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USING DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION IN LIBRARY OF UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HOCHIMINH, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Library classification is one of important tasks in any library. Classifying books is as the art of assigning books to their proper places in a system of classification in which the various subjects of human inquiry, or the descriptions of human life in its various aspects, are grouped according to their likeness or relation to one another (Merrill, 1939). In order to conduct these tasks, using one of library classification schemes is one basic requirement. Dewey Decimal Classification is one of them which help the librarians to do that. By analyzing the literature review and questionnaire for librarians, the paper provides some perspectives of many authors about library classification in general as well as the overview of DDC scheme in particular. Besides, the focus of this paper aims to analyze the status of using DDC in library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh, Vietnam.

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INTRODUCTION

The library classification is the basic tool for organizing and exploring the documents stored in a library. In modern times they are the navigation tools for locating and retrieving documents in more precisely and relevantly. A major objective of libraries is to ensure that satisfy the library users' need of information based on the collections of libraries. To conduct this aim, librarians must create and organize the collections of materials that could be contacted easily by the library users. One such form of subject control is known as classification. The classification of libraries is useful for placing together in classes the subjects which contains common characteristics or even separate from them the subjects. It also analyses the contents of books for library users through the catalogue and is extremely helpful in the compilation of bibliographies. It facilitates book display and can also be used for recording books issued out to the readers and when returned by them which allow an easy return of books to the shelves and in their right places (Sharma, 1978). Moreover, using relevant library classification scheme is necessary to standardize of classification, as well as chances to exchange bibliographical information between library and other libraries. One of library classification schemes is Dewey decimal classification.

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However, there are some requirements for libraries to get those, including improving the qualification of librarians who conduct task of classification, building the process of classification, building collaboration among libraries that use DDC or other solutions. To what extent, understanding of DDC is very crucial for librarians to choose the right classification numbers to the right contents of materials.

FINDINGS

Library classification and library classification scheme

The term 'classification' is a derivation from the Latin word "classis" which connotes 'Grouping'. Classification is a procedure of grouping similar items and objects and is essential in formulating groups that is known as classifying which results in classification. This process helps the user to arrange, organize and make a logical sense of articles which also assists the user to locate them in an easy manner. Classification is the ability to distinguish objects through their similarities and dissimilarities which is distinct in their identities for human beings (Krishan Kumar, 1993). In field of Library and Information Science, library classification is related with the arrangement of materials in the library in a manner that the readers are served in the best relevant way. This activity requires a detailed scheme of classification in which knowledge is divided into a broader perspective, which is again subdivided into main classes. There are many subjects

and their divisions along with their specific aspects are represented by a system of numbers called classification numbers or notation. It is necessary to arrange materials on the shelf. Generally speaking, library classification deals with the organizing of library materials as well as knowledge in a systematic group. According to Sharma C.D. (1978), library classification can also be considered to be a process of putting books and other reading material on a subject in a logical sequence on the shelf, which could be of immense help to the users. It requires an adept thorough study and practice in the technique of classification of books, knowledge of the details and handling of the scheme of classification. A close familiarity with the broad spectrum of learning, its growth and the interrelationship of various components is also necessary. A good selection of books is the basis towards a good library collection and proper classification is fundamental in organizing collection and in the retrieval of specific books for use by the users. Classification is one of the most important steps in the organization of the libraries and has been aptly called the "Foundation of Librarianship."

It could be seen, librarianship consists of the selection, acquisition, organization and dissemination of knowledge presented in the form of books, periodicals, film, photographs, maps, gramophone records, audio and video tapes, Compact Discs, DVDs, Microfiche and Microforms. Knowledge must be organized in a library in an appropriate manner with the objective of dissemination. Classification is a technique of organizing knowledge in a library as larger the number of unorganized books; it is all the more difficult to locate a particular book. Since books are the most common source of knowledge, the term 'Bibliographic Classification' is often used as a synonym for library classification (Husain Shabahat, 1993). Along with the library classification, there are many of classification schemes have been developed and used in many different countries over the world to organize the library collections in the most helpful manner possible. Classification schemes is defined as a list of classes arranged according to a set of pre-defined principles for the purpose of organizing items in a collection or entries in an index, bibliography or catalog into groups based on their similarities and differences to facilitate access and retrieval (Reitz, Joan, 2004).

Therefore, library classification schemes are tools that allow librarians to determine a class number based on its subject content. The result of classification activities is to help the library staff can preserve all the related items together on the library's shelves. This arrangement of subjects is very logical and easy for users to seek the relevant materials. There are some objectives of a library classification such as to assign a specific location for every document on the library's shelves, to place documents on the same or similar subjects together on the library's shelves to facilitate users to find items on the same subject in one place within the library, to enable users looking for items through a library catalogue can use call numbers as references to locate items on the shelves; classification is used as a link between the catalogue record of an item and the item itself on the shelf and to enable browsing facilities by using the structure of a bibliographic classification to browse a collection on the library's shelves or in an electronic or in an electronic collection.

