topics, and in some ways allowed almost any subject to be added to any other. They also provided flexibility in dealing with compound subjects, giving the classifier discretion to decide which aspect to put first. Though separated from the main number by a raised dot like a decimal point, they were not read decimally, as is shown in this example.¹¹⁷

B300	Architecture,	General
B300·1		Bibliography
B300·2		Dictionaries
B300·3		Textbooks, Systematic
B300·4		— Popular
B300·6		Societies
B300·7		Periodicals
B300·10		History

In some respects they are like what have now become the standard subdivisions in Dewey, but they include vastly more topics. Figure 2 shows a typical example page from the 1939 edition.

One particular criticism of the Subject Classification was that Class A Generalia included some surprisingly specific subjects, such as A400 Mathematics, A600 Graphic and plastic arts, A900 General science. On the other hand, the bringing together of history and geography, whose separation was deplored in Dewey, must have been very welcome. Some years later Dickie examined the arrangement of History and Geography

<i>SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION</i>	
.475	Zoology
.476	Animals, Game Reserves
.477	Vivisection
.478	Menageries
.479	Zoological Gardens
.480	Palaeo-Zoology
.481	Protozoa
.482	Metazoa
.483	Platyhelminthes
.484	Rotifera
.485	Echinoderma
.486	Mollusca
.487	Arthropoda
.488	Insects
.489	Chordata
.490	Vertebrates
.491	Fishes
.492	Aquaria
.493	Reptiles
.494	Birds, Bird Sanctuaries
.495	Mammalia
.496	Ethnology
.497	Ethnography
.498	Anthropometry
.499	Aborigines
.500	Genius
.501	National Character
.503	Love
.504	Marriage
.505	Women
.506	Children
.507	Diseases
.508	Diagnosis
.509	Palpation
.510	Pulse
.511	Auscultation
.512	Rigors
.513	Hypertrophy
.514	Oedema
.515	Atrophy
.516	Abscesses
.517	Hæmorrhage
.518	Gangrene
.519	Suppuration
.520	Cough
.521	Sputum
.522	Prognosis
.523	Clinics
.524	Inflammation
.525	Infection
.526	Contagion
.527	Immunity
.528	Hermaphrodites
.529	Euthanasia
.530	Debility
.531	Autopsy
.532	Materia Medica
.533	Pharmacy
.534	Medicines and Drugs
.535	Toxicology
.536	Therapeutics
.537	Balneology
.538	Hydrotherapy
.539	Massage
.540	Convalescence
.541	Medicine
.542	Doctors
.543	Quackery
.544	Surgery
.545	Amputation
.546	Excision
.547	Tapping
.548	Cautery
.549	Phlebotomy
.550	Dressings
.551	Bandages
.552	Splints
.553	Trusses
.554	Orthopædic Surgery
.555	Surgeons
.556	Ambulance
.557	Hospitals, Infirmaries
.558	Asylums
.559	Nursing
.560	Nurses
.561	Hygiene
.562	Public health
.563	Burial, Cremation
.564	Inquests
.565	Tombs
.566	Funerals
.567	Cemeteries
.568	Undertakers
.569	Physical Training
.570	Athletics
.571	Ambidexterity
.572	Gymnastics
.573	Callisthenics
.574	Mountaineering
.575	Acrobatics
.576	Games
.577	Field Sports

FIGURE 2 A page from the categorical tables of Brown's Subject Classification (from James Duff Brown, *Subject classification ...*, 3rd edn., rev. and enl. by James D. Stewart (London: Grafton, 1939) 42)

in Dewey and the Subject Classification, and commented particularly on this.¹¹⁸ A further useful feature was that the whole of O–W could be used for geographic subdivision of any other subject.

Looking at it now, the order of British places seems bizarre, but no criticism of this seems to appear in the contemporary literature:

- U000 Ireland
- U200 Wales
- U300 England
- V000 Scotland
- V500 United Kingdom
- V600 British Empire

The presence of a number for the British Empire in itself a great improvement on Dewey.

Sayers set out eight 'canons' of classification and assessed the Subject Classification against them.¹¹⁹ It fared well, though inevitably he disagreed with some placings, the

chief ones being the appearance of Education, Mathematics and Graphic and plastic arts in Generalia, and Music in Acoustics. He ends by saying 'where the Subject Classification will score is in its completeness, its careful indexing, its simplicity, and the ease with which it may be used'. This too is a reminder that the Subject Classification was more detailed than Dewey at the time, and must have included many subjects which in Dewey were unspecified. The majority of libraries, says Sayers, remained unclassified, but there was no doubt that in the next generation they would be universally classified.¹²⁰

One particular reason why the Subject Classification might have proved more popular than Dewey was that it was a British scheme, designed for British libraries. This is not to imply prejudice (though doubtless there was some), but we should remember that Dewey was and is an American scheme, and that it is only in comparatively recent years that much has been done to reduce the American bias inherent in it. Brown, himself very anti-American, made much better provision for British topics, especially for British places, than was possible in Dewey at the time.

Adoption of the Subject Classification

As an incentive (presumably) for libraries to use the Subject Classification, from July 1906 the *Library World* changed the classification of its lists of new books, now entitled 'The book selector', to this scheme, abandoning both the Adjustable and Dewey.¹²¹ Select bibliographies were also included, classified by the same scheme. Considering that Dewey was already making headway by this time, this can be seen as nothing other than favouritism, and is to be accounted for by the fact that Brown was himself the editor. Surprisingly 'The book selector' did not keep its classification long, because before the end of the volume the class-numbers have disappeared, though the arrangement is still according to the main classes of the Subject Classification. The reason for this is not stated, but the whole section disappeared entirely the following year.

In 1905 Brown had moved from Finsbury to Islington,¹²² and it is therefore not surprising to find that by 1909 this library was classified by the Subject Classification.¹²³ Another early adopter was Twickenham, where reclassification (from 'main classes') is described as having taken place.¹²⁴ Battersea Polytechnic provides an example — apparently the only one — of a non-public library user of the scheme, where it was in use by 1910 in the Edwin Tate Library.¹²⁵

In 1909/10 Brown devoted a series of articles to answering criticisms of the scheme, in preparation for the second edition which was published (just after his death) in 1914.¹²⁶ It is clear from these that the chief criticism was of the number of specific subjects included in class A Generalia. Needless to say, Brown had satisfactory rebuttals for all the criticisms. Wright wrote the only systematic comparison of Brown's scheme with Dewey, something which must have interested many librarians at the time. He states that thirty-six libraries were using it, a figure which is probably slightly exaggerated. The comparison is quite even-handed, and in places harshly critical of both schemes. For example, of Brown he says: 'If Music follows Acoustics, why should not Photography be placed with Optics; Painting with Pigments; or Sanitary Engineering with Hygiene?' It is impossible to tell which he will recommend until the final sentence, when Brown comes out the better scheme.¹²⁷ Wright, working at Sunderland, gave this paper as an address to

the North-Eastern Branch of the Library Assistants' Association. Would it be fanciful to see a connection between this and the fact that both Middlesbrough and Darlington had adopted the scheme by 1912?¹²⁸ In the case of Darlington, perhaps yes, for it is known that a prime mover in promoting the Subject Classification, along with open access, was the chairman of the library committee, Major Biggs. He visited both Bournemouth and Islington to examine open-access libraries, and was instrumental in the choice of Brown's scheme to accompany it. Miss Olive Clarke, from Islington, was appointed to assist in the work.¹²⁹ In West Hartlepool, too, classification was being carried out in 1912-1913 using Brown,¹³⁰ and the library reopened using the scheme following structural alterations for open access on 19 May 1915.¹³¹

