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Brief Communication

Brief Communication:
Abridged Dewey-15 (2012)
in Historical Perspectives

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ABSTRACT: The origin of the abridged edition of the Dewey system goes back to 1894 when an outline of 192 pages based on the full 5th Edition (1894) was issued for small public and school libraries of North America. New editions have appeared regularly following closely the publication of new full editions. An abridged version, which is always in one volume, comprises an introduction, schedules, four tables (namely 1, 2, 3 and 4) only, and the relative index and other minor features of the full edition, and has shorter numbers. Abridged 15 is a logical abridgement of the DDC23 (2011) and is a product of a new approach to development of an abridged edition of the DDC. Its content has been derived from the DDC database applying a set of rules to extract the edition using the new (2010) version of the editorial support system. The revision process has been informed by interaction with an always widening and diversified Dewey community at home and abroad. It aims to improve the currency of the schedules continuing to serve as shelving tool while recognizing its 'other' uses as a spinoff of its simplicity and inexpensiveness.

The origin of the abridged edition of the Dewey system goes back to 1894 when an outline of 192 pages based on the full 5th edition (1894) was issued for small public and school libraries of North America. The new editions of this abridged version were issued irregularly as and when any need arose. The 2nd abridged edition (1912) was based on the full 7th edition (1911), and the 3rd abridged edition (1921) was based on the 10th edition (1919). The 4th abridged edition was issued in 1929 after the full 12th edition (1927). Since then, revised abridged editions have appeared regularly following closely (sometimes simultaneously with) the publication of the new full edition (Comaromi 1976).

In the beginning, an abridged edition was not a strict abridgement but a close adaptation of the then current edition. That created problems of compatibility between the abridged and its parent full edition and in availing of centralised cataloguing services by the users of abridged editions. The abridged 6th to 9th editions (1945/1953/1959/1965) were truly abridged from the 14th (1942), 15th (1952), 16th (1958), and 17th (1965) unabridged editions, respectively. The abridged 10th edition (1971), again, was not a strict and literal abridgement of the full 18th edition (1971). It was argued by the editors that an adapted edition was better suited to the needs of small libraries. In justification of the policy, it was mentioned (1):

The present abridged edition in some places presents different classification policies and slightly different numbers from those in Edition 18 .... Recent abridged editions have been developed from the respective full editions upon which each was based on the premise that all libraries will grow in size indefinitely and that therefore, even the smallest library using the abridged Dewey should be able, as it grows, to expand and deepen its classification simply by lengthening the class number used .... The present edition abandons that position, and is addressed to thousands of general libraries that have no expectations of ever growing very big. It is not, therefore, in the strictest sense an abridgement of the full 18th edition, but a close adaptation of it.

Following protests and realisation of the genuine problems caused to the users of centralised cataloguing services, the old policy of the true abridgement of the corresponding full edition has been restored. Despite this, the abridged eleventh edition (1979) differed slightly from the parental 19th edition (1979), especially in the use of multiple zeros for adding standard subdivisions. The abridged 12th through 15th editions (1990/1997/2004/2012) are, indeed, true abridgements. Now the two versions are so compatible that, as small libraries grow, the abridged numbers can easily be expanded to full numbers as in the unabridged version by simply adding digits to the right of the class number.

Since the last four editions, the growth of the abridged editions has remained quite restrained as is clear from this table:

Abridged edition	Total pages	Total pages of corresponding unabridged edition	%
1 (1894)	192	471 (DDC-5, 1894)	41
2 (1912)	199	779 (DDC-7, 1911)	26
3 (1921)	184	940 (DDC-10, 1919)	20
4 (1929)	184	1,234 (DDC-12, 1927)	15
5 (1936)	196	1,647 (DDC-13, 1932)	12
6 (1945)	343	1,927 (DDC-14, 1942)	18
7 (1953)	315	927 (DDC-15, 1952)	34
8 (1959)	495	2,439 (DDC-16, 1958)	20
9 (1965)	594	2,153 (DDC-17, 1965)	28
10 (1971)	529	2,718 (DDC-18, 1971)	20
11(1979)	618	3,385(DDC-19, 1979)	18
12(1990)	857	3,388(DDC-20, 1989)	25
13(1997)	1,020	4,126(DDC-21,1996)	25
14(2004)	1,109	4,076(DDC-22,2003)	27
15(2012)	1295	4266 DDC-23(2011)	30