The necessity of learning principles of Dewey Decimal Classification in knowledge organization

Dewey Decimal Classification is an almost enumerative scheme of classification which used most of countries throughout the world. This statement can be justified by the fact that DDC has been translated into many languages, such as Chinese, Spanish, Danish, Turkish, Japanese, Hindi, Portuguese, Sinhalese, other languages and Vietnamese. Today, the latest edition is DDC 23 in 2011, the four-volume unabridged edition of DDC, reflects the many changes to the body of human knowledge. It could be clearly seen that, DDC provide helpful tools that make the classification easier to use, including an introduction, a glossary and a list of new features. Each of these tools will help librarians who have better understand of knowledge organization into a library classification. Classifying books with the DDC requires librarians to determine of the subject, the disciplinary focus, and the approach or form. It could be spent four steps for every librarian to build classification numbers. However, with the aim of getting relevant and exact classification numbers of books, every librarian must obey the principles of classification as well as rules of DDC. There are some main reasons for librarians to learn principles of classifying with DDC.

First, standardization of classification in library is the most important reason for learning principles. In recent years, standardization has been regarded as an important element to ensure the quality and effectiveness of any field of activity. In field of Library and Information, standardization has also been recognized as an important element to ensure quality of libraries, information agencies, and lead to promote integration over the world. In fact, the usage of DDC in Vietnamese libraries is increasing when DDC is one of three professional standards in bibliographic activities in Vietnam today, including MARC and AACR2. Secondly, ensuring the unity in classifying books helps in improving the quality of library's classification. Classification is a complex set of actions that includes the interpretation and representation of the subject matter of an entity with an ordinal number to organize and make the product physically accessible. The function of library classification is to identify a sense of position where a user can find all writings on a given subject at one place. The potential of library classification schemes for improving subject access to information results in the development of various schemes (Satija, 2007). The last one is bringing chances to exchange bibliographic information for library. At present, DDC is used in most of academic libraries in Vietnam. Obeying principles of DDC helps libraries exchange bibliographic information. For instance, librarians could take advantages of available class numbers or results from other libraries instead of classifying by them. To do this, librarians must to choose the relevant class numbers that classified by qualified libraries. In the same system of libraries, when using DDC in classification, libraries could exchange bibliographic information among them. For example, the USSH-HCM could use the results of classification from records of other libraries. They could use available class numbers or even rebuild more relevantly.

Table 1. Procedures of classification

Procedures of classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Check class number on OPAC of USSH-HCM library	4	10.5
Check class number on OPAC of Library of Congress	4	10.5
Check class number on OPAC of other libraries	5	13.2
Analyze the content of works/ books	4	10.5
Determine the subject headings	5	13.2
Use the relative index	4	10.5
Read guides of classification	5	13.2
Check their own handbook of classification	3	7.9
Compare with available classification number	2	5.3
Correct the irrelevant classification number	2	5.3
Other	0	0.0
Total	38	100.0

Table 2. Level of understanding of DDC's principles

Level of understanding	All		Most		Partly		Few		None	
	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%	No. of Res.	%
Structures of BBK scheme	0	0	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Structures of DDC scheme (full edition)	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
Structures of DDC scheme (abridge edition)	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
General principles of classification	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
General methods of classification	0	0	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rule of application	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
First-of-two rule	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Rule of three	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
Interdisciplinary numbers	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0

Using Dewey Decimal Classification at library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh

One of academic libraries that use DDC in classification is library of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hochiminh city (USSH-HCM library). USSH-HCM library was established with the aim of supporting training and research activities of faculty and students since 1997. With the open-served-orientation for information users, the library plays an important role in enhancing the quality of education of university through satisfying the diverse information needs of managers, faculty, students, and staff. The USSH-HCM library has function of providing information and knowledge related to field of social sciences and humanities. These information resources could be Vietnamese and many foreign languages such as English, French, Russian, Chinese, Italian, etc. The second function of the library is that the library has taken the responsibility of organizing, managing, supplementing, collecting and preserving the materials, books, newspapers, magazines, tapes, thesis and other kinds of materials. Other function of the library is to provide guidance and to manage activities of ensuring the intellectual property rights of the university. At present, there are five librarians who take responsibility of book classification in USSH-HCM. They have graduated from the same university where have been taught DDC as an important subject in Bachelor of Arts' curriculum. Following to the results of survey, four of librarians have the working – time with DDC is under 5 years, and one librarian has worked one year. The below figure 1 shows some steps of classification that librarians conduct. All of five librarians have accessed at OPAC of other libraries when they class books, determining the subject headings of books, and read guides of classification, including principles of classification.

