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Lois Mai Chan's New Edition of Immroth's Manual on the Library of Congress Classification

Perreault, J. M.: Lois Mai Chan's new edition of Immroth's manual on the Library of Congress Classification.

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The third edition of the standard manual on the Library of Congress Classification shows many improvements over the first and second, but comes no nearer either (a) to helping the practicing librarian deal with many of its irrationalities or (b) to pushing the Library itself toward substantive improvement — and such improvement is needed to keep such a system from becoming a relic of the pre-computer age of library utilization.

(Author)

"Logical! But whoever supposed that it was? We were always taught that it simply was not": such was the laughing response given me by a no-nonsense but perspicacious fellow librarian/cataloguer when I told her that I intended to tax Chan with not having made at least a token effort to discern in the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) some guiding purpose, some coherent structure — or at the very least some possibilities for improvement along such lines — in a word, some logic to it all.

But there are indeed moments when Chan¹ either points to examples of good logic, or draws the practice of the Library together into a summary that evinces compelling logic. The first sort of logic in LCC is shown in the order of preference in complex subjects stated in class N (art) (208): because synthesis (which would be the truly appropriate solution to the problem of complex subjects) is so often unavailable in LCC², a document about a complex subject must be placed in the locus of one or other of its foci; and if there is no stated order of preference among those foci, cross-classification is to be expected over time or between different cataloguers: if today I put a document about Redon's flowerpieces in French painting, there is nothing (lacking an order of preference) to keep me from tomorrow putting one about Bosch's treatment of the nude with special topics instead of in Flemish painting. The second sort of logic is shown in referring by quotation to more than the schedules themselves, e.g. to Cataloging Service in its general outline of a table for classifying the works of a single author in a single class (93); but there is an unfortunate corollary to this last: she does not bring out the fact that the admirable logic shown in the general outline quoted is not only varied in cases where "there are provisions to the contrary in the particular schedule", but is in fact almost wholly abrogated by a change of citation order among the elements in the tables of some of those particular schedules.

1. Subject analysis. Translation into artificial language

There is very nearly nothing to be found here about subject analysis -how does LCC apply its own system? How do we classify? How do we go about translating our own subject analysis into the artificial language of the system? Two examples could have led into such a discussion: on 163, Visages de Bourbonnais is treated as a general history/description of the region named, and one wonders whether the title alone makes this assignment appropriate? (hardly: it is ambiguous) - does examination of the subject headings? (maybe, but they are not given; and how are they appropriately assigned?) – from a reading of the book? (unlikely, however adequate to the task). - Anyway, to use a classification system (which it is apparently the purpose of such a book as this Guide to teach) means more than to know how to interpret its products, as important as such a skill is. That such a skill is as much needed to do good reference work as to catalogue justifies the book's existence, but its real audience, surely, is cataloguers - and indeed primarily cataloguers who are doing original cataloguing. The need, then, is to teach cataloguers how to use LC when they are doing original cataloguing, since in so many libraries nothing more is done (if full data is in hand from LC itself or OCLC, etc.) than to check the accuracy of match of bibliographical details for incoming materials that do not need original cataloguing. — But if such a Guide does not teach this, how is it to help cataloguers when they really need it? - A second example occurs on 322, where Cleveland Rockwell: Scientist and Artist, 1837-1907 is assigned not to science or to art, but to technology – how is this arrived at?

There are a few cases where subject analysis is at least implied: on 323 preference is shown to the national level over the smaller locale for biographies of "public figures, and persons identified with specific historical events or movements", while specification by period is urged: good advice on both counts. On 165 we are told that LCC prefers "geographic names" to "political names. The reason, no doubt, is that the former are less prone to change". On 52 the reproduced schedule implies that there are no general works in mathematics before 1800 - and no objection is raised. Since it is at least strongly arguable that the assignment of subject headings and of classificatory codes are parallel operations and mutually illuminating, it is a pity that a book (being classified in an example) with a descriptive note "Articles, previously published in various periodicals" receives subject headings all lacking the obvious form-element - Addresses, essays, lectures (98). Or are we (and Chan) so confined to consideration of the classificatory part of the work of the cataloguer as to be unable to see anything else? Not so: in dealing (e.g.) with works belonging to such mainheading-types as congresses, serials, and corporate bodies, explicit concern is shown by Chan for the influence of this element of (non-classificatory) cataloguing on classification work — and such an element in the whole cataloguing enterprise is clearly more distant form classification than is the assignment of subject headings.

