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Reclassification of University of Sussex Library local language and literature classes to Library of Congress

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Context

The University of Sussex library was founded in 1961. The original library management team decided to adopt Library of Congress classification (LC) because it was considered more appropriate for an academic collection. However, largely down to the innovatory spirit of the professional librarians at Sussex in the early days, who believed LC to be out of date for certain subjects, modifications were made to the LC schedules. For some subjects (literature, philosophy, fine arts, music, geography, anthropology and social sciences) wholly in-house schemes were designed using the same first-level class letter as LC, but, in the example here of the social sciences (based on the then leading current international bibliography), continued very differently:

Radically speaking : feminism reclaimed / edited by Diane Bell and Renate Duelli Klein

Sussex	LC
HC	HQ
6400	1190
RAD	.R33

In 1969, a Library Unit Plan was produced outlining the need for the library “to achieve conformity with an established classification scheme” (Young, 1969). M. Burton, in her classification policy document, argued the case for reclassification and against the continuance of the local scheme (Burton, 1969). Reclassification began with fine arts and continued on a subject by year basis. Figures available at the time showed that the library was acquiring more books in the local schemes than were being transferred to LC: i.e. staff were getting steadily more and more behind as the putative benefits were becoming ever more distant (Peasgood, 2017). The librarians did manage to reclassify some literature: French (Sussex PE to LC PQ), solely as PQ was unused in the local schedules followed by Italian, Spanish and Portuguese (to PQ) and non-UK world Englishes (to PR) but reclassification was effectively abandoned by 1979. The result is that current staff have been left with the legacy of a series of local classmarks that have not been expanded or revised since reclassification was abandoned. Additionally, the American, English, Germanic and Scandinavian literature classes will soon be temporally obsolete due to the logic underlying the scheme.

The literature classes in question are based on the date of birth of the author:

William Blake (1757-1827) = PF 75700/04

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) = PF 85400/01

Hilary Mantel (1952-) = PF 95218

Linton Kwesi Johnson (1952-) = PF 95219



Authors with 5 numbers (eg. Blake):

00	Complete works
01	Selected works + first 3 of editor's surname
02	Individual works + first 3 of title
03	Biography + first 3 of author's surname
04	Critical studies and bibliography + first 3 of heading

Authors with 2 numbers (eg. Wilde):

00 blank	Complete works and selections
00 + first 3	Individual works
01 + first 3	Critical studies and bibliography

Authors with 1 number (eg. Mantel and Johnson):

Blank	Works by
First 3	Critical studies and bibliography

The problem with this logic arises once we begin to classify writers born post-2000. How do we keep the sequence chronologically robust and future-proof? After considering suggestions to modify the local schema, the decision to begin the project to reclassify to LC was unavoidable.

LC PE (English language) had already been used for a large collection of reprints of early English works, having been freed up by the aforementioned move of French lang/lit to LC PQ, so we decided to test our methods on this relatively small number of items.