Also by 1912 it was in use at Bournemouth, where the whole library had recently been reclassified; the scheme was described as 'the principal English scheme of library classification', a statement which must have owed something to the fact that Brown was the editor of the journal where it appeared.¹³² Its adoption here was doubtless due to Charles Riddle, already mentioned, who had taken up the post of Librarian at Bournemouth in June 1894 and introduced open access.¹³³ By 1912 too it had reached Rochdale, where new additions were being classified by it, and it was intended to reclassify all the lending libraries.¹³⁴ It was soon found necessary to introduce a local expansion for 1400, Textile manufactures, because of the amount of material held in this textile-making town.¹³⁵ The scheme remained in use there for many years (see below). Nevertheless it made slow headway, and the *Literary year-book* for 1913, which provides a useful summary of the state of classification at this time, lists only thirty-two libraries (all public) using it, as against 148 Dewey (several not public). In the introduction to his second edition in 1914 Brown himself more modestly states that 'a score of British Libraries' have adopted it.¹³⁶ In 1915 Henry Bond, Borough Librarian of Portsmouth, said that it was not yet in wide use and had not ousted Dewey.¹³⁷ We shall return to its subsequent history later.

Bond by this time could write that very few libraries were now unclassified, which shows what a great change had occurred in the few years since Sayers's comments. His view does not exactly agree with the information in the year books, and in this connection it is useful to look at the survey of the progress of classification in British public libraries provided by Robertshaw shortly after the War. Robertshaw used the *Libraries, museums and art galleries year book* and its predecessors to plot the growth of systematic classification, and produced Table 2.¹³⁸

TABLE 2.

	1897	1900	1909	1914
Public libraries in active operation	280	400	553	650
Public libraries with systematic classification generally	14	30	180	395
Public libraries with systematic classification in lending or reference departments only	16	20	25	35
Public libraries unclassified	250	350	348	220
Percentage of total unclassified	88	87½	63	33½

This is a useful summary, allowing us to see that after a slow start classification soon increased, so that at the outbreak of the First World War about two-thirds of libraries were classified.

Fletcher

Surprisingly Bond says nothing about the classification scheme used in his own library, Portsmouth. In 1894 William Fletcher, Librarian of Amherst College, Massachusetts, published a suggested classification for small libraries.¹³⁹ It is not clear whether he used this scheme in his own library, or if so what had happened to Dewey's scheme there. The scheme uses a simple sequence of numbers:

1-13	English and American literature. Universal literature
15-75	History
81-82	Biography
85-120	Voyages and travels. Geography
125-172	Sciences
179-240	Useful arts
245-277	Fine arts, etc.
279-350	Political and social
352-416	Philosophy and religion
421-456	Language and literature
461-468	Reference books and special classes

Apart from the progression Sciences — Useful arts — Fine arts, there is little resemblance to Dewey.

A note in *The Library* mentions this scheme as being 'almost unknown on this side the Atlantic',¹⁴⁰ and a very brief outline is published.¹⁴¹ The one British library to use it seems to have been Portsmouth.¹⁴² Why it was adopted there is unclear, but it replaced 'numerical in main classes', which had been the situation in 1900/01.¹⁴³ Later it was stated that: 'The classification had been almost entirely neglected on the shelves, and is now being carried out on Dewey.'¹⁴⁴ Similarly, when Henry Bond went there as Librarian in 1914 he was said to have found the library 'in a most backward condition, ill-classified or not at all'.¹⁴⁵ One can only assume from this that Fletcher's scheme was regarded as 'backward', or perhaps that it was no longer identified for what it was.

Size of library

It is sometimes stated that certain schemes are useful only in libraries of a particular size. For example, A. J. Philip, of Gravesend Public Library, states that 'the size of the lending library ... some 8,000 volumes, made the application of the Dewey or the Quinn-Brown Adjustable classification in their entirety inadvisable'.¹⁴⁶ The reason for this is unstated, but must be assumed to be related to the questionable need for a high degree of specificity in a relatively small collection. It has sometimes been stated that Brown's Subject Classification was never used in a large library authority,¹⁴⁷ but whether this was simply

accidental, and indeed whether it makes any difference, is debatable. Munford states that it 'served admirably' for stocks of up to 100,000, and that the Generalia provided no difficulty in practice.¹⁴⁸ It would certainly be interesting to know whether it was ever considered by any of the large city authorities such as Liverpool or Birmingham, and whether its history might then have been different.

Reclassification

Clearly, whatever systematic scheme was chosen, unless the library was new it was necessary to reclassify an existing stock. The practicalities of this were seldom written about in the early days, but Edward Green gives a good description of the process, which in his case took just over two years.¹⁴⁹ The whole of the stock, some 12,000 volumes, was reclassified before the books were moved into their new sequence. Such a lengthy procedure was possible because in this case the library was still closed access, which meant that the actual sequence was not apparent to the readers, and the whole process could be carried out without closing the library. How it would work in an open-access library is a different matter, which is nowhere described in detail, but we are told that the reclassification of Cork Free Library to Dewey took six years, during which period three class lists were published.¹⁵⁰ It is stated that Northampton considered reclassifying to Dewey but was unwilling to close the library for the necessary time; to which the *Library World* responded that much larger libraries had been reclassified without closing.¹⁵¹

Library of Congress

The Library of Congress began to publish its own scheme before the First World War, but it was many years before it was complete. The scheme was described in the *Library World*¹⁵² but, not surprisingly, few libraries in Britain adopted it. The first public library seems to have been Wigan, where it was adopted in the reference library by the Librarian, Arthur J. Hawkes, who had used it at the National Library of Wales (founded in 1909).¹⁵³ It remained in use at Wigan until local government reorganization in 1974, and the older stock in the local history collection is still classified by it.¹⁵⁴ The scheme was also used at Cardiff,¹⁵⁵ apparently for a few years from the early 1920s, and presumably under the retrospective influence of (Sir) John Ballinger who had been Chief Librarian there before moving to the National Library of Wales. When Savage moved from Coventry to Edinburgh in 1922 he was determined to use the scheme, again on the recommendation of Ballinger.¹⁵⁶ Edinburgh is now the only public library in Britain where the main stock is classified by LC, and even there the children's library uses Dewey.

