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Dewey Today: An Analysis of Recent Editions

Despite the title of this paper, I do not intend to make a detailed analysis of the subject content of recent editions of the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (DDC). Instead, I shall concentrate on certain classificatory changes within the system, and try to show how these changes seem to spring in part from changes in the editorial development of editions 16-18 of DDC,¹ and in the administrative and editorial frameworks within which the editions appear.

In my own research on classification systems, I have become increasingly fascinated by the ways in which the classification systems themselves are determined, shaped and changed by the people who devise and revise them. As has been said many times, the first fourteen editions followed in a largely unbroken line, with some relocations, but basically with expansions. Then came the abortive fifteenth edition.² That this edition was recognized as a disaster became obvious with the appearance of the revised fifteenth edition in the following year.³ This was followed by the contractual arrangement between the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation (LPCEF) and the Library of Congress (LC) that LC should be responsible for the editorial work on future editions, for the length of the contracts. On January 4, 1954, LC began the editorial work, with David Haykin as editor. Benjamin Custer succeeded him as editor in 1956.

DDC-16 seemed to continue the straight-line pattern of DDC-1-14—but did it really? Lucile Morsch, chairman of the Decimal Classification Editorial

Policy Committee (DCEPC) wrote in the foreword to the edition: "Responsibility for editorial policy rests with the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee, a joint committee of the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, the American Library Association, and the Library of Congress."⁴ While various advisory committees had previously existed, the formal professional responsibility by the editor, an LC staff member, and the advisory function of the DCEPC for editorial policy influenced the intellectual and classificatory changes in DDC-16.

In his introduction, Custer recognized that:

There is no avoiding the fact that, historically, the DC is based upon a Protestant Anglo-Saxon culture. . . . Yet the editors have considered that they had a prime responsibility for furnishing a satisfactory and useful classification for the libraries of the United States, and solution to the problem of a classification universally acceptable has not yet been found. In spite of this, the present edition has made a start toward providing more useful expansions of topics in which libraries of cultures other than Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, and Western are likely to excel.⁵

Problems of the lengthy notation were recognized, "particularly in those areas where whole new disciplines of science have sprung up since the original pattern was established." In addition, the degree of expansion for all subjects was linked without explicit reference to E. Wyndham Hulme's principle of literary warrant: "the editors . . . have been guided by the principle that the existence in American libraries of more than twenty titles which would fall in a given number raises a presumption in favor of subdivision."⁶

The admission that DDC was not a perfect classification system, that it did indeed reveal national, religious and cultural biases, and that it could be revised according to principles introduced an entirely new aspect for editorial policy and evolutionary development. Yet, the old conflicting DDC principles of the "traditional policy of integrity of numbers" and "the philosophy of keeping pace with knowledge"⁷ continued, as they continue still.

While facet analysis and faceted classifications were being widely discussed even in North America by 1958, after the founding in 1952 of the Classification Research Group (CRG) in Great Britain, there is little direct evidence of their impact on the DDC-16—yet the seeds are there. They were there, of course, in Melvil Dewey's identification of literature being divided by language, literary form, time period and form division in the 800s; in his organization of the 400 class by language, and then by the linguistic problem. He recognized "facets," although of course he could not anticipate Ranganathan's terminology.

DDC-16 permitted a few new facets in a way which had not been evident in earlier editions, through Dewey's "divide like" mechanism. For

example, 616.1-616.998 *specific diseases*, could be divided like 616.07-616.092, largely by what we might now term the "energy" or "action" facet; 331.382-331.3898 *child and youth labor* could be divided by the major industries in 620-698; and the former one-page *form divisions*⁸ had burgeoned to five pages.

Why the very word "facet" should be frightening or suspect to American librarians, I do not know. As we have seen, the concept was known to Dewey and was practiced unknowingly by the use of the "divide like" technique by every classifier. A citation order was used which was inherent, for example, in some of the directional notes in the 800 class (e.g., 821.002-.09 *form divisions, and types of poetry*, from which the classifier was directed to a model in 811.002-.09, where he found additional notes). Nevertheless, the same citation order by directional notes was omitted completely in other parts of the 800 class (e.g., 823 *English fiction*, where he found permission for division only by a time period).

