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Reader-interest Classifications:
An Alternative Arrangement for Libraries†

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Abstract: The concept of reader-interest classifications and its related terminology have shown a well-established presence and common characteristics in the knowledge organization literature for more than half a century. During the period 1952-1995, it was not unusual to find works, projects and discourses using a common core of characteristics and terms to refer to a recognizable type of projects involving alternative classifications to the *DDC* and other traditional practices in libraries. The use of reader-interest classification related terms and references drastically declined since 1995, although similar projects and characteristics are being used until the present day such as those of implementation of BISAC in American public libraries. The present paper attempts to overview the concept and terminology of reader-interest classifications in a historical perspective emphasizing the transformation of the concept and its remaining characteristics in time.

1.0 Definition

The term "reader-interest classification" has been used to describe various approaches to library classification. In general, this umbrella term—and several of its near-synonyms—refer to alternatives to traditional library systems such as the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (*DDC*). According to its advocates, reader-interest classifications provided a more suitable arrangement for the reader because it gathers related terms scattered across the system and is more intuitive to use.

Within the literature, there were a great variety of terms that refer to this concept with minor variations; among them are "alternative arrangement," "user-orientated arrangement," "categorized arrangement," "verbal arrangement," "bookstore arrangement," "stock categorization" (including the different regional spelling variations), "reader-centred classification" (used more recently by some Australian authors), "two-tier arrangement," "integrated stock," "intensive use of paperbacks" and "subject departmentalism." Such variety of terminology and the regional differences of use were pointed out by Sapiie (1995, 144):

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There are nearly as many variations on the names given to reader-interest classification as there are instances of its use. Librarians in the U.S. have brought the plan into the modern age with the up-to-date terms of merchandising, marketing and bookstore arrangement. In Britain, such terms as reader interest categories, categories or categorization are favored, but broad interest groups or user orientation are also used. Librarians create centers of interest in France and special interest comers in Japan. In Germany, immediate concern areas or alternative arrangement is used; in The Netherlands, broad subject arrangement, reader interest categories or topics of current interest; and in South Africa, the plan is called reader's interest classification.

Many of these terms are used indistinctly in the literature or are studied together in a variety of case studies. However, "reader-interest classification" seems to be the most representative of these terms. This term was used by Ruth Rutzen, Home Reading Services Director at Detroit Public Library, in the first acknowledged case of a library applying a classification of these characteristics. According to Rutzen (1952, 478):

> The term reader interest classification is not a new library term. It has a familiar sound to those who have followed the literature on adult education in libraries. What is the purpose of the reader interest classification? It is yet another effort to make our service more meaningful and pertinent to the interests and needs of the general reader. What is it? It is a plan to arrange books on the shelf in terms of use and interest by the potential reader rather than strictly by subject content.

In another definition, Sharon Baker (1988a, 3) highlights the influence of commercial culture on this system, describing "reader interest classification" as a "natural language classification similar to what the major bookstore chains use." More recently "reader interest classification" was defined in the "*Harrod's Librarian's Glossary of Terms Used in Librarianship, Documentation and the Book Crafts*" (Prytherch 1990, 515) as a "simple and broad classification intended to reflect the special interests of readers rather than the subject contents of books as such." One of the most comprehensive and recent definitions of the concept, this time under the name "Reader's Interest Classification," was given by Mohinder Satija in *A Dictionary of Knowledge Organization* (2004, 182):

> A classification designed to serve the immediate needs of the targeted users. Such systems violate the

filiatory sequence to bring together disparaged subjects needed by a user group. These are useful in mission oriented or multidisciplinary subjects. In a commerce college, e.g., it may be more pragmatic to place commercial law with commerce at 380. It is true to say that reader's interest classification adopted so far are not always satisfactory and sometimes correspond to ephemeral vogues. It reflects a middle level of ambition in knowledge organisation. It is a compromise between ad hoc classification and rigorously scientific classification.

The way books are physically arranged and how classes are displayed within the system have always been among the most important aspects of reader-interest classifications. Mary Ørvig (1955, 223) demonstrated the importance of physical arrangement when she introduced the concept of reader-interest classifications to Europe in 1955, stating that "we are not concerned here with a new classification system, but with a book arrangement." More often than not, this type of classification was presented as an alternative and was in opposition to the arrangement of traditional library classifications such as the *DDC* or the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC), which were alleged to be unhelpful for the reader.

2.0 The importance of arrangement in reader-interest classifications

One of the main aims of the new type of arrangement of reader-interest classifications was to enhance the collection's usefulness for the end-user—or to at least enhance its perceived usefulness. This perception was influenced by features which were not related to the classification system—such as display and presentation of the scheme and also of the collection and the shelves. This being the case, most reader-interest classification projects were indivisibly linked to many other aspects related to guiding and signage. Although some of these individual aspects were sometimes acknowledged to be vital to the project's success they were generally introduced together into the classification projects. As Sykes (1982, 383) pointed out in this context: "'categorization' cannot be taken in isolation; it is only one of several crucial factors involved, others being the nature of the stock and its appeal to the average person, the 'councilly' atmosphere of many libraries, the attitudes of staff and good guiding." In general, the results and outcomes of each factor were hard to measure individually, and this difficulty has proved to be one of the most important problems in monitoring and readjusting the reader-interest classification projects. However, this did not prevent libraries from evaluating their performance as a whole and from proclaiming the benefits of the

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scheme. What these individual factors finally shared with all reader-interest classification projects was they all departed from the previous practices on signage and guidance while introducing new and often revolutionary ideas according to the "user's interest."