Table 1. Growth of the Abridged Editions

An abridged version, which is always in one volume, comprises an introduction, schedules, four tables (namely 1, 2, 3 and 4) only, and the relative index and other minor features of the full edition, such as list of changes and a ready reckoner to change over to the new one from the old edition. It has shorter numbers (normally up to two digits beyond the dot), which are easy to remember and can be easily written on the spine of the document for shelving. In brief, it is efficient for a collection up to 20,000 books in a school or public library and makes a good tool for teaching DDC. It is also used in subject headings for children and provides suggested class numbers to the headings in the celebrated *Sears List of Subject Headings*. The latter being in alphabetical order can also serve as a simplified index to the DDC schedules. Moreover, search engines using the DDC for organizing their content use abridged or even broader versions for the purpose. Beside this, being less expensive, it is accessible to those who are not able to acquire the expensive set whose price goes up to $550 in countries like India.

These true abridgements, compatible with the unabridged, are prepared from the full DDC database under the guidance of subcommittees comprising the ALA Subject Analysis Committee and the DC Committee of the Charted Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). Now the support of the wider Dewey community such as the European DDC Users Group (EDUG) has been acknowledged as in the parent edition DDC23. Electronic versions of the abridged 13 and 14 editions have been available since 1996. With the 15th edition, this facility has been has been taken off the Web mostly due to lack of subscribers of the online abridged edition. Nevertheless, the full online edition that is WebDewey continues to indicate the point of truncation for the abridged numbers. It means the WebDewey subsumes the Abridged WebDewey.

Abridged 15 which comes 118 years after its first abridged ancestor is a logical abridgement of the DDC23 (2011) and is a product of a new approach to development of abridged edition of the DDC. Its content has been derived from the DDC database applying a set of rules to extract the edition with minimal intellectual efforts using the new (2010) version of the editorial support system, ESS4.0. They used the current classes in the abridged 14th, amended to reflect changes in DDC23, as the starting point for this edition. Headings are the same as those found in the full edition with a few exceptions of scientific names. Average length is two digits beyond the dot though technology classes have larger numbers.

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As with the full 23rd edition, the abridged 15th too prefers expansion and revision to relocations where possible (Satija 2012). The abridged 15th incorporates long term and short term updates since the abridged 14th (2004) and the full DDC23 (2003). As in the parent DDC 23, there is a complete overhaul of the representation of the groups of people, especially in the T1-08 and consequently in the T1-092 Biography with corresponding fine tuning in classes 305-306 Sociology, 155 Differential psychology, 331 Labour economics, and 362 Social welfare. Some other changes are in 004-006 Computer science and, correspondingly, in 621.39 Computer engineering, and also in 160 Logic and 513 and Symbolic logic. Updates have been initiated for 281.9 Orthodox Church and 297 Islam which may continue in the next edition. Alignments have been made at places requiring the use of tables 5 and 6, which are not part of the abridged edition. In all, there are five changes in T1 and eight additions in T2, and 65 select changes in the schedules listed on pages xxiii-xxvii of this edition. Besides, there are some structural changes to ease machine representation and manipulation of data as in a newly adopted open source MARC21, and format for Classification and Authority Data. Unwieldy headings in the three summaries have been edited to make them handy. For example, 500 Natural sciences and Mathematics in the schedules appears as 500 Natural Sciences in the summary; so is the case with 600 Technology and 320 Political science. Also, as in the main edition, provision of dual headings at places has been dispensed with. For example, 532 Fluid mechanics Liquid mechanics is now 532 Fluid mechanics with a note to class Liquid mechanics here. An-

other structural change involves the balancing of the span of numbers. For example, 420.1-428 has been split into 420.1-420.9 and 421-428. There are numerous such examples to propitiate the computer. A complete ready reckoner of relocated, discontinued, and a single reused number, 380.1, has been given on pages 119-123. The entire system provides everything in abridged form and pattern of the DDC23 except Tables 5 & 6. The revision process has been informed by interaction with the always widening and diversified Dewey community at home and abroad to which it has been aptly dedicated. It aims to improve the currency of the schedules continuing to serve as shelving tool while recognizing its 'other' uses as a spinoff of its simplicity and inexpensiveness.

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