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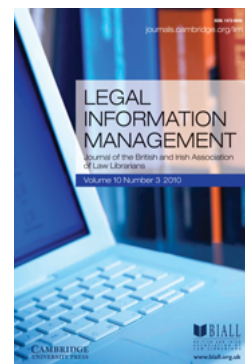
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Re-classification on a Grand Scale – Moys at the Bodleian Law Library

Abstract: Ruth Bird, Bodleian Law Librarian, explains how the original home-grown classification scheme became unfit for purpose, due to the enormous expansion of international legal materials held, and the reasons for implementing the Moys scheme. She outlines the progress and the problems encountered to date in this huge project.

Keywords: Classification schemes; academic law libraries

Introduction

In 2006 staff at the Bodleian Law Library commenced the process of re-classifying our entire current monograph collection to the Moys Scheme. In this article the reasons for selecting Moys, the issues involved, and the progress to date are discussed.

The genesis – a request from the Faculty

In 2003 I was appointed to the post of Bodleian Law Librarian. In the month after I commenced work at Oxford, the Chair of the Law Board, who had been on

my interview panel, met me to discuss the Faculty's priorities for the Bodleian Law Library (BLL). Among a series of issues that needed to be remedied or improved, one that was most irritating to the faculty, and which they perceived as a major deficiency of the open shelf collection, was the home grown classification scheme, which meant that in most jurisdictional sections, treatises could not be browsed by subject on the shelves, even though this was an open access library.

Problems with the existing scheme

The scheme we had in place was adequate for a library holding a predominantly UK based collection, as was the case in the 1960's, but since then the collection has expanded three-fold and much of the expansion has been in overseas jurisdictions. The BLL holds material from over 100 jurisdictions. Its Commonwealth and United States holdings are among the largest in the UK. Yet in the home grown scheme, all monographs, other than those dealing with the law in the UK, were classed at shelf mark 510 with Cutters¹ for the author surname.

Thus, for example, in a collection of over 6,000 US monographs, readers can only locate items by searching the catalogue and browsing is a virtual impossibility. This problem is repeated in every jurisdiction save the UK. The problems that arise in the UK collection came about because of the limitations of the in-house classification scheme, which was never updated to take into account changes in the legal system and the growth of new areas of study, such as intellectual property. For example, we had the situation where the IP treatises are classified into the Property (i.e. Real Property) section.

Re-classification was not an option, but a necessity, if we were to create a more user friendly, browseable and useful monograph collection in our library.

Why Moys?

Moys classification does for law what NLM (National Library of Medicine classification) does for medicine, creating a broad subject arrangement which reflects the use of material by professionals in the field. Principles of the scheme are the move from the general to the specific, a distinction between national laws and non-national laws, the separation of common law and civil law jurisdictions and public and private law.

Common law subjects are arranged together by subject, rather than first by jurisdiction.

Moys uses the letter K, and like NLM's W, may be shelved with books in the LC classification. Moys also has a replacement for DDC's 340. The Moys scheme was developed in part whilst law libraries waiting for Library of Congress to get the K class for law established in the 1960's and 70's.

Moys is one of the most user-friendly class systems available for Law. In a survey in 2007 of British law libraries,

it was in use by 31 of 101 respondents; 40 respondents used in-house systems, 18 used DDC, 5 used LC, 3 a mixture, and 3 none. Of 33 academic law libraries who responded, 8 used Moys, 16 used DDC, 3 used LC (modified), and 6 their own.²

In October 2008, I conducted an informal email survey of colleagues on UK, Australian and Canadian lists to update this information and had responses from over 50 libraries, in 24 hours.

Summary of law list responses received

	Universities	Courts	Govt Depts	Law Societies & The Bar	Law Firms
UK (& Eire)	10	2	3		19
Canada	3	1		1	4
Australia	18	2	1	1	14
NZ	3			3	1
West Indies	5	2			2
Pacific	3				
Hong Kong	2				1

UK universities using the scheme include Bristol, Cardiff, Dundee, Strathclyde, Bournemouth, Lancaster, Exeter, Kent and Brunel, plus Trinity Hall at Cambridge. The Supreme Court Library at the Royal Courts of Justice uses Moys, as did the then Ministry of Justice Library and the Treasury Law Library.

In other jurisdictions, it is used by over 100 law libraries in Australia, including the High Court, and over half the university law libraries; throughout the West Indies; in some Canadian libraries; and in Pacific institutions.