In practice, most reader-interest classification arrangement and display features varied according to the specific characteristics of each case such as community needs and interests, physical size and layout of the building and the size and nature of the collection (Sapiie 1995). Despite such specific characteristics, Sapiie and authors such as Lee Hubbard (1972), also recognized that there were some common patterns among all these cases. Sapiie, for example, noticed that the use of categories for book arrangement and display varied between those libraries that were converting part of their stock and those libraries that only adopted the new scheme for new acquisitions. According to Sapiie, most libraries converting their stock only used reader-interest categories to replace part of that stock. In these cases, the *DDC* was used for the remaining stock while both *DDC* and reader-interest categories were used on all reorganized stock—the spine labels that denoted categories by color coding or symbols—and books were placed in random order within categories. However, reader-interest classification arrangement and display involved a variety of cases and Sapiie noticed that there were some libraries that used both marks in their old stock but only displayed the reader-interest categories on the spine of the new books. In addition, there were some libraries that classified books according to both systems and using different displays (e.g., categories on the spine and *DDC* number on the inside), etc.

Some of the main general display features of reader-interest classifications were explained by Hubbard, author of the generic *Public Library Reader Interest Arrangement* (Hubbard 1972, 27-8). For Hubbard, traditional classifications based on academic disciplines—such as the *DDC*—were associated with problems such as the overlap and scattering of materials. Such disadvantages were closely related to the issue of "distributed relatives" (26):

> A book classification based on fields of study will obviously produce a great deal of overlapping, given the actual complexity of books in content and potential application. The more such a classification subdivides, the more it scatters.

Hubbard linked this problem to signage and the need to list all the related relatives together in order to provide a better service for the user. However, Hubbard also pointed out that related categories should not only be together in the sign lists but also on the shelves, suggesting that both category lists and browsing would thus provide users with better direct access to useful materials. Hubbard also included some remarks on labeling and typing, suggesting, among other things, to avoid "academic jargon" and to abbreviate occasionally. Nowadays, some of these aspects have been overcome, or at least ameliorated, with the use of online catalogs and automated features.

Also common to reader-interest classification display are bookstore practices such as facing the stock out rather than exposing only the spine, as well as other signage and guiding techniques for the shelves. In those cases where not all books could be faced out, innovative marketing techniques were employed—such as concentrating the traditional display only in those shelves which were more accessible to the public (i.e., not those at the top and the bottom). Signage and guiding techniques were also considered essential parts of the reader-interest classification projects. As Sapiie (1995, 150) pointed out:

> As part of the user-friendly approach of Reader-interest classification, good shelf guiding and signs are considered essential and the key to the whole system. It is felt that patrons are more likely to look at a guiding system rather than a catalog, and since the books are not in a specific order, good shelf guiding is all the more important.

According to Lyn Donbroski (1980), a good shelf guiding system was not only the most important part in the physical information seeking process but also should be one of the main concerns of reader-interest classifications. Finally, some other signage and guiding techniques that were commonly suggested in the reader-interest classification literature include large display signs, posters, overhead signs, simple word signs, header signs on free standing display shelves, diagrams, detailed guides, leaflets, maps, color coding, and spine labeling (with regard to labels, categories were usually represented with some kind of symbol such as graphics, colors or letter codes to help the users). All of these demonstrate the variety of practices and factors related to arrangement and display in reader-interest classifications.

As for the arrangement of categories within the system, it depended on the characteristics of each case and was usually random, alphabetical by author or by *DDC*. In larger categories, order was usually by Dewey while in smaller categories, it was more likely to be random. On the other hand, according to the normative principles and guidelines for reader-interest classifications suggested by Hubbard (1972), alphabetical arrangement was the most appropriate order for the first level of categories while random order was most appropriate for a second level (with the possibility of applying some other more specific method such as by year or by quality).

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It is worth noting here that Hubbard considered that within reader-interest classification, alphabetical order is often less confusing than other orders such as geographical and chronological. While the adequacy of an alphabetical order for the arrangement of categories was somewhat controversial in the reader-interest classification discourse—as demonstrated by Hubbard's remarks on Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, such as proximity of "communion" to "communism" and the separation of related topics of interest such as "christianity" and "theology"—the biggest browsing help for the users in Hubbard's proposal was found in the gathering of related subjects within a category (meaning gathering all the possible related topics together once the content of the category was established). Here it might be also assumed that adjacent categories did not have to be necessarily related and that Hubbard did not consider that usefulness of adjacent materials inside the categories had to be related either (since the orders of the second and subsequent levels were not always systematized). In the end, Hubbard's proposal was similar to those made by practitioners and other authors such as Sapiie and only seemed to be efficient for smaller categories or stocks.