The inter-war years

Sharp analysed the information given in the new *Libraries, museums and art galleries year book* for 1923 and found the following state of affairs:¹⁵⁷

No scheme stated	198 library systems
Dewey's Decimal	190
Brown's Subject	62
Main classes or numerical	40
Author and alphabetical	15
Brown's Adjustable	12
Cutter's Expansive	2
Library of Congress	2
Quinn-Brown	1
Miscellaneous	21

It is difficult to rely on any figures when looking at these year books. I make the total for Brown's Adjustable 18, for example. If these figures were correct, this period would probably represent the peak of usage of the Subject Classification at 62, but I think this figure is inflated by misattributions. On the face of it, almost 200 libraries still had no systematic classification at all, and this is a higher percentage than that quoted by Robertshaw for 1914. This seems unlikely, and Sharp suggests that some of these libraries probably did not answer the question on the return. Regarding the 'Miscellaneous' category, he quotes from some of the entries, 'which would be really funny if they were not pathetic'. The year book itself allows us to name the libraries concerned, which Sharp keeps anonymous: 'various' (Dudley), 'simple' (Normanton), 'no particular system has been followed' (Wick), and 'adaptation from general' (Hackney). Sharp concludes by saying that it is high time that every library was classified, and that it was futile to multiply schemes. He also notes that several libraries had different schemes in their reference and lending departments, and suggests that it would be more practical if they did not.

Following the Public Libraries Act of 1919 it became permissible for county councils to run library systems. In the early years it was sometimes assumed that detailed classification would not be necessary, and the first county library simply used broad groups based on letters of the alphabet.¹⁵⁸ Macleod writes at length on the value of classification and recommends Dewey for the new county libraries.¹⁵⁹ In most cases Dewey was indeed adopted, being by now the most widely used scheme elsewhere, and it was assumed to be the norm by the time the Library Association published its *County libraries manual* in 1935.¹⁶⁰

The report of the Board of Education's Public Libraries Committee in 1927 gives the following table (Table 3) for classification (the figures are for 1924).¹⁶¹

These figures are interesting because, although they show that Dewey is far and away the most popular scheme, the total of the alternatives actually slightly outnumbers it. Cutter-Brown is presumably a mistake for Quinn-Brown, which was still just in use (see above). It is also possible that some of those using 'a Subject system not defined as Brown's' were in fact using Brown's Subject Classification. As no libraries are named it is difficult to investigate further. The Committee admits that it cannot claim a high degree of accuracy for the table, which is presumably based on the results of their questionnaire. The county libraries, though included in the report, seem to be omitted from this table. There is no reference to the Adjustable classification, which we know from other sources was still in use, and this is presumably included in 'Miscellaneous'.

TABLE 3.

	County boroughs	Metropolitan boroughs	Municipal boroughs	Urban districts	Total
Dewey	56	18	54	52	180
Dewey modified	2	3	2	6	13
Brown (and modifications of Brown)	15	6	23	15	59
Cutter	3	—	1	—	4
Cutter-Brown	1	1	—	—	2
Library of Congress	2	1	—	—	3
Subject (not defined as Brown's Subject)	5	1	12	15	33
Miscellaneous	9	3	22	37	71

When the *Library Review* started publication in 1927 the lists of new books in each issue were accompanied by Dewey numbers, and one imagines that by this time there was no contest with any other scheme. It is stated, however, that 'The classification marks are given not to save the librarian any trouble in classifying, but as a shorthand indication of the scope of the book'.¹⁶² Gradually during the 1920s and 1930s more and more libraries abandoned their own schemes in favour of either Brown's Subject Classification or Dewey, the latter being very much in the majority.

By the mid-1930s it was very clear that Dewey had come to dominate the field in public libraries. 'Prudence and foresight' led W. A. Munford, on being appointed Librarian of Dover in 1934, to choose Dewey for his new library, even though all his previous experience had been with the Subject Classification.¹⁶³ Sayers provided an update of Sharp's survey, using the 1932 edition of the year book, and produced the following figures (Table 4).¹⁶⁴

He notes the increase in Dewey and the slight decline in Brown, while admitting that the figures for the latter are uncertain because of the terms used. He clearly favours

TABLE 4.

	Public libraries	Other libraries	Total
Dewey	333	43	376
Dewey modified	15	4	19
Brussels	1	—	1
Brown — Subject	48	2	50
Cutter	1	—	1
Library of Congress	3	3	6
Subject (which <i>may</i> be Brown but probably is not)	22	34	56
Main classes or alphabetical in main classes	38	14	52
Own scheme	23	28	51
Classified, but scheme not mentioned	25	147	172
Not stated	163	421	584

Dewey, which is 'complete within its limits, unsurpassed in notation, easy to apply and is kept reasonably up-to-date'.

In 1937 a new edition of the *Libraries, museums and art galleries year book* appeared, and J. L. Thornton published a similar survey based on it. Again the results must be approached with caution because of the inconsistency and incompleteness of the information given in the year book. He does not name individual libraries, but his results are as follows in Table 5.¹⁶⁵

Thornton was not helped by the fact that not every library in the year book has its classification scheme shown, and moreover the terminology used is very inconsistent, clearly being based solely on the wording of the returns. Not surprisingly, his totals do not agree with mine for the same year book. I make the total for Brown 41 public libraries; to this must be added some of the 19 (my figure, not 9) others described as 'Subject', because in some cases they can be shown from other sources to be definitely the Subject Classification. It is of course possible that some of the Browns actually refer to the Adjustable, which, if one excepts the probably erroneous reference at Chatham, by this time is mentioned by name at four libraries only (mentioned above).

It seems surprising that the non-standard schemes lingered on at this late date, and particularly that any of the county authorities were using them. Looking at the year book itself we find two county libraries shown as using 'Subject': Cardiganshire and Somersetshire. It seems highly unlikely that either of these refers to Brown's scheme, and much more probable that they were still using some rudimentary scheme drawn up in their early days. In 1932 Somersetshire is shown as using 'Subjects', which seems to imply something different from Brown.¹⁶⁶ The *Survey of libraries* carried out for the Library Association during 1936-1937 occasionally provides glimpses of classification practice, but it cannot always be reconciled with information in the year book, and this is not surprising because only selected libraries were visited. Interestingly, in the area defined as 'South Midlands and Central South Coast' there was one county library using 'the old "main classes"', and this is contrary to the details in the year book, which shows all the counties included in this chapter of the survey as using Dewey. According to the survey, of those county libraries using Dewey, two used only the first three figures and one only the first figure.¹⁶⁷

As for the Subject Classification, W. P. Preston, Librarian of Hinckley, writing in 1937, states that the number of libraries using it 'has considerably decreased during the

TABLE 5.