2. Overall structure. Collocation

It has been fairly long-known that a departure in notation is to be found in the recently begun class K (law), namely the use of triple-letter subclasses; but Chan announces (27) that this is now also the case with class D (old world and general history). But we must wait till 160 to discover that it is a single instance, DJK (eastern Europe), of which this is now true — but since this is the same sort of thing (intercalation of a partially comprehensive superordinate class into an array where no notation is structurally appropriate to show this relation) that the Colon Classification does with the aid of Ranganathan's idea of 'empty digit', one wonders why LCC did not do likewise: for a new class superordinate to DK (Russia. Poland. Finland) and DR (Balkan peninsula), why not use the last notationally available notation immediately ahead of the first notation to be subsumed, **DJZ?** Or is LCC implying that a superordinate class inserted between DS and DT would read DST? (The use of NX for 'arts in general' looks closer to Ranganathan; but in fact, on his principles, since it subsumes M, N, and P, it would have had to read LZ, since general must come before special and there is no whole notation available immediately ahead of M.)

The fact of the subsumption of two subclasses of **D** (that do not even stand together) into an intermediate class demonstrates well the oddities of collocation in LCC, but none can do so as well as the internal collocation of class **P** (languages and literature). There is no comment on this strangeness by Chan, but the order of presentation of subclasses by date of publication of their respective first editions (!) seems nothing but a means of evading the strangeness that would be more evident were the order of presentation sequential³ — as well, in fact, as making a more intelligible collocation by intellectual affiliation than the notation itself manifests! (This order of presentation is taken over from the Immroth text.)

Cases (classes C, G, and H) in which several main classes are crowded into a single notation are not treated as manifolds but as unitary – with practical examples taken from just one of their constituent classes. Now even though I know that to be able to handle one half of class H does not mean that the same person can handle the other (economics, sociology), it could be argued that even if only economics-examples are given, whatever is peculiar to sociology-examples will have been handled somewhere else in the detailed example-examination of some other main class(es). But my experience tells me that one of the worst problem-cases in sociology does not occur elsewhere, namely in the subdivisions of major figures in the history of the discipline in the various countries, precisely because there is no table available to guide the cataloguer in doing original classifying. Here we strike into the central difficulty with LC: its lack of principle and systematicity - which means in the end that far too little learned in the solving of one problem will be of help when another must be faced.

We are told (52) that all legal subclasses formerly scattered about (presumably because of the lack of a developed schedule for law, not because of a consciously chosen citation order) are being reassembled under

class K (law) — which seems about as good a reason as one could hope for for other libraries not to want to adopt LCC: I challenge anyone but a lawyer or a law librarian in an exclusively law library to prefer the citation order

Law: Psychiatric hospitals: Argentina over Psychiatric hospitals: Argentina: law,

or

Law: women: Europe: 19th century over Women: Europe: 19th century: law

— in each of which cases (applying the Ranganathanian PMEST analysis) the *personality* (respectively: Psychiatric hospitals and Women) is buried within the string when the string begins with Law.

Some other aspects of overall structure not satisfactorily dealt with are hierarchy and synthesis. The unfortunate technique of having two separate hierarchies under the same including place (e.g., under French history, DC 611 is for "Regions, provinces, departments, etc., A-Z", while DC 801 is for "Other cities, towns, etc."). Thus the most obvious further hierarchical divisions of a department such as Indre-et-Loire (very nearly the territorial equivalent of *Tour*aine⁵), namely Tours and other such municipalities within it, are nowwhere near the locus of the including place: browsing becomes as difficult as browsing a single literary author in the Dewey arrangement (where forms are primary under languages, rather than, as in LCC, periods), as against the superior browsability available in LCC by its having all of one author's works (in whatever form) together. - Again, in discussing a new device in class G (geography ...), the colon, which indicates "further subdivisions of a sub-area" (174), what seems all too likely to lead to cross-classification is passed over without comment: if

G 3823 .A4:3 A5 analyzes as G 3823 (maps of Pennsylvania by country) .A4 (Allegheny country):3 (administrative subdivisions) A5 (Aleppo township), and if

G 3804.R6 analyzes as G 3804 (maps of New York state by city) .R6 (Rochester — with no facet indicator analogous to :3 in the first example), what happens when an area covered by a map is both that of an administrative subdivision of a major area (a county or a township), and an incorporated place? It is typical, in my recollection, that in the state of Wisconsin all places were of one of three 'levels' of incorporatedness: (unincorporated) town[ship], (incorporated) village, or (incorporated) city; and that a town could become a village or a city by nothing more than a legal action, with its boundaries and name undergoing no change; and therefore that a map of the same territory at different points of time would belong to quite different hierarchies.