As a summary, one of the most commonly expressed and well-accepted principles of reader-interest classifications (McCarthy 1982; Sapiie 1995) was that the arrangement of books by categories had to be simple and self-explanatory, minimizing the need to use the catalog or staff to find a specific book or subject. What is more, this arrangement had to be organized according to the reader's perspective and not that of the book, the library or the librarian. Outside of the discipline of knowledge organization, reader-interest classifications were thus employed by the user-orientation movement in library and information science.

3.0 Reader-interest classifications as part of the user-orientation movement

User orientation in libraries was defined by Den Reader (1982, 35) in the reader-interest classification context, as "any action by library staff which helps to make (and keep) the library relevant, busy, pleasant to use, and encourages self help." In a further explanation, Reader added that: "at the same time an attempt is made to keep a balance between the commonly-agreed areas of service (recreation/information/education). The guiding light is always to make stock as accessible as possible to readers, and to ask whether any of librarianship's 'sacred cows' are sacred simply to the profession, and are of no practical help to readers." There are three important concepts within this definition that relate to reader-interest classifications: self-help, areas of service (or interest) and the

questioning of librarianship's "sacred cows," i.e., traditional methods of classification and arrangement in libraries. Within the literature on reader-interest classification, this last point has been of particular interest to several authors. For Ainley and Totterdell (1982), for instance, the rejection of traditional methods of classification and arrangement was one of the main *raisons d'être* behind reader-interest classifications in libraries.

In general, it was claimed that traditional classification systems were not designed with the user in mind, but rather according to the interests of the collection or the staff or in the name of some academic dogma which was of no use to the readers, i.e., according to one of librarianship's "sacred cows." Elsewhere, Totterdell (1978, 123) had also stated that: "librarians may fear that the community's ideas of what the library's role should be may not coincide with theirs," making the opposition between librarians and "the community" even more evident. According to Den Reader (1982, 41):

> Librarians know how good their libraries are, but does the public? ... Without orientation towards its users, the library is in danger of dying, and where does that leave those who argue only about the necessity of maintaining standards? Standards, yes, but in a users' library, not a librarians' library!

As Reader pointed out, standards and standardization were not considered to be contrary to the concept of user-orientation; it was only the philosophy behind those traditional standards that was rejected.

Within the literature on reader-interest classification, it was quite common to contrast the traditional standards held by libraries and librarians (such as Dewey) with what was called users' standards. Such a contrast is neatly illustrated by comments made by Alan Sykes, librarian at Camden Library, after attending a "reader-interest classification course" in Surrey, another library adopting a reader-interest classification (Sykes 1982, 383); "Above all, especially in the context of this course, we had to try to arrange stock in such a way that it reflected the mind of the reader and not the mind of the traditional ivory-tower, Dewey-obsessed, librarian. Since most readers were browsers, the best arrangement was probably by broad subject areas -in short, a popular arrangement."

For Douglas Betts (1982, 65), principal librarian at Surrey County Libraries, there was a danger of developing reader-interest categories which accounted for the needs of the librarian instead of the user, or in other words, of following the same process applied in traditional classifications: "lists (sometimes helpful) of favoured topics and fiction genres appear in some surveys, although the categories tend to be the librarian's, not the reader's." However, Betts

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regarded the categorization system as only a small part of a larger plan towards a more user-orientated service—one which combined the physical re-presentation of public libraries and a systematic demand-related approach to stock logistics and books selection.

Opposition to the use of the *DDC* and UDC has extended to the recent implementations of bookstore schemes in libraries (see Martínez-Ávila et al. 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Martínez-Ávila and Kipp 2014). However, it is arguable that despite two decades of the reader-interest movement, satisfactory alternatives have yet to be developed. As pointed out by Birger Hjørland, part of the problem is one of paradigms; that the "bibliographic paradigm" is sometimes wrongly assimilated to the "positivist view." Such a perspective might also have ramifications for the debate concerning cases of reader-interest classification and the philosophy that informs them (Hjørland 2007, 2):

> It seems as if the term 'the bibliographical paradigm' has only been used negatively as a contrast of something better. In this context it has been suggested that it is a part of 'the systems-oriented perspective' (or 'physical paradigm') in library and information science, which in the received view, is opposed to user-oriented paradigms.

In the context of reader-interest classification, the system-oriented perspective would be represented by traditional schemes and views such as Dewey; in the user-oriented paradigms, on the other hand, the "something better" would correspond to reader-interest classifications. In addition, Hjørland (2016) also notes the difference between user-friendly knowledge organization systems and user-based knowledge organization systems. While there is no question that both traditional and reader-interest classifications strive to be user-friendly today, reader-interest classifications also seem to follow a user-based and cognitive approach (a mentalist approach in which, by induction, the interests of a limited number of users is imposed to all). As Hjørland (2013, 11) nailed it, the subjectivity in the construction of knowledge organization systems should be "derived from collective views in discourse communities rather than be derived from studies of individuals or from the study of abstract minds derived from studies of individuals or from the study of abstract minds." In the case of reader-interest classifications, the views of the LIS theories and discourse—"the librarian-interests"—were declined in favor of the user studies of the libraries implementing the systems.