	Public	County	Univ./college	Other special	Total
Dewey	365	91	8	34	498
Dewey and another	15		1		16
Universal decimal				6	6
Brown	34			7	41
Subject (probably not Brown)	9	1	3	14	27
Library of Congress	1		3	5	9
Own scheme	3			5	8
Alphabetical	15	2		6	23
Cutter	1				1

last decade', though there was 'a good deal of strong if silent dissatisfaction with Dewey'.¹⁶⁸ Evidence from the *Libraries, museums and art galleries year book* seems to show that it reached its peak in the early 1930s with a usage of something in the region of fifty libraries. By this time it was almost unknown for a library which had adopted Dewey to change to the Subject Classification, the only apparent example being Hinckley, which had been using Dewey in 1932.¹⁶⁹ There was, however, a slight resurgence of interest, though evidently not of use, during the late 1930s because of the imminent publication of the revised edition. Preston hoped that the new edition might result in 'a wider use of this essentially British classification by British libraries'.¹⁷⁰ Because the scheme had been unrevised since the second edition of 1914, some users evidently worked hard at making their own revisions, and some of these were published.¹⁷¹

The third edition, by Brown's nephew J. D. Stewart, appeared in 1939, which clearly would not prove to be an auspicious time for libraries to consider reclassifying. There is no evidence that any library changed to the Subject Classification after this period.

The McColvin Report

In the early years of the Second World War Lionel McColvin, City Librarian of Westminster, compiled for the Library Association a report on the state of public libraries.¹⁷² His survey was based on a sample of libraries only, but is no doubt nevertheless representative of the situation at the time. He states that of a hundred urban libraries that he visited the lending departments of twelve were not classified 'beyond a very rough grouping of the books into main classes'.¹⁷³ Several reference departments were also unclassified. He suggests that a committee of the Library Association should produce a new classification scheme that could be used throughout the country. This would improve co-ordination and interavailability, and be less confusing to readers. He does not advocate the use of Dewey, which was 'a most unsatisfactory scheme, inadequate in many important sections and confusing and difficult to apply'. Alas, his suggestion came to nothing, and it is now inconceivable that anything will break the virtual monopoly of Dewey in public libraries.

After the war

The first post-war edition of the *Libraries, museums and art galleries year book* appeared in 1948, and already we can see changes in classification. Amazingly there are still several libraries using systems of their own: Deptford ('individual'), Larne ('alphabetical'), Middle Claydon ('numeric in subjects'), Nantwich ('alphabetical'), Newtownards ('alphabetical'). Even Tipton, which used Brown before the War, is now described as using 'main classes', but perhaps this reply was just due to ignorance. At Blackpool a new librarian, F. E. Cronshaw, was appointed in 1947, and he proposed reclassification to Dewey together with the setting up of a cataloguing department.¹⁷⁴ Darwen, the last public library still to be shown categorically as using the Adjustable scheme, started reclassification to Dewey in 1948.¹⁷⁵ Deptford finally started to classify new books by Dewey at the beginning of 1958, with reclassification proceeding over a predicted three or four years.¹⁷⁶

Lorna Paulin said that ‘public library readers who approach Dewey with confidence are rare’,¹⁷⁷ but she could have said the same of any classification scheme. Nevertheless, there was by this time no suggestion that it would be better to change to a different scheme, and Dewey inevitably continued to gain ground. A particular event of the 1950s was perhaps ultimately instrumental in establishing it even more firmly: in 1950 the first issue of the *British national bibliography* (*BNB*) appeared, and this was classified by Dewey. Clearly Dewey would not have been chosen if it had not already been in widespread use, but the choice must have forced librarians using it for selection to become reasonably familiar with it if they were not already, and it may have had some influence towards using Dewey to assist with the classification of new books. However, it was not until 1956 that the *BNB* started to issue printed cards for sale, and even when this happened it would be very difficult to find evidence that it affected local classification. While one might assume that the pressure to conform would have become stronger, the effect of this would have been mitigated by the modifications to Dewey that were soon to be made in-house by the *BNB*.

There was considerable correspondence in the mid-1950s about these modifications,¹⁷⁸ and in view of this it seems unlikely that *BNB* actually effected any standardization in practice. A survey carried out in 1964 found that 29% of respondents used *BNB* for classification (this figure was 37% for public libraries), but in most cases it was with modifications. Many libraries were still using the 14th edition (or older), when the latest was the 16th.¹⁷⁹

Writing of the local government reorganization of London in 1965, the Borough Librarian of Harrow stated that it seemed sensible to adopt the latest edition of Dewey (then the 17th) and to deviate as little as possible from the schedules. But he admitted that this was an administrator’s view, and a minority one: ‘most of the new authorities are interpreting Dewey very considerably to fit local requirements, as libraries have always done.’¹⁸⁰

The Subject Classification in the post-war years

After the war the Subject Classification’s reviser, James D. Stewart, who was Librarian of Bermondsey, wrote about the virtues of the scheme, recommending it to those unacquainted with it.¹⁸¹ The appearance of this article in an international journal must, however, have passed virtually unnoticed among Britain’s public librarians, and there is no evidence that it had any effect. It was too late, and those libraries still using it were already beginning to change. By 1948 Bilston, Brighouse, Denton, Hammersmith, Lytham, Penzance, Rowley Regis, St Anne’s-on-the-Sea and West Ham had changed to Dewey, and Rawtenstall had changed its reference library and Rochester its lending.¹⁸² At Islington reclassification to Dewey started about 1950 and continued for over thirty years because no additional staff were employed to do it.¹⁸³ Subsequent merger with Finsbury has meant that Islington’s (closed-access) local history collection is in two sequences, but the Islington part is still classified by Brown.

If anything, it is surprising that the scheme survived in use for as long as it did. There were no new editions after 1939 and no service of amendments and revisions. Only one further article was written about it, and that was a spoof interview with Brown.¹⁸⁴

Phillips writing in 1961 said that thirty-three libraries were still using it (of which six were changing), and it was clearly still thought worthy of considerable description in the textbooks.¹⁸⁵ Rochdale reclassified in 1962, closing for a fortnight for the rearrangement, which had presumably taken many months.¹⁸⁶ A survey conducted in the early 1960s found only twelve libraries using Brown, but two of these were in the process of changing, and five of the large libraries using it were in London.¹⁸⁷ The libraries are not named. St Albans seems to have reclassified in the mid-1960s, but they continued to use Brown until 2003 for the local studies collection.¹⁸⁸

Several London boroughs continued with it into the 1960s, but following the reorganization of 1965, which resulted in certain amalgamations of boroughs, it was inevitable that those which were still using it would have to conform if they were merged with a borough already using Dewey. Twickenham, for example, became part of Richmond-upon-Thames, and was therefore reclassified to Dewey. This was done by reclassifying the existing stock, while retaining the existing shelf arrangement, and classifying new stock by both schemes, with an eventual rearrangement by Dewey.¹⁸⁹ Likewise Ilford became part of the new borough of Redbridge, and by 1967 the Librarian was able to report that 'the new sequence is rapidly pushing the old Brown sequence into the background'.¹⁹⁰ In Southwark it was necessary to reclassify the stock from Bermondsey, which had used Brown, as well as to rationalize modifications of Dewey which had been made at Camberwell and Southwark.¹⁹¹ At Tower Hamlets, which combined Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney, the collections from Bethnal Green had to be reclassified from Brown, and those of Poplar from various old editions of Dewey.¹⁹² All in all, no borough using Brown remained unamalgamated with a Dewey borough.