It is also used extensively in law firms in all the countries listed, including in 8 of the top 15 firms in London.

Why not Library of Congress?

The majority of newly published books that we receive in the law library are from UK publishers and they are about UK law so, when we receive them, there is often no existing record on CURL, LOCIS or WorldCat /OCLC. We have to create a shelf mark at that point. Nearly half of the cataloguing we undertake is original. LOCIS does not have good coverage of foreign language items or any government papers published outside the US (these types constitute about 40% of all our cataloguing).

Among law libraries in the UK, we identified only four using a version of LC for classification. If any parts of the collection are to be relegated to offsite storage, the sequencing of the general library collection, if it were organised in LC sequence, would not be disturbed, as the K sequence in LC is set aside for law in any case.

The issue of having shelf-ready materials provided by the suppliers is not as important in a law library. This is because 90% of our annual intake comprises serials which come in parts and then are either bound at the end of the year, or a bound volume is supplied by the publishers. We have much of the preparatory work done by the suppliers with the loose parts which they supply. A great part of the monograph collection comes via legal deposit, not directly from a supplier providing shelf-ready materials, so using a certain classification scheme just so that we can use a shelf-ready supplier was not a good enough reason for us to go with LC. Most of our monograph purchases are from foreign law jurisdictions covered by specialist suppliers who do not provide a shelf-ready service.

Project plan in the BLL

I first re-classified a collection to Moys in 1989, in a law firm and the change was enthusiastically embraced by the lawyers. When I went to the University of Melbourne, the Law Faculty had obtained a grant of \$AUD100,000 to re-classify their monographs to the Moys scheme, a project I then supervised. We ascertained early on in Oxford that there would be no financial support for the project, yet the faculty were keen to see it undertaken as soon as possible.

A business case was presented to the then University Librarian and the Collection Management Team, where it was discussed, and agreed, in April 2005.

For various reasons, including staffing changes, we did not commence planning the implementation of the project until 2006. It was agreed that we would undertake the re-classification in-house, as there were no external funding sources available for this purpose.

We determined that the section of the collection that would be re-classified would be the monographs, initially for the UK, then of other jurisdictions. It was decided that we would re-classify current material, not our secondary (superseded) collection, and that we would also dual classify all incoming material to Moys, as well as to our in-house scheme, ready for flipping on the catalogue at a later stage. This last aspect of the plan was only recently implemented.

The vast majority of the BLL collection comprises primary materials and legal journals, which are usually housed in their own sequences in most law libraries. In time this arrangement will also be implemented in the BLL. In the meantime, the vision of bringing all treatises/monographs into a single, comprehensive and logical sequence is an exciting prospect.

The practicalities

Helen Garner, the head of Information Resources in the Law Library, took on the management of the project, having had previous experience of re-classifying to Moys in a law firm. Helen had also used Library of Congress and Dewey at other workplaces, so is well-versed in the

features of each system. She established the project team and worked with them on the practical planning and implementation issues. Several key decisions were made after running trials of real shelf marks on existing sections of the collection. For example, it was decided to use the first three letters of the author's surname as the second element in our shelf mark after the allocated Moys number and then to add the year of the edition as the last element. The reason we followed this path was because we have a collection of current titles on the second floor of the library and a secondary, or superseded edition, collection on the first floor. Having the year on the spine would be an aid to shelf browsing within a subject area, to identify the most recent title on the topic housed on the shelves. Placing a volume number would not be as useful to those browsing the shelves.

We asked among our own staff to find those with an interest in participating in the project. Once we had established a team, they were trained by Phil Bower, our head of cataloguing, and worked for a set amount of time every week as part of their newly re-arranged work responsibilities. Those staff who are involved in the project are located in both the reader services and technical services teams in the law library. In the first calendar year over 4,000 titles were re-classified.

The methodology was to take a group of books from the shelves, so they would be of a broadly similar topic and to classify them into their new Moys number. A specific, unused field in the catalogue record had been allocated by the catalogue systems team for our use, hidden from the users at this stage, but ready to be flipped when the time came. Phil Bower checked everything to begin with, but once he was confident that staff were on the right track, he only did occasional spot checks, or spent time discussing any particular issues that the re-classifiers encountered. Once re-classified, the new shelf mark was written inside the book, and it was returned to the shelves in its pre-existing location.