4.0 Meeting the user's need by gathering materials of interest: the distributed relatives problem

At the time that reader-interest classifications were being considered, libraries carried out surveys that found (Gans 1968; Totterdell & Bird 1976; Astin 1982) that the majority of users were not satisfied with public library service. One reason for this, according to the surveys, was that books were displayed in Dewey sequence, a 19th century conception of librarianship that divided knowledge into academic disciplines instead of topics of interest. In the literature on reader-interest classifications, this problem received the name of distributed relatives; for most advocates of reader-interest classification (see for instance Hubbard 1972; Sawbridge and Favret 1982) the main cause of this problem lay in the very nature of *DDC* itself. Distributed-relatives is the scattering of books about a given concrete subject across classes representing different aspects of that topic (Dousa 2015). In a famous quote of the reader-interest classification literature, Douglas Betts (1982, 63) explained distributed-relatives as follows:

> Traditional classification schemes, in creating a logical set of relationships between 'subjects,' fail to take account of the (changing) interests which lead people to approach those subjects. Interests cross logical boundaries (as do books themselves at times) with the consequence that books which readers would wish to access by interest are often widely and inconveniently separated on the shelves and in some instances one or other sequence may never be found. Conversely, books appear together on the shelves which have no relationship other than a formal academic one, to the benefit of no one in particular. The positive corollary of all this is that books should be grouped to reflect the actual or potential interest relationship between them, even if this means fragmenting the traditional classification sequence.

Other authors also pointed out the problem of distributed-relatives and the use of academic disciplines in developing library classifications. As James Donovan (1991, 28) put it: "Although subjects have a tendency to be treated in classification theory as thought they were natural, objective (i.e. 'real') categories, in fact they are arbitrary assemblages dependent upon time and place: one culture's religion (Dewey 200s) can easily be another's folklore (Dewey 390s). The categorization which necessarily precedes classification is therefore the product of a specific cultural and intellectual milieu." Yet, according to Donovan, there might be more cultural divergences and disagreements among some disciplines when gathered by Dewey than when they remain as scattered subjects, as for example the

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different traditions in anthropology between the United States, Great Britain and Germany (Anthropology would be defined in the United States by a "four field" theory, comprised of sociocultural, linguistic, physical anthropology and archeology; the British tradition would be notable for the explicit exclusion of linguistics for theoretical reasons; while the German schools would restrict themselves almost exclusively to ethnography. In both British and German traditions archeology would be coordinated with, and not subordinated by, anthropology). In addition, Donovan also claimed that arrangement by discipline generates at least two more problems: first, it introduces intellectual assumptions that are not always valid outside their original contexts; and second, it creates confusion since most works are not pure in their disciplinary contents, but rather mix or contrast disparate fields of study. In conclusion, Donovan claimed that current library classification systems based on academic disciplines cannot easily and neatly accommodate heterogeneous (interdisciplinary) materials in a way that maximizes utility for the patrons—that is, the way that the system obliges users to perceive subjects and the collection is psychologically uncomfortable.

In practice, the problem of the distributed relatives mainly surfaces in the way books are displayed on the shelves. Some authors such as Mary Ørvig, credited as one of the precursors of reader-interest classifications in Europe, pointed out that the treatment of the distributed relatives by reader-interest classifications would be primarily understood as a matter of demand and accessibility in libraries (Ørvig 1955, 231). However, as Harris pointed out (1985, 14), this problem might also be related to guidance: "Books on related subject are separated by Dewey into different classes and often library staff may fail to grasp or remember this and guide readers to only one location."

One solution was to apply reader-interest classifications as a corollary to the traditional system; the traditional Dewey sequence would be fragmented and the facets of the system would then be reorganized according to the reader's interest. For Andrew Miller (1992, 132), this meant that: "books previously separated by the Dewey Classification System are being brought together in categories, giving library users a wider range of stock on related subjects." This was a system that was already linear and as Miller saw it, the new way in which facets were developed would be of interest for the user since it did not follow academic disciplines. Because facets would be developed and reorganized into the system according to the reader-interests criteria, related materials could be gathered, remembered and retrieved together.

Because reader-interest classification meant grouping books together according to the relationships of interest between them, one of the most obvious problems that libraries had to face while defining categories was not only to determine the categories to represent the books, but also how to determine the interests (the relationships) that this singular reader would like to see reflected in the schemes, according to what they think groups of scattered books are about and the relationships between subjects. However, this might correspond to the problems of what Hjørland (1992, 175-6) called subjective-idealism:

> With regard to the user, a document can be ordered with the user's conceptual structures and subject perceptions in mind. The user may well have his subjective grasp of what the subject of the book is…he who seeks the key to the concept of 'subject' in the mind of the user commits an error of psychologism.