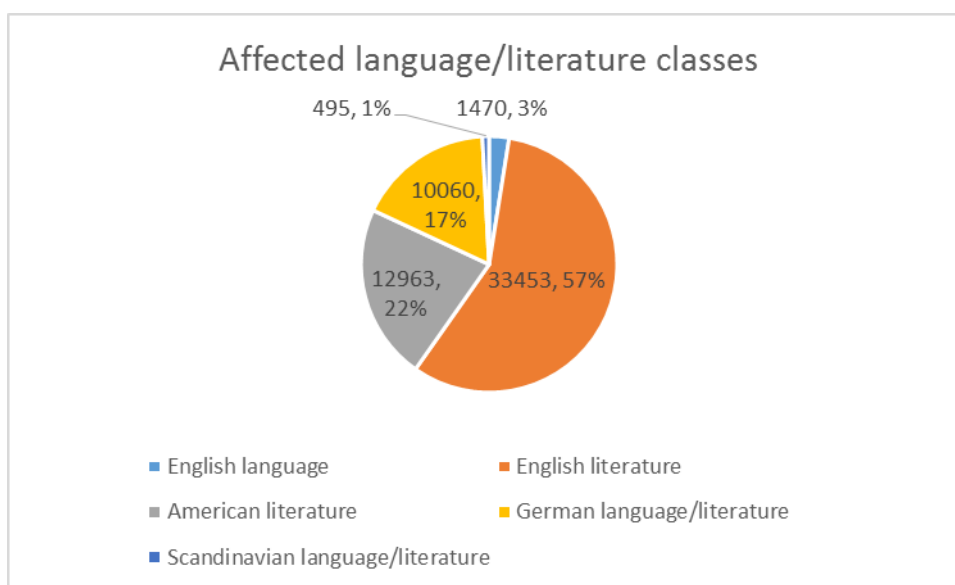
When we started **Phase 1** of the project in early 2014 the library was using Talis as its LMS. Using Talis Decisions, its business information system, we reported on all works in affected classes and saved the data on Excel spreadsheets. Working from these, we reclassified and added the new classmarks to both the spreadsheet and the work level class tables of Talis as an addition to that of the main work level. This way we could work steadily (as time allowed) through the cataloguing side of things before we 'released' this initial part of the project to Frontline Services for book processing. New works acquired after the reports had been run were reclassified straight to Talis work level. New works of fiction by authors yet to be classified locally were classified straight to LC. The reclassification work was carried out by the trained cataloguing staff: 1 x full-time senior library assistant and 3 x 0.5 hours library assistants. Because of factors including the lack of 'time-stamp' on the project and the fact that it has been/is being subsumed into our daily workflows, the outsourcing of the reclassification element (to OCLC for example) was not considered.

In terms of online tools we have a subscription to [Classification Web](#) which was and is consulted extensively when assigning new classmarks. Kyle Banerjee's '[Cutter calculator](#)' has proven invaluable in doing just that, and the LC '[Distribution of Cutter numbers for biography and criticism](#)' table is being used to subdivide the Zs to (largely) 3 numbers.

Sussex PF (language only) to LC PE was completed in good time for temporary staff to be taken on for the small Summer 2014 book processing and stock move. Cataloguing staff started on the reclassifying of the Sussex classes that were moving to LC alphabetically last (the reason will be discussed below), in this case PJ and PK to PT.

In July 2015 we moved to our new LMS, Alma. Unfortunately we were not able to map the added work table classes from Talis but thankfully we retained the data on Excel spreadsheets. New classmarks from those records processed on Talis were transferred to the 050 LC class field of the marc records and all subsequent reclassification in Alma has followed suit.

Overview



Phase 1 (pilot): Reclassification and movement of English grammar, PF 240-994 (approximately 1,500 items). As the smallest stock move, this would act as a pilot and inform decisions on the next 3 phases. Movement of stock - July/August 2014.

Phase 2: Reclassification and movement of PJ and PK to PT. Movement of stock - July/August 2017.

Phase 3: Reclassification and movement of PH to PS. Movement of stock planned for July/August 2018.

Phase 4: Reclassification and movement of the remaining PF works to mainly PR. Movement of stock planned for July/August 2020.

The project, conceived as a joint effort between Content Delivery (assigning new shelf marks) and Frontline Services (reclassification, relabelling and moving), was planned with Spalding's (2011 pages 41-43) design principles in mind. The reclassification work was undertaken away from library users, and we ensured that the space was large enough for staff to store the books and work safely. Each step was documented, we communicated our plans to library users via informational posters and the library's social media accounts, and we set achievable targets for the staff assigned to the project.

Weaver and Stanning (2007 page 65) suggest that a notional time of three minutes should be allowed for the reclassification of each item. That includes updating the library management system, changing the spine label, and shelving the book. We used that time frame to inform our project planning.

Phase 2 - Procedure

The Reclassification Working Group (3 faculty librarians and 3 clerical staff) programmed the PJ and PK to PT reclassification project to take place over the 2017 summer vacation. The project ran concurrently with the library's annual summer clean. PJ consisted of 495 books (3 bays; 19m), and there were 10,060 books (55 bays; 347m) shelved under PK.

We employed six temporary members of staff (working hours equivalent to four fte). Three of the temporary workers were members of the library's shelving team, and three were students who had recently completed their undergraduate degrees. The Shelving Supervisor and the Frontline Services Librarian oversaw the project.

