# THE USE OF CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES IN ORGANISING LAW COLLECTIONS

## A PAPER PRESENTED

## BY

## ALASA M. MHYAS
## DEPUTY DIRECTOR LIBRARY
## SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA

## AT

## WORKSHOP OF LAW LIBRARIAN

## ORGANISED BY THE

## NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE

## ABUJA

**INTRODUCTION**

A law library is an organized collection/information sources to meet the needs of the legal profession and legal information needs of the legal public. Examples of law library are libraries found in court houses, Ministries of justice, law firms or chambers, faculties of law, e.t.c. A law library is crucial to legal practice and administration of justice because law is a specialized and very technical discipline.

Hence, Inorder to accomplish these roles, the library performs the traditional functions of collection development, organization, retrieval and dissemination of legal and related information sources. Inorder to achieve this, two issues are involves:-

The collection development, and organization of the collection.

(1). Collection development involves selection and acquisition of information sources which translate into collections of a library.

Collections of law libraries are the bedrocks of all the services they can offer and determinant of the extent to which such services can be provided. These collections can be categorized into three, primary sources, secondary sources, and finding tools or tertiary sources.

**Primary Sources**
Primary sources are the information containing law, they are books of law rather than books on law. Examples are Constitutions, Laws, Acts, Decrees, Edicts, Gazettes, Law reports i.e courts and appellate court decisions, regulations and ruling of administrative agencies.

**Secondary Sources**
Secondary sources are information sources about law which are not themselves sources of legal authority. They vary widely in quality, form and authority. Although they lack legal authority in a formal sense, some may have a persuasive influence in the process of law-making by virtue of the recognized prestige of their authors or quality of their scholarship. Examples are journals, textbooks, treatises, commentaries, restatements and other periodicals.

**Tertiary Sources**

Finding tools or tertiary sources of legal information are means of locating the primary sources of legal information. They provide access to large body of law, great number of decisions and statutes issued over time. This facilitates effective operations of the doctrine of precedents because judge and legal practitioners can have access to decided cases relevant to a particular case or problem. Examples are digests of decisions, curators, encyclopedia, phrase books, annotated statutory completions, loose leaf services, and indexes.

Collections of a law library must be reasonably good diverse. Such collections must include all the categories of information sources mentioned above, and available in both print and non print form. Legal information sources in non-print form are available in database such as LEXIS-NEXIS, LAWTEL, and the INTERNET. FLICK (1997) notes that:

(2). Organization of collections available in a law library facilitate easy access and retrieval of the information sources. There must be prior organization of the acquired information sources in order to provide access to them when they are needed by the users. Among the means of having access to collections of a law library are registers. bibliographies, and catalogues. These tools provide detail bibliographic information on each of the items in the library, and how they can be retrieved. The processes involved in organizing the resources of a law library is called cataloguing and classification.

a.    Cataloguing deals with physical description of information sources called bibliographic descriptions and allocation of subject headings to the information source using Standard Subject Heading List (sear's or LC). Classification on the other hand deals with assigning codes notation by which that information is shelved in the library. Ama (2003) described classification as: "The systematic arrangement of library collections on the shelves. All documents on a subject and are related ones are brought together from the general to the specific".

b.    Classification is crucial to the determination of placement of an information source in a library and where it is placed on the shelf. The extent to which a library collection are catalogued and classified is a factor of easy

retrieved and access to the collections. Thus, the principles of library classification for law books in compiling a library classification for any special subject, whether it be law, engineering or literature, the general rules of classification, such as the exclusiveness of categories and the comprehensiveness of the sum total of categories, must be observed. The nature of the particular literature and the way it is used in libraries assume great importance, and must be thoroughly studied before any attempt is made to establish the basic outline of a classification scheme. The way specialists in the subject classify it themselves must also be studied, although a classification scheme for books will not necessarily be identical as other factors, such as form of publication, must be taken into account. The classification of law itself has long been a subject of controversy. It is virtually impossible to divide the subjects of law into neat watertight compartments, as there is inevitably a great deal of overlapping of different aspects of subjects. For example, the law of insurance can be treated as subject in its own right, or it can be regarded as an aspect of contract law, commercial law, tort, maritime law, the law of inland or air transport or criminal law. It is partly for this reason that legal practitioners, both in England and America, have trended to resist the introduction of subject classification in their libraries. As recently as 1995, an American survey showed that at least 39 per cent of law school libraries in the United State used no subject classification (Jennet, C. Subject classification in law libraries a survey 1995. 49 Law lib. J. 17-20). The advantages of subject classification for law libraries are similar to those for general libraries. namely that it improves the usefulness of the books to the reader by enabling him to find information on a particular topic, even if the specific volumes he asks for are not available. and that the strength and weakness of a library's bookstock are immediately apparent, so that a well rounded collection can more easily be developed.