Furthermore, this solution was also object of further criticism and discussion in the reader-interest classification discourse; as pointed out by several authors, every facet order inevitably benefits some group of users and yet, in creating new distributed relatives, it has an adverse effect on the other groups. For Roy Payne (1983, 29), the main cause of the distributed-relatives problem was not just to be found in the nature of the *DDC* (as maintained by authors such as Sawbridge and Favret 1982): "for it is not a particular problem of Dewey. As long as authors persist in writing books on complex subjects any linear arrangement of those books will result in distributed relatives: create broader classes and re-christen them 'categories' or whatever, if you will, the problem will not go away." According to Payne, all the reader-interest classification examples given for instance by Sawbridge and Favret, concerning topics of interest that were separated by Dewey and gathered by the reader-interest classifications, created new and potential distributed-relatives and these could only be understood or resolved in terms of the linear nature of library classifications (and not in terms of the academic-like discipline which was the basis of Dewey—as suggested by reader-interest classification proponents). In short, every new arrangement scatters relatives and reader-interest classification does not seem to mean the end of this problem. In the words of Payne: "It is all a case of choosing which relatives to distribute, bearing in mind that in the out-and-out categorized library, with the abandonment of a closely classified and alphabetically indexed arrangement, any chance of ever gathering them up again is lost."

In general, the problem of the new distributed-relatives in reader-interest classifications was well known and even accepted among advocates of reader-interest classification. As a solution, they proposed relegating the interests of a certain group of users (purposive users) for the benefit of "the reader" (meaning the browser, see Martínez-Ávila and San Segundo 2013 for a more detailed discussion on the

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distinction between purposive readers and non-purposive readers in reader-interest classifications). The structure of the system was replaced by a new and entirely reader-oriented structure; the reader-interest classification that followed the same logic, the same principles and which caused the same inconveniences for certain groups of users as the old scheme. The only difference here was that the group of users that was placed at the center of the scheme—which benefited most from the system—was the group generally accepted as "the reader."

However, as Hope Olson has pointed out (1997, 62), a mere replacement of the rejected system with a new system, that targets a new group of users but follows the same logical principles, might not be the best solution: "All systems have a limit that excludes and/or marginalizes something or someone. Replacing the old system with a new one may change the limits, but it does not eliminate them. A more useful approach is to make the limit permeable to allow the voices of those previously excluded or marginalized to speak within the system." What is more, simply replacing the limits of reader-interest classifications could hardly be considered as vital to improving marginalized groups' access to information. Melodie Fox (2016) would rephrase this problem as "a hierarchy of oppressions."

Within the discourse of reader-interest classification, the targeted audience of the system is commonly referred to as "the reader," "the user," "the customer," or "the public." Use of the singular forms of these terms, including the explicit reader-interest classification name and the user-centered context, often denotes that only the interests of one single, homogeneous and exclusive group are intended to be addressed by the system. As Olson and Schlegl (2001, 78) pointed out "the danger of speaking of 'the user' is that that phrase suggests a particular user, a 'majority reader,' rather than the heterogeneous groups of users that vary from one context to another." Still, there were some other authors, such Roy Payne (1983, 29), who wondered what would happen to the minority of purposive readers that were traditionally well-served by libraries:

> In view of this, while the closely classified order may not be the ideal for browsing, but certainly does not make it impossible, the categorized arrangement on the other hand appears virtually to eliminate purposive use of the library. So surveys show that it is only 8% of readers using the library that way; if your readership is but 3000, that is 240 souls. Are they written off? ('If you insist on reading in this infuriating manner, you will just have to move to the next town—or preferably the next county!').

In this vein, it could be said that reader-interest classifications failed in at least two aspects: 1) catering all kinds of readers' interests (in plural terms), as it would be expected from a new "universal" system; and, 2) to clearly state the interests and views of the audience that is being targeted, i.e., recognizing the epistemological views, and their limitations, that are underlying the systems.

5.0 History and origins of reader-interest classifications: the Detroit Public Library

As pointed out before, the term reader-interest classification covers a wide range of concepts that display some common characteristics. While these concepts were usually practiced by a single—but geographically dispersed—movement, it is somewhat difficult to establish a unique time line for reader-interest classification as a whole. Indeed, the variety of concepts within the term, make it difficult to trace their emergence—that is from previous forms to a stage that could be "considered" to be a reader-interest classification (according to its characteristics). As such, it is not only a challenge to identify the origin of reader-interest classifications as a movement, but also to identify the origin of some of the individual terms covered by the umbrella term.

One example of this problem is the concept "subject departmentalism"—the division of the collection of larger libraries into separate subject areas or departments, each of them with different staff, reference and lending resources, and bibliographic tools—that was at one point included in the reader-interest classification movement not because of the rejection of the *Dewey Decimal Classification* but because of the inclusion of the creation of separate "popular" sections. According to Overington (1979), the first experiments with subject departmentalism in public libraries were made in Chicago in 1893 but were first fully developed in Cleveland in 1925 and in Los Angeles in 1926. Considered as a whole, this concept might only be considered a reader-interest classification at the exact point in which it was referred in the reader-interest classification literature (in which the use of the *DDC* was questioned for the organization of the popular sections). Outside of this moment, the concept of subject departmentalism changed so rapidly or focused so much on the division of departments *per se* that it could not really be considered a reader-interest classification or even related to any type of library classification. It could be argued that the only point in common between this concept and the reader-interest classification movement would be how both apply a different scheme for the user-oriented divisions. However, as with the case of the "two-tier arrangement," the idea of splitting the collection into several departments without any "user-oriented" section remains beyond the parameters of this study.