By the seventeenth edition, the editor was firmly stating the aims of a classification system and recognizing the existence of other systems, even of the suspect Colon Classification:

the development of an integrated plan . . . will provide systematically for the tens and hundreds of thousands of subjects on which books are and may be written in this age of multiversity and specialization. . . . It requires the intense efforts of specialists in librarianship, in subject classification, and in the countless disciplines of which the world of knowledge is composed. . . . For this reason, librarians have generally found it advantageous to follow, with local adaptations where necessary to meet local needs, one or another of the commonly used book classification systems, among the best known of which are Bliss's Bibliographic Classification, Ranganathan's Colon Classification, Dewey's Decimal Classification, Cutter's Expansive Classification, the Library of Congress Classification, Brown's Subject Classification, and the Universal Decimal Classification.⁹

Due to the apparent timidity of the editor, the DCEPC or the Forest Press, the dread word *facet* is cautiously and seldom used: "Only the word 'facet' is of recent origin; Dewey understood the concept." Custer stated:

Division of a given subject in DC by more than one principle, or characteristic, is as old as the first edition. . . . It is true that editions prior to the present one did not always recognize and make provision for division by more than one principle, even when the literature would seem to have warranted it; and when they did make such provision, they did not always clearly differentiate among the various principles.

Examples of Application of Several Facets

<u>BASIC SUBJECT</u>		<u>PRIMARY FACET</u>	
617.1	Wounds and injuries	Add to each subdivision *;	
.14	*Wounds	001-008	Standard subdivisions
.15	Fractures	01-09	General aspects
.16	*Dislocations	Divide like 617.01-617.09	
<u>SECONDARY FACET</u>		<u>TERTIARY FACET</u>	
617	Surgery	616.075	Diagnoses
.01	Complications and sequelae	.0755	Clinical diagnosis
.02	Special texts	.0758	Microscopy in diagnosis
.07	Surgical pathology		
.073	Surgical nursing		
.075	Diagnoses		
	Divide like 616.075		

Table 1. Classification of "Clinical Diagnosis in the Surgical Treatment of Wounds."

Source: Dewey, Melvil. *Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index*. 17th ed. rev. Lake Placid Club, N.Y., Forest Press, 1952, Vol. 2, pp. 679-700.

To clarify these issues and further to emphasize subject integrity, this edition makes many new provisions for division by more than one principle.¹⁰

Probably the most obvious new facet was the Area Table by which the place facet (with *area* broadly defined to include *socioeconomic regions and groups and persons*)¹¹ was detached from the 900 class from which it had previously been derived by "divide like." Less obvious facets occurred, with or without specific editorial mention. One such example, not mentioned by the editor, occurred in the 610s (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows examples from the schedules to illustrate the various principles or characteristics of division and the resultant problems. It is possible to achieve a precise notation for the complex concept *clinical diagnosis in the surgical treatment of wounds*: 617.160755. The citation order in which the facets are to be combined is clearly stated in the directions at each step. The use of a facet indicator—the retention of the "0"—is clearly indicated in the example, e.g., *emergency surgery* 026, which accompanies the "divide like" instructions for 01-09 General Aspects. The facets are not clear facets; thus, in 617 *complications* and *special texts* jostle coordinately with *surgical pathology*, and the hierarchical relationships are confused in the subordination of *surgical nursing* (a less preferred option) and *diagnoses* to

<i>Women</i>	
331.4	Women
.42	331.42-.43 Specific elements
.43	Wages
.48	Married women
.481	In specific occupations
	Service and professional
	Divide like 011-999
.482-.489	Other
	Divide like 620-690

Table 2. Table for 331.4.

Source: Dewey, Melvil, *Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index*. 17th ed. Vol. 1. Lake Placid Club, N.Y., Forest Press, 1965-67, p. 296.

surgical pathology. The action *clinical diagnosis* and the agent *microscopy in diagnosis* are confusing coordinates, subordinate to *diagnoses*. Nevertheless, the seventeenth edition made a valiant effort in regard to facets.

