J. B. Friis-Hansen
Danish School of Librarianship, Copenhagen

Library Classification Systems in Denmark

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Report about the development of the classification system for public libraries in Denmark, the "Danish Dewey" and its five editions since its first one in 1915, as well as brief outline of more recent developments concering subject cataloguing and cooperation between the Danish public libraries and the research libraries. I. C.

1. Introduction

The use of library classification systems in Denmark is closely related to the facts of library organization in our country. As libraries fall into several worlds of some similarity, but are far from being totally unified while also having to serve different clienteles – as e. g. research and university libraries, special libraries and documentation services, public libraries, school libraries – the development of library classification systems has not been coordinated and cooperation in classification has been attained only to a certain degree.

The UDC has been in use in technical and related special libraries for many years, the Dansk Central for Dokumentation at the Technical University Library being the Danish link to the FID. An interesting new development is the use of the UDC in two newer Danish university libraries (Roskilde, Aalborg) whereas older Danish universal libraries have developed their own universal systems or adopted and adapted other systems. Special libraries not using UDC have in some cases preferred especially elaborated systems, fit for special disciplines.

The most widely used system is the Danish Decimal Classification System (an illegitimate daugther of Dewey's), in librarians' slang acronymically named DK1, DK2, DK3, DK4 and DK5, indicating at the same time also the five existing editions. This is the system in use in public libraries, in school libraries, in the collection of Danish books at the Royal Library, Copenhagen, at the Teachers' School Library, in the Danish National Bibliography and in other links in the chain of national bibliographic publications.

2. The five editions of the Danish Dewey

Our Danish Dewey emanates from the 7th edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification of 1911, the 800 pages of which were cut down to only 51 in the Danish version. It was inaugurated in 1900 by Andreas Schack Steenberg in his book "Folkebogsamlinger" (Public Libraries). He was in favor of the "American invention", although commenting that this mechanical way of a decimalized break-down of the universe of knowledge resulted in "uneven libraries", with e. g. the library 100 'Philosophy' being very small as compared with the one for 900 'History, Geography and Biography'.

In the introduction to DK1 the decimal philosophy was accepted, but the original class 900 was reduced in the corresponding Danish class 90 to comprise history and biography only, with geography being moved to class 40 and linguistics being despelled from there and chained to literature as an adjoining discipline. The latter operation, it was argued, had already become standard shelving practice in American libraries. In true "Cutter spirit", future expansions were envisaged.

Committee work on DK1 was started in the years shortly before the first world war with the DK1 itself being published only in 1915. On the Committee were some of the most prominent library pioneers of that time, including Thomas Dessing. It was decided that two figures would be sufficient in the base number for the purpose of classifying the then very small book-collections of the scarce Danish public libraries. This characteristic of the system has been retained through the five editions. The system was published originally by the State Inspectorate for the public libraries, that is, DK1 (1915), DK2 (1929), DK3 (1942) with the latest two editions DK4 (1954) and DK5 (1970) being published by the Library Bureau which is the institution authorized by Danish public library legislation to publish this classification system, which all government-subsidized public libraries are required to use.

In 1929 the second edition was launched by the Committee. By now, librarianship and libraries were flourishing to such an extent that the system could offer optional lengths in the notation, according to the differing sizes of the collections to be classed. Alongside with the book-numbers, this idea of expansitivity was the "gift" from that other great American: Charles A. Cutter. Several changes were introduced in this edition, especially in class 30 – Social Sciences and in class 60 – Technology.

Thirteen years later – in 1942 – the third edition appeared, bigger in size and in number of pages. The number of subject headings had likewise been enlarged with a view to the centralized cataloguing started in the late thirties with the establishment of the Danish Bibliographic Office, now renamed the Library Bureau. This institution also supplied printed cards for the public libraries, as well as bibliographic aids for librarians and library users, and it initiated an extensive use of the services of specialists, who cooperated as consultants in the classing of books, in terming subject headings and in developing the DK-system.

The fourth edition of 1954 brought no major changes in the schedules and was largely an updating.