It is commonly agreed that reader-interest classifications—as alternatives to the established and so-called "non-friendly" standards such as the *DDC*—were first

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used in the late 1930s at the Detroit Public Library in the United States. Reader-interest classification thus first came to light some 60 years after the publication of the first edition of the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (then called *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging Books and Pamphlets of a Library*) and only few years after the publication of the second edition of its European adaptation, called for the first time *Classification Décimale Universelle* (Universal Decimal Classification). Reader-interest classifications therefore arrived just as the UDC was being promoted as a universal tool for classification, and the *DDC* in the United States had come to be regarded as the most adequate standard for libraries.

In 1936, Ralph A. Ulverling, then associate librarian at Detroit Public Library, came up with the idea of a classification scheme that offered an alternative to the classification of subjects represented in the *DDC*. In his proposal, Ulvering stated: "For some time I have wondered whether our popular book lending service as organized on traditional lines is pointed directly enough toward our service objectives; that is, whether the organization of our circulating units is adapted to the function we are trying to fulfill" (Rutzen 1952, 479)—others (Woodford 1965) would later express this as to, "classify not by subject but by patrons' reading inclinations."

A few years later, when Ulverling became a full librarian at Detroit, his idea was partially adopted in a pilot experiment at the Main Library in 1941, in what was called the "Browsers' Alcove" in the Open Shelf Room at the Main Library. The adoption of this experiment is considered to be the first time that reader-interest classification was applied. The original experiment at Detroit was applied to a collection of about three thousand books and was composed by the following headings:

– Background Reading (Classics, Art, Music, Belles Lettres)
– Everyman's Affairs (Current national problems)
– World Today-World Tomorrow (The international scene)
– Personal Living-Home and Family (Family relations, maintenance of house and home)
– Work and Play (Crafts and hobbies)
– Adventure (Mostly travel, geographical and scientific exploration)
– Bright Side (The light, the gay, the humorous)
– Industrial Era (Men, machines, mass production and its effects)
– Human Experience (Biography, and some types of travel and history)
– Other Places (Travel)
– Exploring Science (Application of modern science).

The public responded positively to this test and the entire bookmobile service was rearranged according to this system in 1945. From December 1948, the system was extended to both old and new branches in Detroit. Once this first attempted was considered successful, the scheme was expanded to 12 headings and applied to other branches. Four collections which moved into new buildings—the Elisabeth Knapp, Sherwood Forest, Lincoln, Jefferson and Jessie Chase branches—were completely classified according to the system and several old branches were partially re-classified along the same lines (Rutzen 1952, 479).

By 1955, the final version of the scheme was a combination of 14 "subject sections" (categories of interest for the browser) and "information sections" with fields such as "content," "alternatives" and "purpose." Each section was subdivided into subheadings and represented by an alpha-numerical notation. Subject sections were intended to serve readers with specific needs, while Information sections contained factual material and textbooks for answering specific questions.

The *DDC* was retained in most old branches that adopted the new system and was eventually dropped in smaller collections. There were multiple reasons why Dewey was retained in many of the collections: first, catalog cards were produced at the central library, carrying the Dewey number; second, all experiments could be undone if results were not considered positive (a "certain safeguard if our experiment should prove not to be workable," Rutzen 1952, 481); third, it was difficult to have the collections rearranged manually. This was also a problem for the different versions of the scheme, and something that somehow contributed to the idea that reader-interest classifications were only adequate for smaller collections.

Eventually the scheme in Detroit was dropped due to the lack of universalization and centralization, which meant a waste of resources (Ainley and Totterdell 1982, 9). Its legacy however was significant: not only were similar schemes adopted in other library systems in the United States (such as the Boston Public Library) but they were also presented to a European audience (Ørvig 1955).

6.0 Reader-interest classifications during the 1970s and the user-centered revolution

Reader-interest classifications became particularly popular with many public libraries during the late 1970s. In part this can be explained by the fact that the user-orientation movement reached its peak at this time—reflected by the fact that it started to gain acceptance within library and information science and information organization around 1970, as pointed out by Hjørland (2007, 3) and Nahl (1996; 2003).

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Another factor in their popularity might also have been a general desire at that time to experiment with change; the oil crisis of 1973 and the subsequent recession meant that libraries were forced to seek out alternative sources of funding and to develop innovative projects and commercial-oriented practices in order to maximize their resources. As a consequence, some libraries started to look towards bookstores and commercial practices for solutions and were thus influenced by some of their information organization practices (and in some cases these libraries ended up adopting some of these practices).