When the same topic is examined in DDC-18, it is apparent that some of the facets have been sorted out, at least by the use of umbrella headings, e.g., 02 *special topics* and 05-09 *other general aspects* in the facet under 617 *surgery and related topics*, but that the confusion under 617.07 *surgical pathology* and under the extension of 616.075 *diagnoses and prognoses* remains.¹²

Another example of a different type, cited by the editor in his discussion of facets, occurred in DDC-17 at 331.3-.6 *special classes of workers*.¹³ The special classes were grouped as *specific age groups*, *women*, *substandard wage earners*, and *other groups*. The foci or concepts within the primary facets were normally divided by a secondary facet of occupation, by dividing like 620-690 or 001-999 as appropriate. However 331.62 *immigrants* had a secondary geographic facet by the use of the area notations for the place of origin, plus "0" as a facet indicator, plus a tertiary geographic facet using the area notations for the place reached. In contrast, 331.63 *native-born nonindigenous ethnic groups* achieved an ethnic facet by dividing like 420-490, plus the "0" facet indicator, plus a geographic facet using the area notations for the place reached. Within these four groups the citation order for synthesizing the facets was usually clearly stated, and a table of precedence for the groups at the beginning of the section enabled the classifier to avoid cross-classification for a topic such as "youthful convicts who are married women" (see Table 2).

The basic subject group of 331.4 *women*, however, revealed the inability to identify facets which would be relevant to the whole section of 331.3-6. It should be noted that there was a group for *women* but not for *men*, so that a basic or facet division by sex was not possible. Because the facets and their synthesis had not been seriously considered as a problem, how did the classifier cope with topics like "salaries of married women lawyers"? This problem has been solved in DDC-18 by a directional note which requires the use of 331.43 without synthesis, so that the facts of sex and marital status become the deciding factors, rather than the wages, salaries, professions and occupations.¹⁴ With some justification, some members of the DCEPC hurled charges of a sexist bias at the DDC on April 26, 1974;¹⁵ there was subsequently found to be little evidence of sexism, however, and both the editor and the DCEPC will undoubtedly be watchful in examining the subdivisions and terminology of future draft schedules.

The clear facet groups in 331.3 and 331.5-6 in DDC-17 made the deficiencies of 331.4 only too clear in their lack of subject and hierarchical integrity, which were the much-vaunted principles of DDC-17. While true facet analysis—the ability to synthesize concepts and notation—and a specified citation order may seem academically remote from the needs of working classifiers, their absence throughout much of the DDC intellectual structure makes the subject anomalies, faulty hierarchies, and resulting cross-classification militate against sound consistent classification for the users' needs in shelf groupings and detailed specific classified catalogs, bibliographies and files designed for information retrieval.

Many examples of facets from the schedules and tables of DDC-17 might be cited. However, another interesting idea advanced by the editor showed the extent of influence on him of the exponents of faceted classification, spearheaded by the Classification Research Group (CRG). In his discussion of the possible use of DDC in detailed classified files, by the full use of the permitted synthesis, the editor discussed the need for the "0" as the facet indicator, and for the avoidance of cross-classification by various precedence formulae and citation orders. He concluded with the advice: "Class the subject by (1) kinds, (2) parts, (3) materials, (4) properties, (5) processes within it, (6) operations upon it, (7) agents."¹⁶ Anyone who is familiar with the work of the CRG will recognize this as a CRG modification and expansion of Ranganathan's famous PMEST facet formula. This is almost an exact quotation from a statement on citation order in the *Universal Decimal Classification* (UDC) by Jack Mills, one of the early and most influential members of the CRG.¹⁷ The wording is expanded and examples are added in DDC-18, but the CRG's citation order continued unchanged.

The CRG and faceted-school infiltrators went virtually unnoticed by U.S. librarians. Among the many reviews of DDC-17 I have examined, two

critics directly commented on the new faceted influence; one was a British librarian and one was a Canadian.¹⁸ Other reviewers went on to praise the Area Table, damn the index, approve the attempts to remove the Protestant Anglo-Saxon bias, and essentially deplore the attempt to return to "subject integrity."¹⁹ The objections were not to subject and hierarchical integrity *per se*, but to the relocation of topics by which the integrity must be achieved, and thus to the possible re-use of numbers before the end of the 25-year starvation period which existed at that time. Looking back ten years later on the reviews, I believe that the criticism was not of the principle of subject integrity, nor even of the principle of "keeping pace with knowledge." Rather, it sprang from the hard, pragmatic realization that all the centralized and commercial services, from LC on down, would use the relocations, reassigned numbers and full notational extent of the synthesis resulting from the obvious and hidden facets, and thus that libraries faced devastating problems in their open-stack collections.