Lawyers frequently know the author of the books they want, or think they want, but if the books are arranged alphabetical orders is, in any case, less simple than is usually supposed. For example, Clarke, Hall and Morrison's Law relating to children and young person's could be shelves at Clarke or Hall or, according to the present editor, at Morrison. A subject number, such as 347.42

or KN176, is safer, and more meaningful. There are, of course, limitations to the advantages to be gained by classifying law books, most of which are inherent in all library classification. One of the most obvious is that no shelf arrangement can fully bring out all aspects of all the 6? introduction to the First Edition books. However good the classification scheme used, the individual book can be put in only one place on the shelves. It will be alongside books which are similar in some respects of a book's contents. Once it is agreed that a collection of law books should be classified, the principles underlying the arrangement to be adopted should be examined. There are two main types of library classification scheme: the traditional, enumerative kind exemplified by the Dewey Decimal Classification and the library of congress classification, and the more modern faceted, it should follow certain general principles, which are discussed below. The legal system library users almost invariably approach the study of a subject of law in the context of the law of a particular jurisdiction, and only very rarely from the point view of comparative law. Therefore, the classification approach usually adopted for many other main subjects, namely giving primacy to various subjects and sub-arranging them either by traditional sub-division methods or by facet analysis, is inappropriate for law.

The need for a satisfactory classification of law materials becomes more and more acute. The ever continuous production of legal and related materials, with the resultant expansion of law library collections, forces law librarians in self-defense to adopt some form of organization of these materials. For the use of persons both within and without libraries, a methodical distribution of law library holdings into some form of inter related categories becomes an urgent necessity.

Law librarians are well acquainted with the history of law classification. The multitude of case law made it imperative that some form of classification be devised which would serve as a key to law reports. Digest and encyclopedia classification schemes were developed for this purpose. Similarly, the diverse and innumerable materials now maintained and progressively added to law libraries, make it indispensable that law and related materials be organized in a logical and practical manner.

A classification brings together a group of unorganized units into a systematic plan of order through correlation of degrees of likeness and unlikeness. This process consists of analyzing the bulk of materials into units and synthetically reconstructing these units into a complete classification.

There is a basic difference between the classification of law and the classification of law materials in libraries. Classification of law deals with ideas on a universal plane whereas a classification of law materials proceeds on practical and functional lines. Charles A. Cutter has said that the classification of books themselves rather than upon a classification of ideas. Thus the law publishing companies schemes for the classification of the field of law (being classification of law) are not ipso facto usable in the library classification of law and related materials. Nor can groupings of law books conform to a theoretical and philosophical plan. The best plan of classification can only be the most convenient one for the purposes at hand and a plan which produces a reasonable distribution and grouping of all legal materials. Thus not an idea but an applied and empiric scheme is necessary.

It is customary for librarians who are not law librarians to maintain that law grouping of books by type. Most law libraries of any size have atleast some rudimentary form of functional organization if only a shelf arrangement by author or general groupings by type, e.g treatises, bar association reports, court reports, etc. Various schemes of law book classification have been proposed.

The present lack of definite classification scheme for materials has made it more and more apparent that a workable and tried scheme should be provided for law librarians. The service of an organized and applied classification system would be another professional tool of first importance to the lawyer.

## CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES

Classification involves systematic grouping of information sources by subject contents and translation of the subjects into codes of ordinal numbers. These numbers represent definite subjects and serve as abbreviation for the name of

the subjects they represent. The codes are called "call number" or "class mark".

Classification facilitates the following in law libraries:

- Purposeful arrangement and retrieval of information sources.
- Proper replacement of consulted information sources on the shelves.
- Display of information sources on different disciplines at a glance.

To classify an information sources, the classifier first establishes the main subjects of the publication. This is checked with the subject heading in use by the library. The classifier then checks the index of the classification scheme for the appropriate classification number. The number obtained from the index is confirmed from the schedule.

Classification schemes are the main tool in classifying information sources. They are publications containing systematically listed terms or notations representing discipline and sub-disciplines. They aim at assisting librarians to organize library resources, and the users in locating desired information sources easily and quickly. A typical classification schemes is in three parts, notation, and index. The schedule contain the list of all the main classes and sub-classes of the scheme; the notation is a sign or symbol in a definite order representing disciplines, and subjects listed in the schedule; and the index is an alphabetical list of subject terms in the schedule with their corresponding notation. Index provides quick access to the schedule.