Work on the fifth edition was started in 1959, when it was felt that the system was in need of some thorough overhauling work by a committee, owing to the fact that

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the old system was not only a bit out of fashion but had also great difficulties in properly accomodating such new subject fields as cybernetics, information science, computer science, etc.

A decisive question for the Committee to solve was that concerning the aim and scope of the new edition: should its main purpose be shelving, should it serve also as an effective search instrument in library collections or should it even have purely bibiographic search qualities? A mixture of these three demands had been observed for many years so as to ensure that each book would always have the same address wherever it would appear. As this question was rather controversial with nobody being able to predict the possible effects of a change, it was decided to uphold the tradition of having one system for all three purposes. DK5 got more refined classes but mostly so on an empirical basis. The guiding principle had alway been not the change anything just for the sake of better logic; any inconsistencies detected should be allowed to live on. Irritating reclassifications had to be avoided since they would not make anybody happy, neither the borrowers, who would neither care nor know, nor the librarians, who would know but not care. Only the committee members, having discovered the inconsistencies, might possibly rejoice, but who cares about their happiness?

The work on the new, the fifth edition lasted for 10 years; the democratic procedure of the committee being partly an excuse for the slowness. Besides the several specialists acting as consultants the committee had organized a background corresponding group consisting of representatives from 30 public libraries. This group devoted itself not only to the solution of problems of a more difficult nature such as the conservation of the basic philosophy of the system and the amount of reclassification to be tolerated, but also to more detailed questions of fundamental interest such as the question of how to avoid interference with the search procedures in a long line of bibliographies which would be interrupted by too vehement and radical alterations in the schemes and by too harsh decisions.

When DK5 was finally published the number of its classes had grown to more than 3000. Among other things, this was due to the fact that almost all classes had been compared with the newest editions of Dewey, the UDC, the Swedish SAB-system and various other systems in order to keep abreast with or even a little ahead of the foreseeable acquisitions of our public libraries. The main structure, however, had been preserved.

Since there had been also representatives from research libraries on the Committee, the possible use of this classification in research libraries with open shelves was discussed. Such libraries would, however, need more extended classes and more flexibility, and the enumerative system would have to be changed into one with combination facilities. Although the extension was not agreed upon, synthetics were allowed to creep into the precincts of the system; auxiliary tables were discussed but introduced only in a very embrionic way, namely only the 05 for periodicals. The basic structure of the general subdivision table is shown together with the introduction to the edition.

The unusual conservatism observed had its explanation in the centralized classification of books, periodicals and newspapers at the Library Bureau.

The necessary reclassifications seemed rather disquieting, although better search possibilities on the shelves, in the catalogues and in bibliographies were the reward of the new edition. A new Classification Committee was appointed immediately upon the dissolution of the old one. This Committee was to see to it that alterations in the system would be carried out as soon as manifest changes inside or between disciplines were discovered, thus avoiding that libraries would ever again have to face such a burden of reclassification as was the bitter harvest after the appearance of DK5. However, such minor alterations as were published were not welcomed by the libraries which were badly in need of a more tranquil period and had had quite enough of reclassification.

3. New ways for subject cataloguing

Since World War II classified catalogues have gradually gained ground against the dictionary catalogues. They are now the only way to subject approach in Danish public libraries. This fact has led to big organizational gains and eliminated all individuality in library catalogues. The centralization mentioned above was working well. The loss of the alphabetical approach was, however, regretted by some. In 1974 a Subject-Catalogue Committee was organized by the Library Bureau with the object of recommending procedures for computerized subject catalogues for public libraries as well as for school libraries. Alphabetical and systematic indexing methods were to be examined for both off-line and on-line searches. A separation of shelving systems and classified catalogue systems was to be discussed. Cooperation possibilities with research and special libraries and the possible international exchange of bibliographical data were also to be investigated. All the members of the DK5 committee were appointed members of the Subject-Catalogue Committee also and in addition two representatives from the Council of the Danish Research Libraries soon joined the group – a historical event, since this meant the first official cooperation between public and school libraries on the one hand and research and special libraries on the other hand in the history of Danish librarianship.

