Reasons for the changes

It is widely accepted that the last century has seen some of the most dramatic and rapid changes in our society; knowledge has increased, technology has advanced and boundaries have been pushed out. The Dewey Decimal Classification schedules are designed to allow all areas of knowledge to be represented; when knowledge, technology and understanding change, the schedules are expanded, contracted and modified to reflect this. It is nearly eight years since the current edition of Dewey (22) was introduced, and many areas are inadequately represented, as so much has changed since 2003.

To change, or not to change?

There are many approaches to re-classification, but it is important to establish the necessity of re-classifying any specific area. Herein lie many paradoxes. A specific class number may have changed dramatically, but may not be an area that is taught at the university; therefore one may decide not to undertake re-classification of that area. On the other hand, however, because the subject is not taught there are only a couple of hundred items at that number, a quantity that could easily be handled by the staff available; therefore it may be decided to undertake re-classification. An area of change that is taught by the university would undoubtedly benefit from the enhanced classification, but would be a difficult task given the number of titles concerned and staff availability.

It is, therefore, necessary to evaluate each area of change, and decide if items can be left at the current numbers or if they should be re-classified to the new edition. Decisions may be based on:

- the use of stock (little use would indicate that re-classification might not be necessary)
- viability of the course (if a course is likely to be withdrawn in the near future then there is little point re-classifying the material)
- input from the library senior management team
- input from the library subject teams
- input from academic staff
- input from library users
- availability of staff to make the necessary changes
- the ease with which changes can be made (some areas are easier to classify than others)
- comparison of other university library usage of new schedules

Factors to consider in re-classification

- adoption of new numbers for new stock, but retaining old numbers for existing stock
- re-shelving of re-classified items
- demand for items whilst being re-classified and therefore temporarily unavailable
- items on loan
- timing of re-classification
- weeding of stock prior to re-classification
- re-classification work at other sister libraries
- cannot be done solely from lists – often need to see items to know what they’re really about
- need to have enough re-classifiers to keep up with the processors and vice versa

Distribution of re-classification work

- each cataloguer could be timetabled to undertake a fixed number of hours of re-classification each week
- each cataloguer could be allocated a unique section of the schedules
- each site could be allocated a unique section of the schedules and would re-classify all books at all sites
- any extra money available could be used to employ someone to re-classify
- re-classification could be offered to qualified librarians at the institution, as a secondment, or as a developmental opportunity
- a work experience student could be involved
Previous experience and Methodology

In order to minimise the re-classification process, it is possible to keep up with interim changes by following the OCLC website at:

http://www.oclc.org/dewey/updates/new/default.htm

and, if appropriate, the archive site at:

http://cdmresolver.worldcat.org/oclc/44278966/viewonline

where all interim changes are listed.

Areas of minor change are often easily altered by using the Reductions and Relocations tables provided in the DDC schedules, as well as working on the Discontinuations table (although here, not all things move to the same classification number, so a cataloguer’s input is needed). Tackling areas of major change is done differently at the sites: one site works from the shelves, while another works from printed lists, produced by the management reporting tool of the LMS. During the last period of re-classification (DDC21-DDC22) the work done during a nine month period, consisted of about two hours a week on actual re-classification. The process of re-classification is often long and laborious, and about 3000 items have were re-classified in those 9 months. Therefore, in a difficult area it appears to take about one hour to re-classify about 20 books.

If it is not possible to re-classify an item simply by looking at the details on a list, a library assistant will bring the relevant items downstairs to be physically looked at by the classifier. Once the items have been re-classified the annotated list is passed onto a library assistant who then brings the books downstairs, changes the OPAC record and the old spine label is removed and replaced with a new one. The stamp on the t/p verso is also amended. Books are then put for re-shelving. Any books that are out on loan are trapped so that on their return they are sent to the re-classifying team and are then actionned as above.

DDC22 to DDC23 – Areas of major change

Below is a table of the areas of major change which are expected in DDC23, with a suggested figure for the amount of stock affected. These figures were generated by a query using the management reporting tool in the LMS (Item classmark greater than or equal to x, Item classmark less than or equal to y, Item status equal to In stock for the main numbers and Item classmark matches pattern %%% and Item status equal to In stock for computing standard subdivisions). These figures are only a snapshot and are thus only valid on the day they were produced. They are also a bit speculative as the information available on the potential changes is quite broad, and the changes may not be across the board. Furthermore, the vagueness of the statement “Changes to T1 & T2, Groups of People and Computer Science” doesn’t really help when trying to calculate the possible workload for the re-classifiers and processors!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of major change</th>
<th>Number of titles to re-classify</th>
<th>Number of copies to process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>704.94</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>615.5</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>616</td>
<td>2239</td>
<td>3937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>791.43</td>
<td>9716</td>
<td>12471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>8326</td>
<td>13669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of people</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
<td>Impossible to estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>21487</td>
<td>31732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much of the decision-making regarding which areas to re-classify from DDC22 to DDC23 cannot realistically be undertaken until DDC23 has actually been issued and the true picture of the amount of stock concerned is known.

Lynne Dyer, January 2011