Maltby's revision of Sayers's *Manual* in 1967 still included a substantial chapter on the scheme, though there must have been very few users by then and he noted that it seemed to be heading for extinction. He states that several had been considering reclassification, and mentions that Bury were recommended to change by a team of O & M (Organization & Methods) investigators who were looking at aspects of work in all the corporation departments. It was believed that it would be beneficial to use the same scheme as *BNB*.¹⁹³ At Darlington reclassification to Dewey was approved in April 1967, at which time it was stated that only nine libraries were still using the Subject Classification. To minimize the inconvenience, a time limit of two years was set for completion. Extra staff were taken on, supplemented by four library school students during the summer of 1967, and the library was closed for four days in February 1968 for reorganization.¹⁹⁴ Again the Local Studies Centre continued to use Brown, and still does so.¹⁹⁵ In the year 1965/66 Bournemouth realized that eventually they would need to change, for reasons of local cooperation and possible boundary changes, and began to add Dewey numbers as well as Brown to the new non-fiction stock. By 1970 several of their branches had been converted, and change-over at others was imminent.¹⁹⁶ The change prompted a somewhat pained letter to the *Library Association Record* from one Miss P. M. Hand, 'late of Ealing School of Librarianship', who deplored 'the American and alien scheme of M. K. Dewey', and laid the blame for its demise on past librarians who had not kept Brown's scheme up to date.¹⁹⁷

In 1972 a survey of the use of Dewey in Britain showed 744 libraries using Dewey, as against one Brown, but although an overall breakdown of kinds of library is given this is not correlated with the use of different classifications.¹⁹⁸ It seems very unlikely that any

library was still using Brown at this time, and it appears from other evidence that this reference is probably to Wallasey, which was still using Savage's scheme adapted from Brown.¹⁹⁹

The foregoing would seem to imply that the Subject Classification is now completely defunct, but this is not quite the case. As already mentioned, part of Islington's closed-access local history collection is still classified by it, and my enquiries have shown that Canterbury, Darlington and Margate are in the same position. In the case of Margate the scheme in use was compiled in 1927 with a view to being used elsewhere in Kent, and was intended to be used with Brown's categorical tables.²⁰⁰ Undoubtedly the reason why the scheme has been retained in these local studies collections is that Brown allows something that Dewey has never done, namely putting the place first and subdividing it by topic using the categorical tables. I should like to hope that there are other such collections, and that the Subject Classification will never completely die.

As for Dewey, no matter how good a replacement scheme might be developed — and the new Bliss Bibliographic Classification is undoubtedly one — the prospect of wholesale reclassification ever taking place now seems to be entirely out the question, and it is impossible to foresee the scheme being superseded.

¹ Thomas Kelly, *A history of public libraries in Great Britain: 1845–1975* (London: Library Association, 1977) 23.

² Kelly, *A history of public libraries*, 25.

³ See Edward Edwards, *Memoirs of libraries: including a handbook of library economy* 2 (London: Trübner, 1859) 815–31.

⁴ Thomas Greenwood (ed.), *Greenwood's library year book* (London: Cassell, 1897). Despite its title this was never annual. The next edition was entitled *British library year book* (1900–1901); it later became *Libraries, museums and art galleries year book* (1910–1911 onwards) ('LMAGYB' in these notes) and is now the *Libraries directory*. For some years from 1955, unfortunately, information about classification was included only in very exceptional cases.

⁵ *Greenwood's library year book* (1897). The libraries are Carnarvon, Dukinfield, Elgin, Heywood, Leicester, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Sowerby Bridge, Tarves, Westminster and Wrexham.

⁶ Thomas W. Hand, 'The Leeds Public Free Libraries', *Library Association Record* 6 (1904) 14–15.

⁷ J. Henry Quinn and James D. Brown, 'Classification of books for libraries in which readers are allowed access to the shelves', *The Library* 7 (1895) 75.

⁸ James D. Brown, 'Classification and cataloguing', *The Library* 9 (1897) 146.

⁹ Edward Green, 'The old order and the new', *Library World* 4 (1901/02) 38–41.

¹⁰ Edward McKnight, 'A weak point in library administration: the absence of exact classification in British public libraries', *Library Association Record* 8 (1906) 292.

¹¹ *Library World* 1 (1898) 57–58, in review of James Duff Brown's *Manual of library classification and shelf arrangement* (1898).

¹² Richard W. Mould, 'Wanted — a classification: a plea for uniformity', *Library Association Record* 8 (1906) 127–47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁴ T. W. Lyster, 'Observations on shelf-classification', *Library Association Record* 2 (1900) 406.

¹⁵ *Library World* 1 (1898) 8, referring to the annual report of Preston Free Public Library 1898. There is no further reference to this, and therefore no enlightenment.

¹⁶ *Library World* 20 (1917/18) 273.

¹⁷ W. A. Munford, *James Duff Brown 1862–1914: portrait of a library pioneer* (London: Library Association, 1968) 32.

¹⁸ Wilfrid Robertshaw, 'Systematic classification in British public libraries', *Library World* 25 (1922/23) 227–31. A. W. Robertson delivered a paper on the subject in 1897: Classification in public libraries, *Transactions and proceedings of the Second International Library Conference ...* (London: Printed for members of the Conference, 1898) 89–92.

¹⁹ See James Duff Brown, *Library classification and cataloguing* (London: Grafton, 1912) 48–49; J. Henry Quinn and James D. Brown, 'Classification of books for libraries in which readers are allowed access to the shelves', *The Library* 7 (1895) 75–82.

