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Library Systematology

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The purpose of the article is to present the main points on the science or the construction, development, use and maintenance of library classification systems. Problems of structure of library classification, as of a specific kind of activity, the nature of the document and classes of documents are discussed.   (Author)

Library systematology is the science of the construction, development, use, and maintenance of library classification. There are three basic concepts of library systematology upon which the theory and practice of library classification is built. They arc: concepts of activity, of structure and of system.

An *activity* is a specific fragment of human life. In terms of structure, classification activity consists of five components: a) the objects classified, b) the subject of the classification action, c) the objectives of the classification action, d) the classification action itself, and e) the result of the classification action in the form of a class of elements.

A *class* is a group of related elements. The common feature on the basis of which the groups of related objects (classes) are created is called "the characteristic of division". In this way a group of elements united by a common characteristic is called a class.

With respect to their *purposes*, classification systems can be cognitive, instrumental, or mixed. The purpose of a cognitive classification is the comprehension of reality. An instrumental classification is called upon to serve some pragmatic purpose. A mixed classification combines in itself the features of both the cognitive and instrumental classifications.

From the point of view of *structure*, a classification can be simple or complex. A simple classification is identified as an activity composed of the five above-mentioned components. A complex classification is an interrelated aggregate of simple classifications.

A *classification is called direct* if the identity of the classified objects and the elements of the created class can be readily established. A classification is called environmental if the elements of the created class are concepts or similar artificial substitutes of the classified objects. A library classification is a fine example of a complex, mixed, and direct-and-environmental classification.

The *object of a library classification* is the document. A *document* is a script at the moment of its perception by a reader, or, to put it briefly, it is a reader-perceived script. The *script* is a material object on which the author has drawn certain symbols, signs or words with the help of a special instrument for the purpose of communicating its meaning to the reader. A document comprises three components: the material object (information carrier), the text (symbols, signs, words), and the meaning of the text. A script, when viewed from the point of view of these components, is a purely physical object: it is a carrier of the text. The meaning of the text is purely intellectual or to put it more broadly: a psychic phenomenon.

A document is more a casual thing than a permanent object of reality; it is originated by the reader at the moment when he reads the script, and it turns into a script when the process of reading is over.

Documents can be distinguished from one another in a) the information-carrier, b) the text, and c) the meaning. A library accumulates scripts, but with the growing of their number, the problem invariably arises of reducing the time of search for the needed script. This problem cannot be solved if the scripts are not ordered by classes. The origin of library classification is, essentially, a method of saving the time of search for the relevant document. The library accumulates scripts and the librarian classifies documents. The class of documents is a sporadic object. The class of scripts is a permanent object, which is kept on the library shelf. The class of documents can be likened to a switched-on light bulb, and the class of scripts to a switched-off light bulb.

The library creates and stores classes of three types: classes of scripts, classes of bibliographical records, and classes of subject headings. The structure of these classes is the same: the name of the class plus the group of its elements. The elements of the class make up a group of related objects (without the name of the class); the uniting characteristics is reflected in the obligatory structure component - the name of the class. According to their material embodiment, the elements of the classes differ from one another: they can be scripts, records or subject headings.

When these two parts exist outside the reader's cognition, they merely represent two adjacent physical objects, but when they are perceived by the reader they turn into an inseparable unity, into an intellectual system in which the subject (the reader) plays the role of an ingredient, which calls interconnection into being, and in this way this two-part structure turns into a three-part formation.

In order to form a class of scripts it is first of all necessary to mentally cognize their common character and then physically move the scripts into one place.

The physical shifting of scripts is not an easy job, particularly if there are many of them. It seems that this sort of moving things from one place to another inspired the appearance of the Latin axiom: "Quietis non mover" (Let all settled things lie in peace).

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