

Reorganizing a Library Book Collection - Part II

This is the second of two articles on problems of reorganization, the first having appeared in College and Research Libraries for March 1945.

IN THEIR ATTEMPTS to solve problems involved in reorganizing book collections, librarians have established routines which are intended to meet the needs of users and staff members. It has been found necessary, if the work is to flow smoothly, to reach decisions early concerning (1) the order or procedure of reclassification, (2) aspects of recataloging and current cataloging practices, (3) the disposal of new acquisitions, and (4) the routinizing of activities on an efficient basis. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss these four problems and to suggest possible approaches.

The order in which materials are reclassified presents an interesting pattern of variation in college and university libraries. Generally, this variation is due to differences in book collections, the caliber of previous classification and cataloging, the future purposes of the libraries, the physical arrangements of the buildings and the placement of materials in the stacks, and the personnel available for reorganization. The aggressiveness of certain faculty members and the opinions of the librarian and other staff members also have influenced the basis of reclassification in some libraries. Table I shows the ranked order of the bases for reclassifying materials followed in sixty college and university libraries

changing to the Library of Congress system.

The decision to reclassify the "most-used" classes first seems entirely reasonable. Usually in libraries following this policy the records of the circulation department

TABLE I

Bases	Number of Libraries
By "most-used" classes	28
By whole classes (in order of notation)	12
By location	7
By poorly classed sections	6
By special order	5
By special subject	4
By recency of material	3
By appearance of L.C. schedules	2
By reference collections	1
By fastest growing classes	1
By departmental libraries	1
Total	70*

* Ten libraries noted more than one procedure.

are consulted for data concerning the use of materials. The opinions of the circulation department staff in this respect are helpful, since the approach of the user is kept in mind. The circulation attendants are in a position to say which classes are causing the most difficulty to users, through delays in locating books or through particularly troublesome arrangements in the stacks. In large libraries consultations with

¹ For a list of these libraries, see Tauber, Maurice F. "Reclassification of Special Collections in College and University Libraries Using the Library of Congress Classification." *Special Libraries* 35:139, April 1944.

the stack supervisors reveal information of this type. It should be apparent, however, that the adoption of a policy to reclassify according to major use implies that a considerable speed is necessary in the process. Otherwise, confusion may arise just when readers are most anxious to use certain materials.

The foregoing procedure seems more effective than the method second in prominence—that is, to reclassify a whole class in order of notation. In changing from Dewey to the L.C. classification, this would mean reclassifying all the books in the 000's, then the 100's, the 200's, and so on. When this procedure is adopted, the new accessions are sometimes placed with materials in the old categories until the particular class is undergoing reclassification. This practice, however, does not necessarily follow. The contention has been made that the users of the stacks are less confused by reorganization, class by class, particularly if new accessions are not broken up into small units by placing them in the new classification. However, the amount of time to be taken to complete the task is a factor to be considered in selecting a procedure.

Some explanation may be made of the motives for other procedures listed in Table I. The location of the stacks, or of departmental and school libraries, has been a motivating factor in determining which class should be reorganized first, second, or third. It is apparent, first of all, that reclassification involves considerable utilization of work room. In order to prevent unnecessary shifting, librarians have justifiably reclassified materials within departmental or school libraries without transferring the materials to the general cataloging department. In some libraries those sections of the collections which would cause least confusion in movement have been reorganized first.

Other things being equal, however, "use" rather than "administrative convenience" should be a primary motive for introducing a certain method or process. Generally speaking, to reclassify the "badly classed" sections early in the operations is keeping in line with the goal of doing first the work which has the greatest benefit to the users, either directly or indirectly. It is possible, of course, that a certain section of material, although badly classed, does not warrant any better treatment, since use of it is meager.

Such procedures as reclassifying by "special subjects," "recency of material," and "fastest growing classes," all are governed by the conditions of use. The special subjects are frequently reorganized first because of pressure from faculty members or departmental heads of libraries. There is usually a close correlation between reclassification of special subjects and use. Sometimes reclassification of a special subject has been used as an experiment for the purpose of determining whether or not a whole collection should be reorganized, although certain subjects might prove to be false guides.