The desire by librarians for notations shorter than those provided in the LC bibliographic services, coupled with the inability of unsupervised technicians (and possibly of librarians) to cut the notation at meaningful points in the notational string, led LC in 1967 to record in all the LC bibliographic apparatus, centrally assigned DDC numbers in segments by the use of prime marks. If libraries could not cope with the precise notational synthesis which specialized libraries needed for their information retrieval, the Decimal Classification Division (DCD) of LC had to do the work for them. Within individual libraries, in the battle between economy (in time, and therefore in money) and specific subject analysis and retrieval, economy won.

The facets and their frightening results which had lurked implicitly in DDC-17 were glaringly obvious in DDC-18. One curious anomaly is that the word *facet*, which had appeared so cautiously in the editor's introduction to DDC-17, seemed to disappear completely from the pages of DDC-18. It is not in the preface, the editor's introduction, the glossary, nor in the Index to Preface, Editor's Introduction, and Glossary.²⁰ However, the number of faceted auxiliary tables increased from two to seven. As a result, completely faceted synthesis was practiced by librarians with apparent ease in applying Table 4, "Subdivisions of Individual Languages," to asterisked topics in 420-499; and it was attempted with considerably more difficulty by the application of the complex Table 3, "Subdivisions of Individual Literatures," to asterisked topics in 810-890.²¹

The faceted auxiliary tables for "Racial, Ethnic, National Groups" (Table 5) and "Persons" (Table 7)²² were particularly welcomed by librarians. Their use obviated the need for difficult and often inappropriate synthesis by dividing like 420-499, 001-999, or 920.1-928.9, or for the forced acceptance of an imprecise notation because there was no opportunity for synthesis.

These tables have proved so popular that there have been numerous requests to the editor that their use be permitted with any appropriate number in the schedules. Such a synthesis has long been permitted for geographic areas by the use of standard subdivision -09 plus the area number, where the area number may not be added directly. The same kinds of facet indicators are needed for tables 5 and 7, and the editor and the DCEPC struggled for several meetings, between April 26, 1973 and April 26, 1974, to find suitable facet indicators as leads-in with the shortest possible resulting notation. After several unsuccessful attempts, the DCEPC recommended to the Forest Press Committee (FPC) the use of the -088 s.s. for Table 7 and -089 s.s. for Table 5.²³ Screams of anguish over lengthy notation may perhaps be tempered to mild whimpers or even faint expressions of pleasure when the synthesis is desired for one's own local needs.

Other less noticeable facets appeared in the schedules of DDC-18 by combinations of notations from several tables, separated by the "0" facet indicator, as at 301.4511 *aggregates of general, mixt, North American origins*;²⁴ or from combinations of schedules and tables which might even be derived in multiple stages. For example, consider the precise topic specification, as well as the intellectual gamesmanship of 636.59201-.59208 *turkeys-general principles*, which permits synthesis from 636.01-.08 *animal husbandry-general principles* or of 636.089 *veterinary sciences-veterinary medicine*, which permits additional synthesis from 610-619 *medical sciences-medicine*.²⁵ Fortunately for the sanity of classifiers and particularly of library school students, the "divide like" instruction gave way to the simple "add to" instruction. With crystal clarity in most cases, the editor's directional note at each stage specifies not only the base number to which the addition is made, but also "the numbers following" from which the succeeding facet notations are derived. Other facets emerged in revised sections of the schedules, as they received routine editorial scrutiny.

It would be possible to continue the search through DDC-18 for facets, indicators, citation orders, and other devices to gladden the mind of the theoretician. It is more important to see where we have come from with Dewey since 1873-76, to see where we are now with DDC-18, published in 1971, and to assess the means by which we have come.