There are several classification schemes in use worldwide. Popular ones among them are:

- BLISS Bibliographic Classification (BC)
- Bernard Classification Scheme (BCS)
- Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)
- Library of Congress Classification (LC)
- Moy's Classification Scheme for Law Books (MC)
- Universal Decimal Classification (UDC)

Each of these schemes except Bernard Classification Schemes, have provisions for law collections and related disciplines. However, this discourse will focus on three schemes that are readily available in Nigeria. These are Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), library of congress (LC) and Moy's Classification Scheme (MC) special attention will be placed on their treatment of law collections.

## A. Dewey, Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC)

This scheme was developed by the American librarian Melvil Dewey, DDC is structured hierarchically; it proceeds from the general to the specific, it arranges knowledge into 10 broad classes. Each main class is divided into 10 divisions, and each division is further divided into 10 sub-divisions until all the subjects terms have been specified. Arrangement of classes in DDC is based on disciplines rather than subjects. The main feature of DDC are:

- The use of pure Arabic numerals in notation; it has pure notation.
- The use of decimal to specify subject terms that is specific. Arabic numerals and decimal allow indefinite expansion of the classes.
- The scheme is compact. It is available in four volumes.
- Availability of mnemonic devices that facilitate easy recall of classification number. DDC employs three minimum digits to the left of the decimal.
- Availability of relative index to the diverse materials in the schedule.

DDC treated law as a division, in the social science discipline. It provides class mark of 340-349 for law collections. These class marks are:

340- Law

340.02-09- Standard sub-divisions

3401-9- Philosophy, and theory of law, comparative law, law reforms, legal systems, conflicts of law

341- International Law

342- Constitutional and Administration Law

343- Military, defence, public property, public finance tax, trade (commerce), industrial law

344- Labour, social problems and services, education cultural law

345 - Criminal law

346- Private law

347- Civil procedure and courts

 348- Law (statutes), regulations, cases

349- Law of specific socio-economic regions and of specific jurisdiction and areas

Although DDC treated law as a division of social science, and allocates ten classes to it. the scheme can be deemed good enough for law collections because it allows for expansion through number building to meet specific subjects in law. The availability of auxiliary tables in the scheme also add to its suitability for law collections. The tables are:

Table 1: standard sub-division

Table 2: Geographic Areas, Historical periods

Table 3: Sub-Divisions of Individual Literature

Table 4: Sub- Division of individual languages

Table 5: Racial, ethnic and national Groups

Table 6: Languages

Table 7: Groups of persons

## B. Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LC)

LC was developed out of the desire to fashion out a scheme that will be peculiar and adequately suit collection of the library of congress in the United States of America. It is a scheme rooted in literary warrant. i.e the existing

collections of the Library of Congress. The scheme divided the entire spectrum of knowledge into 26 classes and a class for general works. The classes in the scheme are published in separate schedules. These classes are designated with symbols or notation by letters of Alphabets A-Z, (without letters I, O, W, X, Y,) and Arabic numerals; this is referred to as mixed notation. Each class schedule has a synopsis that provides guidance to classifiers. The scheme start form general knowledge to the specific, and theoretical aspect to practical to aspects of subjects.

**Outline of the Library of Congress Classification Scheme is done below:**

A - General Works
B - Philosophy and Religion
C - Auxiliary, science of History
D - History, General
E - F- History, America
G - Geography, Anthropology, Folklore
H - Social Science
J - Political science
K - Law
L - Education
M - Music
N - Fine Arts, Architecture
P - Language and Literature
Q - Science
R - Medicine
S - Agriculture (plant and animal industry)
T - Technology
U - Military Sciences
V - Naval Sciences
Z - Bibliography and Library Science

From the above outlines, LC uses letter to denote the main class mark for Law, double capital letters for sub-classes for further -divisions, and cutter

numbers for specificity. The outline of the schedule for LAW is provided below.

First schedule:
 K- Law in general, comparative and uniform law. jurisprudence. Second Schedule: Sub class K.

KA   - Law of the united Kingdom and Ireland

KDZ, KG-KH: Law of Americas, Latin America and the West Indies

KE: Law of Canada

KF: Law of the United States

KJ   - KK2: Law of Europe

KJV - KJW: Law of France

KK   - KKC: law of Germany

KL   - KWL: law of Asia and Eurasia, Africa, Pacific Area, and Antarctica

K2:   Law of Nations

K   Tables: Form Division Table for Law

A cursory look at the coverage of law by LC reveals detailness and indept coverage. The main class 'K', published in a separate schedule treats all subjects in Law (Advocacy, Banking, Equity, Conflicts etc). The subclass K treats the Laws of varies continents, regions, and countries of the world. As such, LC treatment of law can be considered adequate. The classes are expansive, the use of cutter number, and from Division Tables guarantee specificity for information sources being classified. Furthermore, wide of the scheme provide benefits of resources sharing, cooperative classifications, and Union catalogue.