Most of respondents spent most of activities related to access at OPAC of library before building classification number for works, access at OPAC of Library of Congress, analyze the contents of works, as well as use the relative index. However, they rarely compared available class numbers, and correct the irrelevant and inexact class number (just only 2 respondents). It is shown from the results of figure 2 below, all of librarians who working at USSH-HCM could understand totally the structures of BBK scheme (100% of respondents), meanwhile, there are only 40% of respondents said that they understand DDC's structures with full edition. This could be explained that, at present, USSH-HCM library use BBK scheme and DDC scheme at the same time in classification. Moreover, the time of using BBK is longer than using DDC. Furthermore, they just use DDC with abridge edition.

However, when asking about their understanding about structures of DDC scheme as well as general principles of classification, general methods of classification, rule of classification (just rule of application and first-of-two rule), more than 80% of respondents believed that they understand most of them. Another highlight of this table is that, there is up to 80% of respondents understand partly some rules related DDC (rule of three, interdisciplinary numbers). More specifically, analyzing the result of applying principles of classification show that the relation between librarians' understanding of DDC and the practice of application. The results illustrate the differences between understanding of classification theory and practice of application of the librarians. Each of instances related to different books is belong to each of rule. All of the librarians decided the first option is "mobile technology". This meant the librarians are very skillful at applying the rule of application to classify books like these. Moreover, this also shows that there is similarity between understanding and practice of using the rule of application of librarians at USSH-HCM library.

Example 1. Application of mobile technology in library and information services

Application of mobile technology in library and information services	No. of Res.	%
Mobile technology	0	100
Library and information services	5	0
Librarianship	0	0
Others	0	0
Total	5	100

Example 2. History of Vietnam and China

History of Vietnam and China	No. of Res.	%
History of Vietnam or history of China (subject which have more emphasis)	2	40
Subject which has the first stand in main scheme (951 và 959.7)	1	20
History of Asian (950)	2	40
Total	5	100

Example 3. Culture, language, history of Japan

❖ Culture, language, history of Japan	No. of Res.	%
The most emphasized subject (culture/ language, history)	3	60
The notation has the first place in main scheme (306-400-900)	0	0
Subject cover all of subjects (001-knowledge)	1	20
Interdisciplinary subject	1	20
Other	0	0
Total	5	100

Example 4. History and economics of Vietnam

History and economics of Vietnam	No. of Res.	%
The most emphasized subject (history/ economics)	4	80
The notation has the first place in main scheme (330 -- 900)	1	20
Other	0	0
Tổng	5	100

This rule is shown by the choices of librarians about the book has two subject belong same class. The result shows the dissimilarities among the librarians. For instance, 40% of respondents agreed the first choice for the subject which has more emphasis. Meanwhile, there has also 40% of respondents choose the notation of 950 (history of Asian) which is not exact. In this case, 60% of librarians have relevant applying of first-of-two rule while 40% of respondents have mistakes with the rule of three. With rule of three, 60% of respondents classified the book on the most subject, 20% of them on the subject cover all of subjects, and similarly, 20% of respondents are interdisciplinary subject. Although the decision of librarians for this book is right choice for right notation, there are also differences of capacity of applying the rule among the librarians. There are 80% of respondents who chosen the most emphasized subject. Therefore, comparing the understanding of theory with the practice of applying this principle, the librarians have applied well and exactly. Thus, it could be summarized that the level of understanding of the librarians about the general and specific principles of classification, sometimes they do not concern much about the ways of naming principles or contents of principles. They always pay much attention to the process of applying these principles. This is easily explained by the fact, the librarians' understanding of DDC principles sometimes does not quite influence the effective of book classification. It could be explained for these features is that, there are also several of factors impacting on the capacity of adopting principles of librarians in book classification.

First, every librarian has differences in qualification as well as awareness of DDC's scheme as well as principles. Second, the working time of the librarians with DDC has also brought impacts on the book classification. They have much experience on reading, analyzing content of books and master the DDC scheme. Especially, they are able to apply the principles of DDC scheme more effectively.

Conclusion

These results of research provide some prominent features of capacity of using DDC as well as applying DDC principles in USSH-HCM library. A questionnaire for librarians who conduct classification activities is one of useful methods with the aim of understanding the status of classification in the library. However, by using another method of analyzing the results of classification on OPAC, the research also brings more evaluation of using DDC in USSH-HCM library. This could be seen as a future research for this matter. To sum up, there are many principles that librarians ought to obey effectively. To what extent, to able to build infinite numbers of subjects effectively, librarians must apply the principles of classifying with the classification scheme that library uses and DDC scheme is one of classification scheme that has many different principles of classification. These principles help the librarians make sure the unity in book classification and enhance the quality of library's classification, especially in the standardization context today.

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