Mention should be made of the policy of reclassifying "in no special order." This practice usually indicates that the process of reclassification has not been carefully analyzed nor has a time limit been set for the completion of the task. Reclassification under these conditions becomes a fill-in job and is generally unsystematic.

Recataloging

Earlier it was pointed out that the need for recataloging has frequently been a primary reason for reclassification.² But recataloging may mean a number of things, such as eliminating obsolete main and sub-

² Tauber, Maurice F. "Reclassification and Recataloging of Materials in College and University Libraries." In William M. Randall, ed. *The Acquisition and Cataloging of Books*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1940, p. 200-01.

ject entries, revising descriptive information on cards, abandoning the use of one subject heading list for another, introducing a new system of cross references and information cards, and subdividing subjects which have grown rapidly. It may also refer to such activities as eliminating odd-sized cards for standard-sized cards and replacing handwritten and worn cards with typed and printed ones. These activities are usually present in a general recataloging project which may have as its goal a complete editing of the catalog.

In most recataloging programs attention should be given to such matters as (1) the type of catalog to be maintained, (2) the methods of ordering L.C. printed cards, (3) the use of L.C. printed cards, (4) procedures regarding L.C. assignment of class numbers and subject headings, (5) main entry assignments, (6) added entries, (7) analysis of series, and (8) routines concerned with catalogs, cards, and filing. Attention will be directed here only to those problems which have not been discussed elsewhere.³

The following suggestions, based on experience in reorganizing libraries, are offered in connection with decisions which are necessary to carry on controlled operations:

1. Librarians should consider seriously the possibilities of types of catalogs other than the dictionary form (e.g., divided or period)

2. Large-scale ordering of printed cards by number may be done through the use of a depository catalog (also of the *Catalog of Books Represented by Library of Congress Printed Cards*)

3. Printed cards are not essential for certain types of material, such as fiction, textbooks, juvenile works, etc.

4. L.C. class number assignments should be generally accepted⁴

5. A definite policy regarding the acceptance of L.C. subject headings and added entries should be made at the outset

6. Few variations should be adopted in main entries

7. Series which are adequately indexed should not be analyzed

8. Such tools as authority files, shelflists, and union catalogs of materials in all libraries of the system should be made

9. A policy should be established for rules for cataloging books for which there are no printed cards

10. A decision concerning the filing code should be made at the outset

11. Other things being equal, it is probably more effective to begin a new catalog during reorganization. This procedure should reduce errors to a minimum and aid in catching all untraced items. The presence of the two catalogs—old and new—makes it desirable to provide explanatory guides to aid patrons.

Disposal of New Acquisitions

Some libraries have followed the procedure of doing a single class at a time, placing the new acquisitions in the old classification—usually with penciled call numbers—until the whole class is worked upon. During the process of reclassification, therefore, the user within the stacks does not have to consult two places each time he searches for material on a subject; that is, except in the case of the class that is in process at the moment. Another assumed advantage is that relationships are seen to exist which are not observed when individual books are reclassified. While this may be true, it appears that if the Library of Congress classification—which was developed from books on the shelves—is being applied, the need to see all books at once is not important.

The consensus, based on experience, holds that if reclassification is once decided upon

³ Tauber, Maurice F. "Subject Cataloging and Classification Approaching the Crossroads." *College and Research Libraries* 3:155, March 1942.

⁴ For another point of view see Boisen, Harold L.

"A Venture in Reclassification." *College and Research Libraries* 6:67-72, December 1944; see also Tauber, Maurice F. "Special Problems in Reclassification and Recataloging." *College and Research Libraries* 4:49-51, December 1942.

it is less costly and, in the long run, more convenient to most users of the library to place all new acquisitions in the new classification immediately upon receipt, than it is to place them with the old materials in each class until the entire class is changed. The re-marking of books and the withdrawal and retyping of cards are thus eliminated. By judicious arrangement of the newly classified materials, they may be made accessible without serious trouble to the clientele using the stacks. For example, if the education collection is being reclassified there is no reason why the "L" books could not be placed adjacent to the 370's (if the change is being made from Dewey).