According to Hoffman (2009), library and information science standards started to move toward the user-centered paradigm in research and practice with contributions from researchers such as Paisley (1968), Allen (1969) and Zweizig (1976) shifting the paradigm within library and information science from systems and standards to users. This interest in user-centered practices and theories also affected the way that libraries were physically organized and a wide range of practices and arrangements were embraced under the reader-interest or user-centered umbrella. Among the main studies conducted on library classification from a user-centered perspective were works by Groombridge (1964), Luckham (1971) and Taylor and Johnson (1973) (see Ainley and Totterdell 1982, 9). As pointed out by Ainley and Totterdell, most of these works—and those similar to them—mainly focused on non-fiction collections.

One of the first proponents of reader-interest classification in the UK is considered to be Archibald William McClellan, Chief Librarian of Tottenham. From 1949 to 1970, McClellan studied a wide range of concepts related to the social and pragmatic role of libraries within society and the way libraries could serve the community. One of his central concerns was the reader and McClellan committed himself to finding the best way to arrange the collection in order to meet the reader's interests (McClellan 1973), with a particular focus on the integration of stock and the division of the collection (or two-tier arrangement). In subsequent years, the experiment conducted by Tottenham library with reader-interest arrangements was an important source of inspiration for many other libraries all across the country.

7.0 Fall of non-fiction reader-interest classifications during the 1980s and 1990s

During the 1980s, there was a loss of interest among public libraries in applying reader-interest classifications to non-fiction. Despite this, the philosophy behind the reader-interest classification movement was still considered relevant and debate continued as to the validity and adequacy of Dewey. One example of this debate can be found on Arthur Maltby and Ross Trotter's interesting discussion in the "Catalogue and Index" journal of 1984 on the adequacy of Dewey and on reader-interest classifications as possible solutions to problems faced by contemporary libraries—"Dewey as an Asset" (Trotter 1984) and "*Dewey Decimal Classification:* A Liability?" (Maltby 1984). While both authors recognized that Dewey might not be totally adequate for libraries, neither did they consider reader-interest classifications to be the best of alternatives. In defending Dewey, Trotter (1) stated that:

> The recent obsession with "reader interest treatment" is at base nothing more than broad enumerative classification taken to extremes. All this approach does is to set up a small number of very broad disciplines, and then to ignore, more or less, any principles of subdivision within them. I personally feel that this is something of a cop-out, leaving the reader with most of the work of locating the sort of material he or she requires. A regular classification, with principles of division and subdivision, and backed by a good alphabetical index, is to my mind far superior.

Although it suffered a decline during the 1980s, non-fiction reader-interest classification was still practiced in some libraries during the first half of the 1990s. Among them were the De Beauvoir Junior School Library in the UK (Bridgwater 1990) and the Glasgow City libraries (Miller 1992) while other instances can be found in Jacquelyn Sapiie's work (1995, one of the very last bibliographic retrospectives on reader-interest classifications found in the literature). Although De Beauvoir Junior School Library pointed out that the previous experience of Brent and Camden libraries in the 1980s had influenced their own experiment in reader-interest classification, their interest in the advantages of this system were practically confined to the children's section, leaving the adult section with a shadow of a system that had been designed to provide for the whole collection: "Readers will be aware that such schemes have been very successful, particularly in the organisation of children's libraries (though many adult users also express relief at the introduction of an easier system)" (Bridgwater 1990, 53).

The De Beauvoir and Glasgow City libraries might be considered two of the very last non-fiction reader-interest classifications cases *per se* reported in the literature—the former dominated under the system of broad categories (or subject categories), and the latter as an alternative arrangement. In some ways both cases were the last of an era in which the concept of reader-interest classification captured the attention of many librarians.

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8.0 Rise of bookstore practices and fiction categorization

The decline of reader-interest classifications of non-fiction during the 1980s and 1990s coincided with the increasing interest in fiction classifications and a more commercially orientated vocabulary.

Richard Maker (2008a, 171) points out that the concept of fiction categorization was initially "'borrowed' from a bookstore model because it is thought people prefer to browse and choose books by genre rather than alphabetically by author." In practice, the concept has been noticeable popular in the UK and the Eastern States of Australia since the late 1980s (Maker 2008b), and in other countries around the world (for instance, arrangement of popular fiction by genre was the norm in Danish public libraries since at least the mid-1970s, while Annelise Mark Pejtersen's *Book House System*, developed in 1987, is another good example of fiction classification in Denmark that claimed to follow a user-based approach—see Hjørland, 2013, for a detailed study on the *Book House System* regarding this matter). Although it is true that some libraries around the world arranged fiction by genre before the 1980s (such as in Denmark), there does not seem to be a clear link between the birth of fiction categorization and the reader-interest classification movement according to the literature. It rather seems that some of the reader-interest classification focus shifted to fiction classification transforming that concept or even creating an offshoot that for a time substituted the reader-interest classification concept.