It was soon felt that a survey of the literature on classification and indexing systems was badly needed, as well as an evaluation of different classification systems versus indexing systems. A joint interest in a common subject indexing system was soon apparent, but unanimity in a joint classification system seems to be still a matter of the very distant future. The many years of work with the DK in public and in school libraries as well as in the bibliographies have cemented it in the minds of many librarians.

In Danish special libraries and in the aforementioned university libraries the UDC is in use, although with some modifications. A real UDC-committee was established only this year, however. It will be very useful in offering cooperation possibilities among UDC-users in Denmark. It may become the forum for a follow-up of a recommendation set forth by another committee,

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which was appointed by the Council of the Research Libraries in Denmark in 1972. This recommendation advised to look for a classification system that would be suitable for the demands of the research libraries. The UDC, being considered as the system that with the least endeavors and with the least elaboration could be fitted to the purpose if it was available in a Danish edition, came out as the winner.

At present the situation regarding classification in Denmark is in the state of a draw. Hopes for a common classification system exist, and much thought is being given to the possibilities for its realization. The American Dewey is entering the discussions, too, since it is provided on the Marc tapes and since it possesses the peculiar extra merit of not being used by either kind of library in Denmark. Since it is the ancestor of both of the systems in use it may have some chances.

Cooperation regarding the index to DK5 and a future UDC also seems to be something very desirable. So far, however, the doors are open to any new development.

Available in Spring 1977
in reprinted edition

Evgenij Ivanovic Samurin
Geschichte der bibliothekarisch-bibliographischen Klassifikation
(History of Library-Bibliographical Classification)

Band 1: Vom Altertum bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts (From antiquity to the beginning of the 19th century)
Band 2: Das 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (The 19th and 20th century)

1977. Reprint of the edition 1969. Vol. I/II in one volume. XXXII, 1186 pages, 12 illustrations. Cloth appr. **DM** 160.00. In German.

In view of the structural diversity to be found in the subject catalogues of German libraries one is conscious of the urgent need für standardization, for a classification system commensurate with the present state of the various branches of learning, resulting in the optimal exploitation of library stocks.

This study by the internationally well-known Soviet library scholar E.I. Samurin provides an historical survey on the development of classification systems from antiquity to the present day. By critical examination and evaluation of material at hand as also of his own personal experience, he gives practical suggestions for the establishing of a subject catalogue.

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Mogens Weitemeyer
The Royal Library, Copenhagen

Which way to "Shared Classification"? A Danish View

Weitemeyer, M.: **Which way to "Shared Classification"? A Danish view.**
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Report on the results of an investigation to clarify 1) which classification systems are in use in other countries than Denmark meeting some preestablished criteria and 2) how much of the Danish classification data is preclassified on available magnetic tapes and in which classification system. Data for the use of the systems are shown as well as the percentages for language distribution of foreign literature in Danish research libraries. Discussion of new trends which may lead to use of a rough classification supplemented with subject headings.

I. C.

1. Introduction

The following is a summary of the main points of a report, delivered in December 1975 to the Danish Advisory Council for Research Libraries on the use of international classification systems in Denmark (1). It had been preceded by two other reports of 1967 and 1972 respectively. In the 1967 report the UDC, DDC and LCC were investigated and evaluated with reference to a new university library's policy for shelving and cataloguing. The UDC was recommended in very cautious terms. It was realized that use of an 'international' system would result in the acceptance of rules or notations that seemed superfluous and in a lack of rules of notations of national and local value. The notation of the UDC seemed to minimize these problems, chiefly on account of its combinatorial structure (2). In the 1972 report on administrative requirements, the following five criteria were considered basic for a general classification system:

1) universality
2) possibilities for Danish influence on the system
3) internationality
4) a system already known in Denmark
5) possibilities for a subject index

Classification data (notations for a classed item entered on a bibliographic description, as e. g. the MARC format descriptions) were only touched upon in an appendix to the report in which the codes on exchange tapes were mentioned. At the time of the report it appeared that the USA, England, Sweden and France would all use the UDC. This would have meant that roughly 60% of the Danish research libraries accessions of foreign books would have been preclassified by the UDC. This aspect was of course

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