- ²⁰ Quinn-Brown classification (letter), *The Library* 8 (1897) 131–32.
- ²¹ *Greenwood's library year-book* (1897).
- ²² Munford, James Duff Brown, 31.
- ²³ *Greenwood's library year book* (1897) 159.
- ²⁴ Munford, James Duff Brown, 57.
- ²⁵ 'Notable libraries: Bournemouth', *Library World* 11 (1908/09) 463–66.
- ²⁶ 'Adjustable' at Finsbury, Kettering and Kingston (Clerkenwell had become part of the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury in 1900); Subject Classification at Bournemouth. Quinn-Brown does not feature at all in the list in *The literary year-book and bookman's directory* 16 (London: Routledge, 1912).
- ²⁷ LMAGYB.
- ²⁸ It was published in Brown's *Manual of library classification and shelf arrangement* (London: Library Supply Co., 1898) and separately.
- ²⁹ *Library World* 1 (1898/99) 249, review of catalogue issued 1899.
- ³⁰ Classify your library! (advertisement), *Library World* 3 (1900/01). The eleven (from the *Year book*) were: Bexley, Brighouse, Clerkenwell, Colne, Darwen, Hornsey, Kingston-upon-Thames, Longton, Newington (London), Southport and St George's-in-the-East (London).
- ³¹ *Library World* 4 (1901/02) 297.
- ³² *The literary year-book and bookman's directory* 1907 (London: Routledge, 1907); *The literary year-book, illustrators' directory and bookman's guide* 17 (London: John Ouseley, 1913).
- ³³ *Literary year-book* (1912) 571.
- ³⁴ Brown, *Library classification and cataloguing*, 75.
- ³⁵ LMAGYB (1937). Blackpool appears as using 'Brown', but it appears from other evidence that it was the Adjustable. See, 'Practical classification by schemes other than Dewey', *North Western Newsletter* 6 (1950) 5.
- ³⁶ LMAGYB (1948).
- ³⁷ It is used in *A Manx notebook: an electronic compendium of matters past and present*, edited by Frances Coakley, which refers to the Manx Museum Library. See http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/catalog/cub_idx.htm (accessed 17 August 2004).
- ³⁸ T. W. Lyster, 'Some observations on the Dewey notation and classification, as applied to the arrangement of books on library shelves', *The Library* 8 (1896) 482.
- ³⁹ L. Stanley Jast, 'Classification in public libraries; with special reference to the Dewey Decimal System', *The Library* 7 (1895) 169–78.
- ⁴⁰ L. Stanley Jast, 'Classification in British public libraries', *Library Association Record* 5 (1903) 175.
- ⁴¹ Jast, 'Classification in public libraries' (1895) 174.
- ⁴² I am indebted to staff of the Tameside Local Studies Library for assistance in locating this catalogue, which is now held at Stalybridge.
- ⁴³ Thomas Aldred, 'The formation of an advisory board on cataloguing and classification', *Library Association Record* 9 (1907) 167–72.
- ⁴⁴ L. Stanley Jast, 'The Dewey Classification in the reference library: and in an open lending library', *The Library* 8 (1896) 349.
- ⁴⁵ L. Stanley Jast, 'Recollections of Melvil Dewey', *Library Review* 4 (1933/34) 285.
- ⁴⁶ *The Library* 8 (1896) 379–80.
- ⁴⁷ Jast, 'Dewey Classification in the reference library', 336.
- ⁴⁸ *Library World* 10 (1907/08) 424 refers to the first year of open access.
- ⁴⁹ Jast, 'Classification in public libraries'.
- ⁵⁰ Jast, 'Dewey Classification in the reference library', 344.
- ⁵¹ *Library World* 7 (1904/05) 337.
- ⁵² L. Stanley Jast, 'A new book number', *Library World* 3 (1900/01) 120–23 and 150–52.
- ⁵³ Geo. A. Stephen, 'The application of exact classification to shelf arrangement, II', *Library World* 11 (1908/09) 325–31.
- ⁵⁴ *Library World* 3 (1900/01) 21. Also mentioned in *Library Association Record* 3 (1901) 48.
- ⁵⁵ Norris Matthews, 'A survey of Bristol public libraries', *Library Association Record* 2 (1900) 649.
- ⁵⁶ Letter, *Library World* 3 (1900/01) 112.
- ⁵⁷ *Library Association Record* 3 (1901) 49–52, and later.
- ⁵⁸ See for example *Library Association Record* 6 (1904) 94–97, which uses Dewey, and *Library Association Record* 7 (1905) 113–33, which does not.
- ⁵⁹ *Library World* 8 (1905/06) 75.
- ⁶⁰ Notable libraries: Bromley, *Library World* 12 (1909/10) 349–53.
- ⁶¹ See *Library World*, passim and LMAGYB.
- ⁶² Review of Aberdeen University Library's *Subject catalogue of science and law*, 1906, *Library Association Record* 9 (1907) 257.

- ⁶³ Basil Anderton, 'Books brought into relation with one another, and made operative. Part II', *Library Association Record* 7 (1905) 458.
- ⁶⁴ *Library World* 4 (1901/02) 316.
- ⁶⁵ *Library World* 5 (1902/03) 81 ('somewhat modified').
- ⁶⁶ *The Library* 10 (1908) 464.
- ⁶⁷ 'Notable libraries: Croydon', *Library World* 11 (1908/09) pp. 222–28.
- ⁶⁸ *Library World* 6 (1903/04) 298, in a review of the catalogue of books in the useful arts. The same catalogue is noticed in the *Library Association Record* 6 (1904) 57, but there is no comment there on the extensions.
- ⁶⁹ Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *Catalogue of books on the useful arts ... in the Central Library* (Newcastle: Andrew Dickson, 1903).
- ⁷⁰ *The Library* 11 (1909) 273, in a review of a catalogue of books on photography.
- ⁷¹ *Library World* 9 (1906/07) 445.
- ⁷² W. C. Berwick Sayers, 'The Dewey Decimal Classification after thirty years', *Library Association Record* 12 (1910) 329.
- ⁷³ Basil Anderton, 'On planning a printed catalogue of local literature', *Library Association Record* 15 (1913) 545.
- ⁷⁴ Edmund V. Corbett, *An introduction to librarianship*, 2nd edn. (London: James Clarke, 1963) 279–80.
- ⁷⁵ Lyster, 'Observations on the Dewey notation', 487–88.
- ⁷⁶ L. Stanley Jast, 'The Dewey Classification, and some recent criticism', *The Library* 9 (1897) 340–45.
- ⁷⁷ Franklin T. Barrett, 'A book-notation and an indicator', *Library World* 4 (1901/02) 284.
- ⁷⁸ *Library World* 14 (1911/12), review of Arthur J. Hawkes, *Suggestions towards a constructional revision of the Dewey Classification* (1911) 240.
- ⁷⁹ *Library World* 15 (1912/13) 210, note of Arthur J. Hawkes, *A revision and elaboration of Dewey's 760–779 schedule* (date not given).
- ⁸⁰ T. Warburton Wright and H. Hamer, 'An emendation of the Decimal Classification 790–799', *Library World* 17 (1914/15) 232–33.
- ⁸¹ Sayers, 'Dewey Decimal Classification after thirty years', 330.
- ⁸² J. E. Walker, 'Suggested re-arrangement of the Dewey classes 100 and 200', *Library World* 16 (1913/14) 163–65; 'Some thoughts on Dewey', *Library World* 17 (1914/15) 23–26.
- ⁸³ 'Mr. Sayers on classification', *Library World* 18 (1915/16) 113. (A review of W. C. B. Sayers, *Canons of classification*.)
- ⁸⁴ Ernest A. Savage, *A librarian's memories: portraits and reflections* (London: Grafton, 1952) 104.
- ⁸⁵ Wm. Gifford Hale, 'The Decimal Classification as applied to small libraries', *Library World* 16 (1913/14) 263–68, 311–16.
- ⁸⁶ *Library World* 3 (1900/01) 320; *Library Association Record* 7 (1904) 674.
- ⁸⁷ *Library World* 8 (1905/06) 8, referring to 15th and 16th annual reports, 1903–1905.
- ⁸⁸ *Library World* 7 (1904/05) 151.
- ⁸⁹ *Library World* 8 (1904/05) 243.
- ⁹⁰ 'Notable libraries: Liverpool', *Library World* 12 (1909/10) 261–72.
- ⁹¹ *LMAGYB* (1937).
- ⁹² I. G. B., 'The progress of open access', *Library World* 8 (1905/06) 177–79. I have so far been unable to identify this writer.
- ⁹³ See comment in *Library World* 7 (1904/05) 154.
- ⁹⁴ Munford, *James Duff Brown*, 65.
- ⁹⁵ Charles A. Cutter, *Expansive classification* (Boston: C. A. Cutter, 1891–1893).
- ⁹⁶ James Duff Brown, *Manual of library economy* (London: Scott, Greenwood, 1903) 254–64.
- ⁹⁷ *Library World* 6 (1903/04) 135–36.
- ⁹⁸ Robt. Alec. Peddie, 'The Decimal Classification and relative location', *The Library* 9 (1897) 347.
- ⁹⁹ E. Wyndham Hulme, 'Librarians' aids', *Library Association Record* 5 (1903) 124.
- ¹⁰⁰ Thomas Aldred, 'The Expansive Classification', *Library Association Record* 7 (1905) 207–19.
- ¹⁰¹ *British library year book 1900/01*.
- ¹⁰² W. C. Berwick Sayers, 'The Expansive Classification', *Library Association Record* 11 (1909) 99–117.
- ¹⁰³ *The literary year-book, illustrators' directory and bookman's guide* 17 (London: John Ouseley, 1913) 109.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Library World* 4 (1901/02) 331, in a review of supplementary class-list for the Passmore Edwards Public Library, Borough Road.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Library World* 15 (1912/13) 86.
- ¹⁰⁶ *British library year book 1900/01*.
- ¹⁰⁷ *The literary year-book and bookman's directory 1907* (London: Routledge, 1907).
- ¹⁰⁸ See R. Conrad Winke, 'The contracting world of Cutter's Expansive classification', *Library Resources and Technical Services* 48 (2004) 122–29.
- ¹⁰⁹ *The literary year-book, illustrators' directory and bookman's guide* 17 (London: John Ouseley, 1913).
- ¹¹⁰ Classification problems (letter), *Library World* 6 (1903/04) 316.