In this way, over a period of two years, most of the UK section was completed which was nearly 20,000 titles. In June 2009 it was agreed that by the start of August we would be in a situation where we could re-label and re-shelve the UK section.

To assist us in this final process, we employed 15 postgraduates for a period of one month. The original plan was to produce spine labels with a programme run on the special field in the catalogue. This proved too complex with our current catalogue system, so we set up templates in Word and asked the students to type the shelf marks from a spreadsheet list. The sequence we followed was that of the current shelf order.

This took the students about four days, working half a day each. They then removed all the books from the shelves, laid them out in order on the library tables and proceeded to re-label every book. The next phase was re-shelving into the new sequence. It took the students four weeks to complete these tasks and our own staff another month or so to re-space and tidy up the shelves. In that

month we did a lot of tidying up work by replacing tatty boxes, re-boxing loose items, etc. Work continued during the term on preparing an error report as a result of the changeover. The re-labelling and re-shelving work took place in our quietest month, August and by the start of the academic year 2009–2010, the books were in their new sequence and shelf guides had been produced.

The funding to pay students came from one of our donor funds. All the rest of the work was undertaken within our existing staffing. As we are one of many Oxford libraries undertaking re-classification, the project is factored into our staffing allocation. Having a group of staff willing to participate was a vital factor in the early success we have had.

The next steps

We made the physical switch over to Moys for the UK collection ahead of finishing the overall project, because this had been a discrete section and it was rewarding for the staff to see the results of their labours sitting in the new order on the shelves. Having completed the sections for England and Wales, we will now set about working on the collections from Scotland, Ireland and the Channel Isles. From then on we have identified small collections where we will be able to re-label and re-shelve in situ, such as Ancient and Religious law.

The next major physical re-arrangement of the collection will be in some years' time. It will take place when all the books in various jurisdictions will be amalgamated into their new shelf-mark run. As we have about 60 to 70,000 volumes to re-classify, the project may take another two to three years to complete. The experience gained by staff in the first two years will make the next stages in common law countries relatively easier, as the decisions have been made for the location of topics. We have also made decisions in relation to labelling the books and creating a BLL-variant for shelf-marks that will group jurisdictions within single shelf-marks.

Staff are now classifying books to the old and new schemes when they arrive in the library, to make things easier in the future.

The benefits

The first, and major, benefit, has been the totally positive reaction from our readers. Unsolicited praise has been very welcome and we have not had any grumbles or complaints.

A second benefit is the ability to point readers to a specific spot on the shelves and let them know, with confidence, that the books they need can be found at that shelf-mark.

A third benefit is one we hope to provide to our colleagues in libraries that use Moys. By making the shelf-marks available on our catalogue now, rather than at the completion of the project, we hope to assist our colleagues to allocate shelf-marks in their own collections.

Our experience has provided us with insights into developments in the law which will be useful in the work on a new, fourth edition of the Moys Classification Scheme. This is being undertaken by Diana Morris and a small editorial team under the auspices of BIALL.

And finally, the project has given a number of our staff a better insight into the structure of the law and a far greater familiarity with the breadth of topics covered in our collection.

Conclusion

The re-classification project has not always been straightforward and the staff involved have been on a great learning curve. Despite some hiccups along the way, good planning and collaboration among the staff working under Helen's guidance have meant that phase one of the project has been a great success. Staff have come to embrace the changes because they are the ones doing this work, rather than outsiders with no sense of ownership of the collection. Their sense of pride in the outcome, and participation in the process, has been a positive, and unexpected benefit of our re-classification project.

The welcome acceptance by the Faculty and students of this major re-organisation of their core collection of UK texts provides us with the incentive to see through the re-classification to its conclusion, providing an open access law collection that is also fully browseable.

Footnotes

¹The Cutter number, or **Cutter**, is an alpha-numeric device for representing words or names by using one or more letters followed by one or more arabic numerals treated as decimal numbers. The combination of letters and numbers, called the Cutter, follows the LC *classification number* and is preceded by a decimal point. It is named for Charles Ammi Cutter, who developed several tables using letters and numbers to achieve an alphabetical arrangement. The Cutter enables alphabetic order to be maintained within a given class. *Book numbers* and some subdivisions in the *classification schedules* are types of Cutter numbers. www.itsmarc.com

²Brett, Rachel: Classification practice in law libraries: a brief survey. *Legal information Management*, 8 (2008), pp 61–63.

Biography

Ruth Bird is the Bodleian Law Librarian and a member of the BIALL Council.