A quick survey of the reader-interest classification literature reflects the development of this shift: initially fiction categorization was either secondary or non-existent in the reader-interest classification experiments (Sawbridge and Favret 1982; Wijland 1985) or was given the same importance as non-fiction (Augenanger 1981; Venter 1984; Sivulich 1989). The central role given to fiction categorization can be seen in the works of Harrel (1985), Baker and Shepherd (1987), Borden (1987), Langhorne (1987), Baker (1988b), Kellum (1989), McGrady (1990), Scott (1995), Saricks (1997, 2006) and Scilken (1998), although hardly mixed with the same arguments that were posited on the past literature on reader-interest classification literature of non-fiction. In addition, it is worth noting that, although Borden's paper was originally published in 1906 in the *Library Journal*, it was not until 1987 that it was reprinted by *The Unabashed Librarian* in the middle of a stream of publications by Baker and others on fiction classification. For some reason, Borden's work was overlooked during the previous reader-interest classification references suggesting a theoretical disconnection with the Detroit Public Library discourse.

On the other hand, although the concept of reader-interest classification did not disappear, the term reader-interest classification was also abandoned for a more commercially orientated vocabulary as new terms and ideas from bookstores and commercial spheres became increasingly popular in the United States. One example of this trend can be found in Langhorne's work (1987), where bookstore approaches in libraries were compared with previous reader-interest experiments in the UK in the areas of fiction and non-fiction categorization, labeling and signage, visibility and physical location and display. Although bookstore techniques seemed to be a more commercial and more appealing concept in the 1990s than "reader-interest classification" or "alternative arrangement," it was virtually alike in all but name and the new techniques did not add anything new to the previous concepts.

Re-labeling of the reader-interest concept as a "bookstore (bookshop) approach" did not only take place in the United States in the 1990s but also in countries that followed the British tradition during the 2000s, such as the United Kingdom itself and Australia. While these approaches had many characteristics in common with the reader-interest classifications (which had been very popular during the previous decades in some of these countries), rarely did they include the terms "bookstore classifications" or "classifications."

For instance, the 2002 Audit Commission's "Building Better Library Services" report in the UK (Audit Commission 2002) indicated several aspects that libraries could improve if they adopted bookstores practices. Although the Audit Commission's report did not mention library classification systems, it applied arguments that were almost identical to those employed more than 20 years earlier during the reader-interest experiments. Other interesting concepts used in the Audit Report were the terms "reader development" and "reader development schemes." These terms basically coincided with the practical applications of reader-interest classifications to the collection development and stock control. This latter aspect was also pointed out by many reader-interest classification advocates, such as Ainley and Totterdell, as being one of the main advantages of reader-interest classifications in the past (see Martínez-Ávila and Satija 2015 for a discussion on this matter). It could be argued that these advantages seem to have remained valid over time.

9.0 Current cases of implementation of BISAC in public libraries as new cases of reader-interest classifications

Since the second half of the 2000s, several public libraries in the United States have been experimenting with BISAC (Martínez-Ávila, 2016) as an alternative classifica-

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tion system to Dewey for non-fiction. These kinds of experiments gained a major attention by the media mainly in 2007, when Perry Branch Library in Maricopa County (Arizona) was presented in the literature as the first case of Dewey-BISAC switching in US public libraries.

After this case, several other libraries in the United States and abroad have looked to Maricopa as a source of inspiration for the remodeling and new opening projects of their systems. As well they started to consider BISAC and other bookstore-like techniques as a good alternative to the traditional practices in knowledge organization. As "space management" of supermarkets is taught in school of Business, Paco Underhill and his *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (1999) became a major influence and common reference in these projects. Despite the omission of every reference to the old and failed reader-interest classification projects in the discourses of adoption of BISAC in libraries, with the exception of a brief mention in an editorial of *School Library Journal* (Kenney 2007), these cases of *DDC-*BISAC switching for non-fiction have also been studied as new cases of reader-interest classifications (Martínez-Ávila 2012; Martínez-Ávila et al. 2014). As reported in these studies, some arguments reinforcing the idea of BISAC as a new case of reader-interest classification include: the rejection of Dewey under the assumption that it is not useful for the majority of library users, assumed to be browsers or non-purposive readers; the introduction of multiple factors at one time, many of them related to signage, labeling, guiding, facilities, etc., and the use of pilot and reversible tests before the expansion of the experiments; the aim to maximize resources, and a claimed increase in circulation with the implementation of the projects; and the influence of previous cases and the local scene. It is also concluded that the main difference between BISAC and the reader-interest classifications of the past is the existence of central organizations involved in the scheme (such as BISG). They could be regarded as external aspects of the system, linked to the globalized situation of current times, and therefore discarded as a decisive negative factor against identifying BISAC with the concept of reader-interest classification.

10.0 Conclusion

The concept of reader-interest classification, despite its variations, has shown some common characteristics. As for the terminology, historically, there has not been a single, unified terminology on the concept of reader-interest classification in the literature. During the different stages of the concept its terminology was changed from the original term "reader-interest classification" used in the case of the Detroit Public Library (and first expressed in the literature in 1952) to the more commer-

cial oriented terminology of the 1990s and after. However, although the terminology and some of the reader-interest classification features have varied according to the literature during the period of 1952-1995, the concept has also kept a core of common and agreed upon characteristics, alleged advantages and shortcomings throughout this time.

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