Fortuitously, we had recently moved a large number of items from our Official Publications collection to the basement, which freed up 96 bays of available rolling stack (996m). All PJ and PK books were removed from the shelves, cleaned, and transported 112m to the rolling stack, where they were shelved in the same order. This took two days.

Books in LC classes PL-PS (38,000 items; 171 bays; 1078m) were cleaned and moved to make space at PT. Not all PJ and PK items were reclassified as PT. German language books will eventually be shelved under PF, but they will remain under PK for the time being. The PF shelf mark is currently home to our English Literature collection, and we thought it would be confusing to have an enclave of German language books in amongst English Literature! So, the German language books will be moved from PK to PF at a later date.

Space was left between PH and PL to accommodate the language books that would be returned to PJ and PK. The movement and cleaning of PL-PS took eight days.

For the next stage of the reclassification process, we set up two work stations in a study area near the rolling stack, each consisting of a PC, a scanner, and a Brother P-Touch label printer. In total, 230 spreadsheets, in new PT shelf mark order, were printed from the Alma library management system, giving the following details:

Title (and volume number, if required)
Old shelf mark number
New shelf mark number

Each spreadsheet contained 40 titles. Staff members worked through the spreadsheets, picking the listed books from the rolling stack in the new shelf mark order and taking them to the workstations. Using Spalding's (2011) guidelines, we set an achievable target of picking 40 books in 30 minutes.

At the workstations, the books were reclassified on Alma, labelled, and returned to the rolling stack in the new PT order.

We noted that the picking and processing of books speeded up significantly as staff became used to the various processes. As the project went on, staff were able to locate 40 books in as little as 15 minutes. The process of Alma reclassification and labelling took 40 minutes for 40 books. In total, this part of the project was completed in 19 days.

Once all of the books were changed and labelled, they were returned to their new area next to PZ. They were shelved in reverse order (i.e. highest number first) to ensure adequate spacing. Books remaining in PJ and PK were also returned. This took two days.

The entire process of moving and reclassifying the books took 23 days, using 4 fte staff.

Discussion

As explained above, the Sussex schema assigned PF to Englishes, PH to American Literature, and PK to German. The Reclassification Group chose PJ and PK to PT to be reclassified first for two main reasons:

- It is the smallest collection of the three big remaining literatures, and would be used as an extended pilot. French had been reclassified as part of an earlier reclassification programme, and English Language was moved to PE in 2014 – the original pilot scheme.
- We reasoned that if we reclassified and moved PJ and PK to PT first, then we wouldn't need to move it again when we reclassified PF and PH to PR and PS respectively.

There was much debate in the Reclassification Group, and amongst other library staff, about the order of movement. Some wondered if it was necessary to move PJ and PK to the rolling stack first. Couldn't the same result have been achieved by picking books in the new PT order from the original shelves? The short answer is yes, the practical answer no. As Spalding (2011) suggests, it is good practice to carry out significant work away from users. The area allocated to undertake the reclassification was closer to the rolling stack than the original PJ and PK area. The original PJ and PK area was next to a large number of study spaces. We decided that it was better to have two intensive days of trolley movement passing the study space, rather than nine days of moderate disruption. The new PT area is located on the opposite side of the study space, nearer to the rolling stack, and can be accessed through the book stack. Also, this area was part of the clean-up and needed to be programmed into that process.

The reclassification of PH to PS is programmed to take place next year (2018). PF to PR will probably be reclassified in 2020, as this will require significantly more preparation due to its size.

Conclusion + lessons learnt

The need to conform to a worldwide classification system that is an industry-standard in terms of efficiency has become more and more necessary in recent years in terms of data interoperability. We have highlighted how, in the 1960s, the staff at Sussex developed their own schemas, which worked well at the time, but which do not now meet our requirements. The move to our new LMS, Alma, has enabled us to perform bulk data changes much more effectively than has been possible in the past. On a local level, this has been an excellent joint venture between the Content Delivery and Frontline Services Sections and a model by which we can consider future internal reclassification projects.

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