Mechanical Routines

Reclassification and recataloging involve several mechanical routines concerned with the markings on the books and the cards. To discuss these mechanical minutiae of reorganization may seem unnecessary, but hesitation to do so is brushed aside when data reveal that such matters are often serious obstacles to the satisfactory completion of the task. Moreover, among practicing librarians such matters as the practical mechanics of an operation often loom as annoying administrative problems which directly affect the users.

Markings on exteriors of books. In order to change numbers, librarians have had to contend with various markings on books, such as gold leaf or black ink stamping or lettering, markings by stylus, and lettering with white and black ink on paper or cloth labels. It is in those libraries in which books are stamped with gold leaf that the mechanical aspects present greatest difficulties. None of the several methods of librarians to black over the gold stamping or to remove the old call numbers by an electric stylus or eraser or by a sharp instrument have met with complete success.

The use of the electric stylus or eraser obtains more permanent results than other methods, although risk of injuring the binding exists. Generally the gold markings are moistened before erasing. In order to remove labels or inks which have been shellacked, it is necessary to use varnish remover (*e.g.*, ethyl acetate) first. Labels may then be removed, and inks can be washed off with water. It is usually necessary to shellac over the space of the old marking before the new class numbers are placed on the books.

Markings on inside. An electric eraser used to remove the numbers from bookplates and from the insides of the back covers of the books usually results in rubbed patches which cannot be marked upon again. Sometimes new plates have been placed over the old ones. Obviously, this procedure results in a cleaner job. Soaking off each bookplate is a tedious task. The librarian faced with the re-marking of a large collection of books may well reconsider whether or not all previous markings were necessary.

Re-use of old cards. One question which is relatively important is whether the old cards are to be erased and re-used or whether new cards are to be ordered. In catalogs of some libraries which have half-sized or handwritten cards, the latter procedure is necessary. However, the only valid reason for discarding old cards is the presence of data revealing that it is cheaper to order all new sets. The costs of ordering new cards and of typing and revising all subject headings, added entries, and changes on the cards, represent relatively large expenditures when thousands of items are considered; and available evidence shows that it costs approximately twice as much to recatalog and reclassify a volume by ordering new sets of cards than it does to re-use satisfactory old cards. Hence, the experience of librarians indicates that

it is better to use old cards when possible. This is particularly true if L.C. subject headings and added entries have been accepted in most cases.

Experience has shown that from the standpoints of speed and final appearance an electrical eraser is probably the most effective tool for removing the old call numbers from cards. A clerical assistant with a little training can take off such numbers at the rate of from two to five per minute. The final procedure should show a smooth surface at the spot on the card where the new call number is to be typed; otherwise, fingering by users of the card catalog will dim or remove the retyped figures and letters.

In recapitulation, three points may be made. The decision in regard to the order

of reclassification should rest on the criterion of use, unless conditions are such that some other order cannot be avoided. In the disposal of new acquisitions, the user of the stacks must suffer somewhat by the recommendation that accessions be placed with the new classification rather than with the old numbers, until the whole class is rearranged. If the reclassification is planned definitely as a speedy process, an exception to this rule may be made. In regard to the various routines for carrying on the mechanical work of reclassification, the aim should always be the establishment of those activities which insure a free flow of material through the technical department. Such a procedure will reduce the costs of operation as well as give maximum service to users during the process.

Shall Library Schools Teach Administration?

(Continued from page 340)

Under the present scheme the real administrative program must be delegated to the second year of library training. At this level, some students are recruited for administrative potentialities, the curriculum has the requisites of time and flexibility, and the administrative content will be compatible with the professional and research content. The approach might well be in terms of the basic managerial principles and concepts mentioned earlier, built around the administrative process, and applied to libraries by means of adequate case studies.

For the present, this seems best placed in the second year of study. In the future, it may be just as appropriate in the first year; and, indeed, much of the administrative and professional material in the second year may eventually be found in the first year when the purely technical material is removed from that level. But, in either case, the library school is potentially able to supply the junior executives which the profession needs. We will move in that direction, both in content and method, once we decide actually to teach administration in the library school.