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The Regensburg Classification Scheme: Users and Partners

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Description of the history and development of the home-made Regensburg Classification Scheme since 1964 and its notation which has been built according to the one of the Library of Congress. Although not intended in the beginning, the Scheme has become the common tool for a number of Bavarian libraries since 1970 and also of libraries in Switzerland (since 1986) and the so-called new German states (after 1990). The individual schedules are listed and also the classification aids published with the Scheme's progressing. Concludingly future plans are outlined. (K.O.)

0. Introduction

For some time it has been clear that the Regensburg Classification Scheme has deserved a presentation along the lines of those existing for other general classification schemes. There are several reasons for this. One is the need to give information to a wider international audience. Another is to bring together the experience of specialists in classification theory and those working with classification. We know that practising librarians are busy, students are grappling with a crowded curriculum, and the relevant literature is scattered.

1. Development

The University of Regensburg Library was founded in the year 1964. After studying the possibilities of adopting one of the major published classification schemes - above all in the context of discussing a so-called unitary classification scheme („Einheitsklassifikation“) - the University of Regensburg Library established a new „home-made“ classification scheme for their own open-access library. This idea of the good neighbourhood of books is based on the assumption that researchers - of humanities above all - tend to seek information and creative use of literature by browsing among the stacks of the library.

The result has been that the open-access library especially owes much of its efficiency to the flexibility and usefulness of its classification system.

The Library of Congress classification was also considered to be too strongly based in American thought to be of use to a new German university library like Regensburg or a German academic library in general.

However, serious consideration was given to the mixed notation of double letters and numbers used for LCC. From a theoretical viewpoint, Regensburg's notation is certainly adequate.

Like LCC, a Regensburg classmark consists in general of three principal elements: location number, classification number and author number (the Cutter-Sanborn number).

These author symbols are composed of an initial letter followed by Arabic numerals. To these may be added symbols designating a particular title and/or a particular edition.

Here is an example:

Eric John Dobson: English pronunciation 1500-1700
65 / HF 190 D 635
Location number Modern Phonetics Author[CSN]
for English English
(separate number
for each library)

There is no reason why alphabetical order should not be used, to a certain extent, within the classification scheme whenever it is the most sensible method of sub-arrangement or whenever it can bring about a more useful grouping than a classified sequence; yet the alphabetical arrangement can only justifiably replace a classified one if we are sure that no loss of efficiency results.

Many of the schedules also provide common geographical divisions, although they may not always use this term to denote them.

There are many „see“ and „see also“ references too in the schedules.

The Regensburg classification scheme was originally designed and developed as a pragmatic system to classify the books of the Regensburg collection and for future expansion of the collection. This system was not intended for use by any other library.

Max Pauer, chief librarian of Regensburg 1964-1989, emphasized the practical considerations as an important basis for the development of the Regensburg classification scheme. But ten years ago we started to work more intensively with theoretical considerations in mind. For this reason understanding the relationship between classification and browsing is essential for librarians and information scientists. Thus a successful classification system should minimize the amount of user-time spent for browsing.

Therefore more efforts went into developing aids for using the classification scheme.

Like most university and other academic libraries in Germany, Regensburg had a separate classification scheme for the years 1964-1969, similar in essence to LCC which was used for shelfmarks and in the stack.

But unlike most university and other academic libraries in Germany, Regensburg has developed its classification in line with the classification of a large group of German academic libraries.

This classification, as has been stressed, was originally only intended for the University of Regensburg but it has also been employed with success elsewhere. Other academic libraries therefore use the same classification scheme and they employ it with only few adaptations.

The history of this development shows three main steps:

1) Since 1970 extensive cooperation has been going on with the newly founded University of Augsburg Library, followed by the other new university libraries in Bavaria, and also with the old and famous university libraries of Erlangen and Würzburg.

2) During the 80's a group of other libraries in Bavaria with predominantly technical interests worked together with Regensburg and its partners and began to use the classification scheme (partly reclassifying from the formerly used Universal Decimal Classification).

In the neighbouring countries of Germany there are also users of the Regensburg classification scheme, for example the University Library of St. Gallen (Switzerland) - since 1986.

3) The most significant developments have taken place since 1990. The unification of Germany brought together the „Regensburg classification group“ (i.e. the group of academic libraries using the Regensburg classification scheme) with a large number of important university libraries and other scientific libraries of the former GDR.

It is a pleasure indeed to report that a large number of famous libraries like the Humboldt Universität Berlin, Chemnitz (-Zwickau), Dresden, Greifswald, Leipzig and Rostock have become users of the classification scheme and at the same time cooperating partners in the on-going work of improving the scheme.

At the same time it is gratifying to see that newly opened university libraries like Erfurt, Frankfurt/Oder and Potsdam have become users of the classification scheme.

Two years ago research of Hans-Joachim Zerbst and Olaf Kaptein showed the Regensburg Classification Scheme to have a special significance for German academic libraries.

2. Classification scheme

The Regensburg classification schedules comprises altogether 34 physical volumes. The individual schedules

are kept up-to-date by:

- 1) Newsletter (semi-annual), published by the secretary at Regensburg, with three units:
 - State-of-the-Art
 - Additions, Modifications and Corrections
 - List of individual schedules
- 2) On-going contact between specialists and the secretary
- 3) New editions of the individual schedules appearing periodically

Each schedule has a similar, even identical format. A prefatory note, containing a brief history of the schedule, accompanies the usual elements making up each schedule.