- ¹¹¹ James Duff Brown, *Subject classification: with tables, indexes, etc., for the sub-division of subjects* (London: Library Supply Co., 1906).
- ¹¹² *Library Association Record* 8 (1906) 384–86.
- ¹¹³ Ernest A. Savage, 'The Subject Classification', *Library World* 9 (1906/07) 48–55.
- ¹¹⁴ James G. Ollé, *Ernest A. Savage, librarian extraordinary* (London: Library Association, 1977) 59–60.
- ¹¹⁵ Personal communication from Jennifer Done, Information Officer (email, 22 July 2004).
- ¹¹⁶ Since this paper was completed, a further article has appeared: Claire Beghtol, 'Exploring new approaches to the organization of knowledge: the Subject Classification of James Duff Brown', *Library Trends* 52 (2004) 702–18.
- ¹¹⁷ Taken from James Duff Brown, *Manual of library economy*, 2nd edn. (London: Library Supply Co., 1907) 198.
- ¹¹⁸ William M. Dickie, 'A critical examination of the arrangement of history and geography in the Dewey Decimal and Subject Classifications', *Library World* 25 (1922/23) 401–07.
- ¹¹⁹ W. C. Berwick Sayers, 'Some canons of classification applied to the Subject Classification', *Library Association Record* 9 (1907) 425–42.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 425.
- ¹²¹ First shown in *Library World* (which for this year only bore the additional words *and book selector*) 9 (1906/07) 17–28.
- ¹²² Munford, *James Duff Brown*, 65.
- ¹²³ 'Notable libraries: Islington', *Library World* 11 (1908/09) 303–08.
- ¹²⁴ *Library World* 10 (1907/08), referring to report of 1906/07.
- ¹²⁵ 'The Edwin Tate Library at the Battersea Polytechnic', *Library World* 13 (1910/11) 144–45.
- ¹²⁶ James Duff Brown, 'The Subject Classification: criticisms, revisions and adjustments', *Library World* 12 (1909/10) 41–45, 81–86, 121–24, 153–60. The 2nd edition was published in 1914: *Subject classification: with tables, indexes, etc., for the subdivision of subjects* (London: Grafton, 1914).
- ¹²⁷ Richard Wright, 'Brown versus Dewey', *Library Assistant* 153 (October 1910) 227–37.
- ¹²⁸ 'Middlesbrough Public Library', *Library World* 15 (1912/13) 105–07.
- ¹²⁹ Valerie Redhead, *Darlington Public Library: a centenary history, 1885–1985* (Darlington: WEA, 1985) 19–20.
- ¹³⁰ *Library World* 16 (1913/14) 62.
- ¹³¹ *Library World* 17 (1914/15) 375.
- ¹³² *Library World* 15 (1912/13) 299.
- ¹³³ Munford, *James Duff Brown*, 31.
- ¹³⁴ *Library World* 15 (1912/13) 29.
- ¹³⁵ F. Helliwell, 'Subject Classification: I400 expanded', *Library World* 16 (1913/14) 308–10.
- ¹³⁶ Brown, *Subject classification* 2nd edn. [5].
- ¹³⁷ Henry Bond, 'Some features of recent library practice in Great Britain', *Library Association Record* 17 (1915) 236.
- ¹³⁸ Robertshaw, 'Systematic classification', 230.
- ¹³⁹ William I. Fletcher, *Public libraries in America* (Boston [Mass.]: Roberts, 1894) 121–37.
- ¹⁴⁰ 'The library assistant's corner', *The Library* 9 (1897) 210.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 206.
- ¹⁴² 'Notable libraries: Portsmouth', *Library World* 11 (1908/09) 263–65.
- ¹⁴³ *British library year book 1900/01*.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Library World* 18 (1915/16) 305.
- ¹⁴⁵ Obituary of Henry Bond, *Library World* 20 (1917/18) 48.
- ¹⁴⁶ A. J. Philip, 'A card class register', *Library World* 7 (1904/05) 323–25.
- ¹⁴⁷ See, for example, W. C. Berwick Sayers, *A manual of classification for librarians*, 4th edn., revised Arthur Maltby (London: Deutsch, 1967) 167.
- ¹⁴⁸ Munford, *James Duff Brown*, 71.
- ¹⁴⁹ Edward Green, 'On the improvement of old libraries', *Library World* 6 (1903/04) 204–07.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Library World* 16 (1913/14) 145.
- ¹⁵¹ *Library World* 20 (1917/18) 189.
- ¹⁵² Reginald Ernest Smither, 'The Library of Congress classification', *Library World* 16 (1913/14) 130–36.
- ¹⁵³ Review of *Wigan Public Libraries forty-fourth annual report, 1921–1922*, *Library World* 25 (1922/23) 262–63.
- ¹⁵⁴ Information from Christine Watts, Heritage Officer, 22 July 2004.
- ¹⁵⁵ Public Libraries Committee, *Report on public libraries in England and Wales* (London: HMSO, 1927) (Cmd. 2868) 192.
- ¹⁵⁶ Savage, *Librarian's memories*, 103.
- ¹⁵⁷ Henry A. Sharp, 'The present position of classification in British public libraries', *Library World* 26 (1923/24) 349–51.
- ¹⁵⁸ E. J. Carnell, *County libraries: retrospect and forecast* (London: Grafton, 1938) 121–22. It is not clear which library this was, or whether it had any connection with a bizarre alphabetical scheme proposed for rural libraries by Robinson Smith: see *Library World* 23 (1920/21) 541–42. This involved choosing subject terms to fit the letters of the alphabet, and was ridiculed in subsequent correspondence.