Figure 1 illustrates a theoretical chain of influence. Dewey's first edition was conceived in 1873 and published anonymously in 1876.²⁶ In 1895, the Institut International de Bibliographie (IIB) adopted DDC-5 (1894) as the basis for its proposed UDC, with Dewey's consent. However, the two systems apparently went separate ways. UDC in its turn was the intellectual inspiration of S. R. Ranganathan, who from 1925 was busily improving on the potentialities of the UDC. After experiments in the University of Madras Library, Ranganathan began to publish his *Colon Classification* in 1933. His

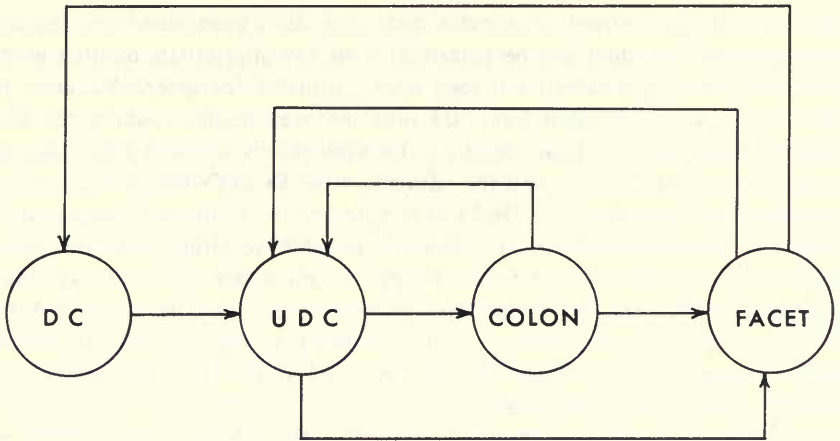


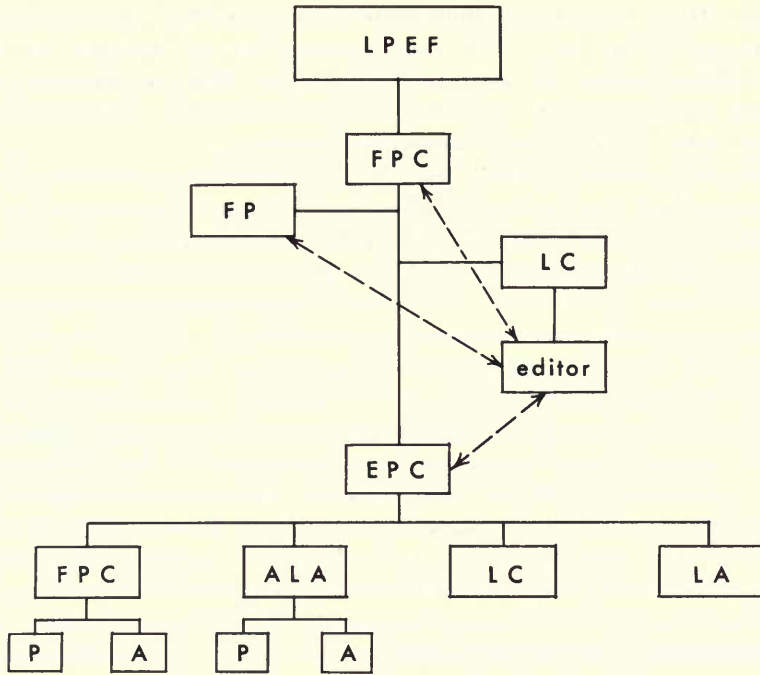
Figure 1. Theoretical Chain of Influence

Source: Cockshutt, Margaret E. "Professional Involvement in the Evolution of the Dewey Decimal Classification" (EPC Exhibit 71-63). Washington, D.C., 1974, p. 4.

sixth edition appeared in 1960, and the seventh is appearing posthumously, in parts, under the aegis of Ranganathan's disciples.

In his six editions, frightening to North American pragmatists in their rapid and continual adoption, rejection, and violent change of concepts, notation and classificatory devices, Ranganathan showed the practical and basic importance of both facet analysis and the identification and listing of the fundamental component parts of each subject. He further demonstrated the subsequent grouping of the parts into facets or groups, with each facet possessing only one common characteristic, and the method of synthesizing concepts from facets by a stated citation order, in order to avoid cross-classification.