Like class P of LCC, the philological schedules E-K of the Regensburg classification contain over one third of the pages of the entire classification scheme.

Nevertheless the schedule „Technology“ has assumed an ever-growing significance during the past few years.

Subject specialists at the partner libraries developed and continue to develop each of the individual schedules by consulting academics. The revision policy is, on the whole, very good. The full editions make steady, if unspectacular, progress and are mainly devoted to the sciences. Each schedule is published separately; no text is older than 1988. The revision is continuous; one has to acknowledge the very practical attitude of the team of compilers.

It must be stressed that this classification is essentially a team product and that, in many ways, it is best thought of as a co-ordinated series of special classification systems.

University of Regensburg Library Classification Scheme: Individual Schedules

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| A | General. Bibliography. Encyclopaedias (General). General reference works. Universities. Libraries and library science. Information science. Environment. 1993; 4th ed.; 245 p. |
| B | Theology. Religion 1993; Add. of the 4th ed. (1987); 356 p.; index |
| CA-CI | Philosophy 1992; Add. of the 4th ed. (1989); 58 p. |
| CL-CZ | Psychology 1990; 4th ed.; 21 p. |
| D | Education 1993; Add. of the 5th ed. (1987); 49 p. |
| E | General and comparative linguistics and philology. Indo-European languages. Extra-European languages and literatures. 1993; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1987); 179 p. |
| F | Classical languages and literatures (Ancient, Medieval, and Modern) 1993; Add. of the 2nd ed. (1984); 308 p. |
| G | Germanic languages and literatures 1993; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1987); 315 p. |
| H | English (British English, American English). English literature (including US-literature) 1995; 5th ed.; 277 p. |
| I | Romance Philology 1992; 5th ed.; 344 + 160p. |
| K | Slavonic Philology 1994; Add. of the 3rd ed. |

- (1988); 346 + 357 p.
- LA-LC Ethnology. Ethnograph 1994; 5th ed.; 22 p.
- LD-LG Classical Archaeology 1993; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1984); 41 p.
- LH-LO Fine arts 1992; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1988); 433 p.
- LP-LZ Music and Musicology 1993; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1988); 165 p.
- MA-MM Political Science 1993; 5th ed.; 80 p.; index
- MN-MS Sociology 1993; Add. of the 6th ed. (1990); 29 p.; index
- MX-MZ Military Science 1993; Add. of the 2nd ed. (1982); 28 p.; index
- N History (including Auxiliary sciences) 1993; 6th ed.; 175 + 224 p.
- P Law 1992; 7th ed.; 179 p.
- Q Economics 1992; 4th ed.; 175 p.; index
- R Geography 1993; 7th ed.; 48 p.
- SA-SP Mathematics 1992; 6th ed.; 53 p.; index
- SQ-SU Information technology 1993; 6th ed.; 44 p.; index
- TA-TD Natural Science (General) 1993; Add. of the 4th ed. (1990); 11 p.
- TE-TZ Geology and Palaeontology 1993; Add. of the 4th ed. (1990); 63 p.
- U Physics 1994; 6th ed.; 105 p.; index
- V Chemistry and Pharmaceutics 1993; 6th ed.; 104 p.; index
- WA-WU Biology 1991; 4th ed.; 223 p.
- WW-YZ Medicine 1992; 5th ed.; 153 p.; index
- ZA-ZE Agriculture. Forestry. Horticulture. Fishing. Home Economics 1993; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1988); 72 p.; index
- ZG-ZS Technology 1993; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1991); 120 p.; index
- ZX-ZY Sports 1993; 5th ed.; 53 p.; index
- O Students' library 1992; Add. of the 3rd ed. (1988); 43 p.

The following aids for classification are offered:

- 1) Rules for the assignment of shelfmarks (5th ed., 1992)
- 2) Newsletter vol. 1-, 1985- (semi-annual)
- 3) Bibliography: a survey of works about the Regensburg classification scheme
- 4) Outline of the Regensburg Classification scheme
- 5) Index to the classification scheme (4th ed., 1992, 6 microfiches; about 100.000 entries)

There are separate indexes to fifteen, and lists of authors/names to seven of the thirty-four individual schedules.

The system, therefore, may serve as an example of a classification scheme useful and perhaps also successful in some academic and other libraries.

3. Classification in progress

Plans in the field of classification for the next years include:

- Updating according to developments in the sciences and humanities
- Revision of auxiliary tables and indexes
- Online classification: a project is in the offing at the University of Regensburg library supported by DFG (German Research Organization).

As far as possible, the Regensburg Classifications should be maintained and developed as a tool for the organization of knowledge which is to meet the needs of users in a variety of different circumstances and areas.

Certainly the foundations of a library classification scheme can be safely laid by thinking of it as a language. At the same time library classification, which is subject to technical and financial restrictions such as we are experiencing now, seems to face insurmountable limitations regarding the multitude of special subjects to be organized. It is the knowledge of these limitations which made us look for help from. Some help is possible from another tool: the use of subject headings. As the process of subject analysis is necessary for both, the assignment of classification numbers and subject headings it was concluded to combine the two activities.

In future we want online classification data to:

- use classification numbers for validation, global changes, and links to subject headings
- enhance subject access, automate shelflist functions
- incorporate online classification data into a workstation
- provide timely updates to classification numbers
- print the schedules from an online database
- assist in the task of reclassification

The Library is pleased to receive information and communications from colleagues working in the field of classification to help in planning the future of the Regensburg Classification.

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