## MOYS CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES

Moys classification scheme for law books was devised based in part on existing Classification Schemes, LC and DDC to express the unique characters of law collections and their categories. The scheme was written by Elizabeth Moys as a thesis to substitute the missing class K for law materials in the

Library of Congress Classification, and to improve on the provisions for Law Collections by Dewey Decimal Classification.

Moys incorporates both enumerative number building concepts of LC and faceted theory of DDC. the scheme adopted a different way of organizing legal materials due to the difficulty associated with mixing primary and secondary law collections. The scheme organized law collections into primary law, secondary law, law reference and law journals.

LC and DDC keep jurisdiction of various countries strictly separated, usually arranged by continent. Moys treat the countries whose legal systems are based almost entirely on the common law (England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States etc.) as part of one legal system and all other jurisdictions as separate legal systems. Within each legal system, materials and divided into primary sources arranged by form: Legislation, Law reports, etc; and secondary sources arranged by subject.

The outline of the scheme is provided below

General and non-national legal system

K Journals and reference books 340.01-9

KA Jurisprudence

KB General and cooperative law 340.01-9

KC international Law 341

KD Religious Legal Systems 342

KE Ancient and Medieval Law

Modern national legal systems

Common Law

Primary materials 344

KF British Isles

KG Canada, US., West Indies

KH Australia, New Zealand

Treatises

KL General 345

KM Public Law 346

Other modern legal systems

KP Own country (Optional alternatives)

KR Africa 349.6

KS Latin America 349.8

KT Asia and Pacific 349.5

KW European Communities 349.4

Optional alternative

KZ Non-legal subjects

The scheme like DDC and LC make use of tables to ensure specificity in the classification of information sources. Specific instructions (notes) on how each table should be used are provided.

The tables are:

| II | Subjects of Law |
|------|------|
| III | Dates |
| IV | Common Law Jurisdiction |
| V | Courts |
| VI | Special legal forms and topics |
| VII | Persons |
| VIII | Non-legal forms and treatments |
| IX | European Communities Law |

In addition to these tables, the scheme has appendices on Criminology, Nigerian States, their historical periods, and cutter numbers from the index of jurisdictions.

**Notation and Index**

Moys scheme has two complete alternative system of notation: Library of Congress-style (K) and 340, decimal-style system. This style of notation provides opportunity for law libraries to choose either of the notations, and still enjoy the benefits of the scheme.

he scheme has a subject index to the schedule. The index is both specific and relative. Specific index gives only topics while relative index gives topics with their interrelations with topics> The index of the scheme is referred to as "index-thesaurus", because it combines the quality of thesaurus with index. The thesaurus terms used in the index are:

RT  - Related term
SN  - Scope not
UF  - use for
USE

**CONCLUSION**

The use of the DDC & LCC classification Schemes have widely been use by many law libraries in Nigeria being the older classification schemes in the country. It has meet up the needs or the purpose of law information sources. However the advert of Moys classification scheme for law libraries have been found to be very easy and not all cumbersome, especially since it's a one volume scheme. The class KP for own country with individual law libraries' ingenuity can be found to be more roburst than class KP. The subject law is very dynamic and new areas of law keep emerging, thus there is need for the law librarian to strive to keep abreast of new development in the subject law.

However it is at the discretion of the organization to choose which scheme is best suite to their organization. But the paper has mirror the clear direction among the classification schemes to be adopted by the law libraries in Nigeria.

**References**

1.      Nwalo K.I.N (2006) The Role of Classification Scheme in Consortium Building. A Paper Presented at the 26th Seminar/Workshop of the Library Association, Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section, Abeokuta 31st October 3rd November, 16p.

2.      Library of Congress Classification Class K (1998, Prepaid by the Cataloguing Policy and Support Office, Library Services. Washington D.C.; Library of Congress, Cataloguing Distribution Service.

3.       Dewey (1996) Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index, 21st edition. New York: Forest Press.

4.      Moys Elizabeth (2001) Moys Classification and Thesaurus for Legal Materials/ 4th edition.

5.      Charles A. Cutter (1886) Close Classification, II Library Journal 183