The incredible Ranganathan jargon—which appears to be in the English language, but which is really in "Ranganathanese"—was new; the simple conceptual facets were long known to Dewey, at least in the 400 and 800 classes, and through him to the developers of UDC. Undaunted by economic pressures, and without the desire for a constant shelf address for a document. Ranganathan continued his theoretical and applied research, always experimenting and changing. In turn, his theories and devices, such as his "phases" and the formerly named "octave device," circled back to influence the UDC, and moved forward to influence the CRG. Now, somewhat hesitantly in DDC-17 and openly in UDC and DDC-18, the direct impact of the CRG's



P = Permanent
 A = Appointed on nomination
 - - - = formal and informal communication

Figure 2. Tripartite Structure

Source: Cockshutt, Margaret E. "Professional Involvement in the Evolution of the Dewey Decimal Classification" (EPC Exhibit 71-63). Washington, D.C., 1974, p. 8.

faceted experiments can be seen. What began as a chain of influence is now a series of three intersecting loops. The complex present structural control of the system is illustrated in Figure 2.

How did this happen? Without doubt Melvil Dewey was the dominant influence on the DDC until his death. By the time DDC-16 appeared, control of the DDC was in the hands of the LPCEF (now the LPEF) and its nonprofit subsidiary, the Forest Press, founded by Dewey in 1922 and incorporated in 1933. The LPCEF had signed its contract with LC for the editorial work to begin in 1954; and beginning with DDC-16 we have the editorial work done by LC's professional staff, under the editorial supervision of a professional

librarian. Thus, there was a truly professional involvement in the editorial process, and there was a firm basis for professional evaluation of new classification theories and practices by the editor. Practical assessment was increased by the merger of LC's Decimal Classification Section and the editorial office in the Decimal Classification Division.

In 1937 Godfrey Dewey established the Decimal Classification Committee, on which were represented both the LPCEF and the American Library Association, and which was concerned with both management and editorial policies. After the disastrous DDC-15, the ALA also established a short-lived Special Advisory Committee on the Decimal Classification, which consisted of a group of senior and conservative librarians. In 1952 the Decimal Classification Committee was renamed the Decimal Classification Editorial Policy Committee (DCEPC), and in 1955 it became a joint committee of the LPCEF and the ALA, with additional permanent representatives from what are now the ALA's Cataloging and Classification Section, the FPC and LC (while it continues to edit DDC). In 1973, the 1968 agreement between the Forest Press and the ALA was amended to permit the Library Association also to have a voting member appointed to the DCEPC.²⁷ Gradually the functions of the DCEPC have changed, so that it now advises the FPC directly on the development and editorial implementation of DDC, and makes recommendations to the FPC on matters needing editorial consideration and on the acceptance of draft schedules of which the DCEPC approves. It also advises the editor informally on ideas presented as trial balloons, more serious formal proposals, and various stages of draft schedules.

The present DCEPC is a committee of ten people: three appointed on the nomination of the ALA, three on the nomination of the FPC, one on the nomination of the Library Association, and three permanent members to represent the three official participating organizations. Or we can mix by nationality: one Englishman, one Canadian, eight persons from the United States. Or we can sort by professional contribution: three library school faculty members, three catalogers, four administrators. Or I might venture personally to group by classificatory ideologies: two (sometimes three) theorists, eight (sometimes seven) pragmatists. All are strong-minded, so that the discussion is professional and vigorous.

The DCEPC meetings are also attended by the executive director, editor and assistant editor of the Forest Press (all as nonvoting participants), and recently, on invitation, by the staff of the DCD in rotation as observers.

As I have perceived the meetings since 1970, the various combinations of the DCEPC and others in attendance are healthy and valuable for the development of DDC. It is essential that the DDC be intellectually and structurally sound, and the input of new ideas by the theorists and the editor should ensure that the DDC editorial staff and the DCEPC are aware of

current research and trends in classification theory. It is also essential that the DDC be practical in its application and that it fit into current library administrative goals and practices; the catalogers and administrators help to ensure this. The DCD staff should be aware that the proposals are discussed thoughtfully and carefully from all angles, and that the draft schedule criticisms are based on rational arguments rather than on arbitrary whims; the presence of the DCD staff as observers should facilitate this awareness. It is essential that the tripartite bodies are officially informed, through their members and through documents, of the policy recommendations and of the reasons for which they are made.