- ¹⁵⁹ Robert D. Macleod, *County rural libraries: their policy and organisation* (London: Grafton, 1923) 163–69.
- ¹⁶⁰ *County libraries manual ...*, edited by A. S. Cooke (London: Library Association, 1935) 71.
- ¹⁶¹ Public Libraries Committee, *Report*, 329.
- ¹⁶² *Library Review* 1 (1927/28) 71.
- ¹⁶³ Munford, *James Duff Brown*, vii.
- ¹⁶⁴ W. C. Berwick Sayers, ‘What classifications?’, *Library World* 35 (1932/33) 157–58.
- ¹⁶⁵ John Leonard Thornton, ‘Classification in Great Britain: a brief survey’, *Library World* 40 (1937/38) 155–56.
- ¹⁶⁶ *LMAGYB* (1932).
- ¹⁶⁷ Lionel R. McColvin (ed.), *A survey of libraries: reports on a survey made by the Library Association during 1936–1937* (London: Library Association, 1938) 123.
- ¹⁶⁸ W. P. Preston, ‘The Subject Classification and the future’, *Library World* 40 (1937/38) 31.
- ¹⁶⁹ The library was classified by Dewey in 1929 on the appointment of the first professional librarian, William P. Preston; see H. F. Warren, *A history of the Hinckley Public Library 1888–1938* (Hinckley, 1938) 20. I am indebted to Phillip Lindley of Hinckley Library for a copy of this history; there appears to be no record of any reclassification to Brown’s scheme having taken place, and yet, if the year books are to be believed, it must have happened, to be followed later by reclassification back to Dewey. It seems very unlikely that Preston would have written as he did without detailed practical knowledge of the Subject Classification.
- ¹⁷⁰ Preston, ‘Subject Classification and the future’, 32.
- ¹⁷¹ See, for example, ‘Brown’s Subject Classification — new edition’, *Library World* 40 (1937/38) 3–4, which includes a list of proposed revisions produced by George F. Vale, of Bethnal Green Public Libraries, and ‘Brown’s Subject Classification — revision’, *ibid.*, 62–63, referring to Bournemouth.
- ¹⁷² Lionel R. McColvin, *The public library system of Great Britain: a report on its present condition with proposals for post-war reorganization* (London: Library Association, 1942).
- ¹⁷³ McColvin, *Public library system*, 84.
- ¹⁷⁴ Information from Tony Sharkey, Blackpool Central Library (email, 11 August 2004), quoting from the *Annual report of the Libraries and Art Gallery Committee* (1947–1948).
- ¹⁷⁵ Darwen Public Library, *Borough Librarian’s monthly report*, May 1948. I am indebted to the staff of Darwen Library for making me a copy of the relevant page.
- ¹⁷⁶ Borough Librarian’s report to the Public Libraries Committee, 5 December 1957. I have not been able to find later references.
- ¹⁷⁷ Lorna Paulin, ‘Cataloguing in county libraries’, in: Mary Piggott (ed.), *Cataloguing principles and practice: an inquiry* (London: Library Association, 1954) 108.
- ¹⁷⁸ See, for example, *Library Association Record* 57 (1955) 78–81 and 498.
- ¹⁷⁹ ‘The British National Bibliography questionnaire’, *Library Association Record* 67 (1965) 52–57.
- ¹⁸⁰ W. S. H. Ashmore, ‘Cataloguing, classification and book provision in the new London boroughs’, *The Assistant Librarian* 59:4 (1966) 76.
- ¹⁸¹ James D. Stewart, ‘Brown’s “Subject Classification”’, *Review of Documentation* 17 (1950) 56–63.
- ¹⁸² *LMAGYB* (1948).
- ¹⁸³ Information from Roy Hidson, who worked at Islington from 1955 (28 July 2004).
- ¹⁸⁴ M. Hutton, ‘Browned off’, *Librarian and Book World* 50 (1961) 69–71.
- ¹⁸⁵ W. Howard Phillips, *A primer of book classification*, 5th edn. (London: Association of Assistant Librarians, 1961) 110. The source of his figure 33 is quoted as ‘Library Association’s records’, but I have been unable to trace these. J. Mills, *A modern outline of library classification* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1960) gives a figure of ‘some 40 libraries’ (p. 103). Both these figures are perhaps rather high.
- ¹⁸⁶ Personal communication from Julian Jefferson, Local Studies Access Officer (email, 22 July 2004).
- ¹⁸⁷ Keith Davison, *Classification practice in Britain: report on a survey of classification opinion and practice in Great Britain, with particular reference to the Dewey Decimal Classification* (London: Library Association, 1966) 8–9. The date of the survey is not clear, but it was certainly before late 1964 and therefore represented the London situation prior to any borough amalgamations.
- ¹⁸⁸ Personal inspection of reference stock, February 2005. Email communication from June Kavanagh, reader development librarian, 2 March 2005.
- ¹⁸⁹ K. R. McColvin, ‘Administration: a general review’, *The Assistant Librarian* 59:4 (1966) 72.
- ¹⁹⁰ London Borough of Redbridge, *Library services, April 1965–March 1967* (Ilford: Central Library, [1967]) 3.
- ¹⁹¹ London Borough of Southwark, *Report of the Public Libraries, South London Art Gallery & the Cuming Museum, April 1965–March 1967* ([London: Borough of Southwark, 1967]) 14.
- ¹⁹² F. Bennett, ‘Mergers and catalogues’, *Library Association Record* 70 (1968) 100–02.
- ¹⁹³ W. C. Berwick Sayers, *A manual of classification for librarians*, 4th edn., rev. Arthur Maltby (London: Deutsch, 1967) 176.
- ¹⁹⁴ Redhead, *Darlington Public Library*, 73.
- ¹⁹⁵ Information from Kimberley Bennett, Local Studies Librarian (email, 10 August 2004).

¹⁹⁶ See Bournemouth Public Libraries, *The Borough Librarian's report for the year ended 31 March 1966*, 5 and ... 1970, 8.

¹⁹⁷ P. M. Hand, A plea for Brown (letter), *Library Association Record* 71 (1969) 311.

¹⁹⁸ Russell Sweeney, 'Dewey in Britain', *Catalogue and Index* 30 (Summer 1973) 4-6, 15.

¹⁹⁹ Arthur Maltby and Eric Hunter, 'Readers and classification', *New Library World* 73 (1971/72) 411-13, includes a reference to 'an adapted form of Brown's Subject Classification' and from the list of libraries surveyed this must be Wallasey.

²⁰⁰ Information from Kevan Atkins, Team Librarian at Margate (email, 13 August 2004).