Why do these growths and changes in the editorial process, administrative development, and professional involvement matter? They matter because the varying needs of users in libraries of all sizes and types must be represented: users who want broad shelf groupings and location addresses, those who want a detailed specific information retrieval system, skilled original-classifiers, technicians working with derived copy, library school students trying to learn the theoretical base and the practical mastery for use in their new profession, and so on.

Contact between "the profession," i.e., the users, and the editor takes place through various formal agreements between the DCD and the *British National Bibliography*, the *Australian National Bibliography*, and *Canadiana*, as well as informally (see Figure 3). There have been various field surveys, questionnaires, draft reviews by subject experts, and official and informal visits by various officials of LPEF, the FPC, the Forest Press, and the editor on this continent and abroad. That DDC is now regarded as a truly international classification, can best be conveyed in the statement now adopted by both the DCEPC and the FPC:

The Decimal Classification is an American classification, international in standing and application. In preparing an edition it is desirable to allow positively for the needs, both in detail and in order, of countries outside the U.S. Where there is a conflict between these needs and those of the U.S. the editor should give his preference to the needs of the U.S. but must make provision for an alternative use by libraries outside the U.S. in a manner appropriate to the particular problem.²⁸

So the editions march on, in English, in French, and in a host of other translations and adaptations. As DDC-18 went to press, plans for DDC-19 began. As Paul Dunkin wrote: "In the making of an edition of Dewey there are many things: emotions, logic, traditions, economics, a Committee—what not?"²⁹ Or, as Heraclitus wrote about 500 B.C., with a sense both of *déjà vu* and of wonder at something new: "Upon those that step into the same rivers, different and different waters flow down."³⁰

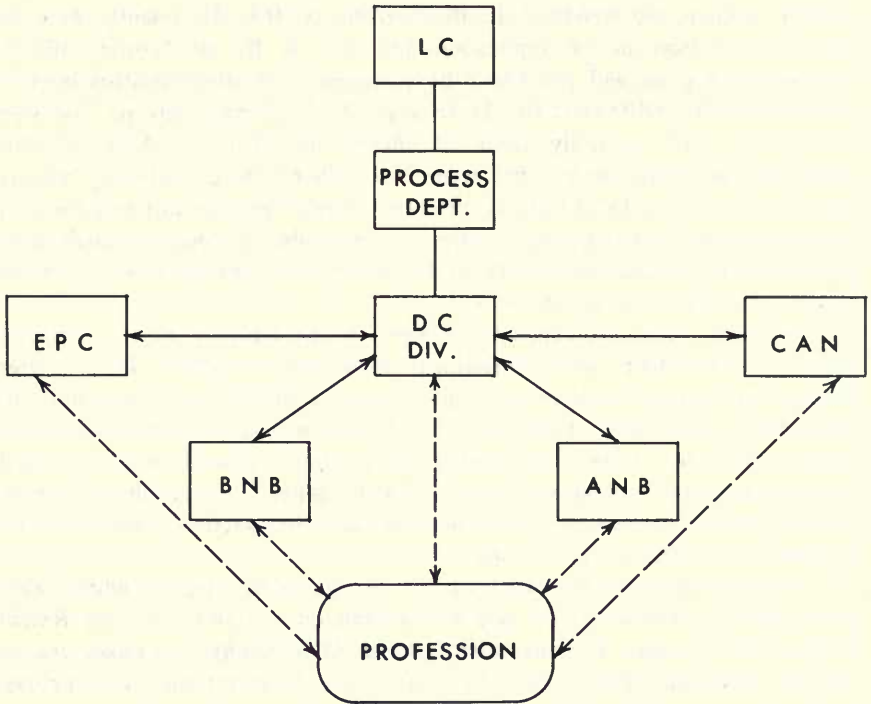


Figure 3. Informal International Involvement (Impressionistic)

Source: Cockshutt, Margaret E. "Professional Involvement in the Evolution of the Dewey Decimal Classification" (EPC Exhibit 71-63). Washington, D.C., 1974, p. 13.

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