One of the most important structural elements of any general classification system (perhaps 'pervasive' would be a better epithet here than 'overall') is synthesis. We have already seen that where synthesis is lacking, an order of preference among the elements of complex subjects is a worthy 'next-best' (though not widely enough available in LCC). But while synthesis is available in LCC whenever tables apply, this synthetic possibility is often unavailable just where it most needs to be. It is unfortunate that the topic never becomes thematic in Chan, despite the great intensity of concern bestowed upon the use of tables; for instance, in the discussion of French history and description (161–164) she never mentions

even such low-level synthetic possibilities as periods understood as subdivisions of the place exemplified (Bretagne), though the span allocated (.B841-9173) is shown tabularly only up to .B855 — and it is just at .B856 that periods begin to be enumerated: early to 877/877-1492 (with many smaller periods listed) / 1492-1789/1789-1815.

Another 'pervasive' structural element is citation order (in synthesis: given the way tables are used in LCC there is generally none of that regrettable laxity one sees in UDC — but we shall have to look at some unfortunate enforcements of bad citation orders under "Author Classification", below), but it emerges in a thematic way only once, namely when we are told (55) that the usual order [subject]: [country] is replaced by the order [country]: [subject] at some points in the social sciences, and that this "allows greater specific and appropriate enumeration for each country". Perhaps I could dig up some examples (which Chan fails to do), but it is hard to see the likelihood of the gain that she postulates: change in citation order is generally thought of as a matter of clarification of meaning and avoidance of ambiguity, not of increased allowance of specificity - which, in a basically enumerative classification like LCC, is absolutely in the hands of the designers in any case, so that little latitude for structural extrapolation is left to non-LCC-cataloguers.

3. Other general concerns, pedagogical qualities

Before undertaking to discuss some detailed technical aspects of the *Guide*, I want to comment on some general aspects more of the book itself than of its treatment of the system (or, *a fortiori*, of the system itself).

Criticism is very seldom explicit, but examples of details that can be taken as the raw material for criticism are not uncommon, e.g. on 48 we are told that form subdivisions, which are generally the first under any major subject, are not consistent in their order (and this is not argued as providing a gain in intelligibility or appropriateness). On 160 we are informed that an "extremely helpful" introduction to the first edition of a schedula has "not been retained" in the second edition. On 300 we are told that "work letters, beginning with letter 'a' are assigned in order of receipt of the publication" of various items issued by a congress — which flies in the fact of the quasi-official publication The Use of the Library of Congress Classification, in particular the paper by M. C. Arick, "Subclassification and Book Numbers of Documents and Official Publications"6, which includes a table (p. 154) showing alphabetical marks reserved for 'proceedings', 'papers read', 'abstract of papers read', etc. This may have become invalid in the intervening twelve years, but if so, why are those still aware of the earlier directions not so informed (especially since Chan herself cites the book here cited)? Most glaring of all (but perhaps intended to shock the reader without any thematic statements being needed) are the two contiguous examples (230-231) of translations of the same work: one into German using a single Cutternumber to represent both language and translator's name, the other into Russian using separate Cutter-numbers for the language and for the translator's name.

As regards pedagogical qualities, no praise can be too great for the tremendous improvement in readability that we find in Chan: the whole layout, as well as the typography, makes the Guide far easier to use in this edition. Again, the biggest substantive change from Immroth's text is the addition of the very useful chapter on problems in classifying "Special Types of Library Materials", which covers (with appropriately varying degrees of depth) serials, series, and sets; abstracts, indexes, and supplements; corporate headings (especially societies, government documents, and congresses); juvenile materials; nonbook materials and microforms; etc. On 135, just before undertaking the examination of individual classes in the system for their peculiar problems, Chan (following Inunroth) enunciates very clearly the intentions she proposes (and to which she does indeed adhere), namely that for each class the reader can expect "an introductory rather than a definitive treatment of the problems involved", and that "Only parts of schedules or tables posing a new or a special kind of difficulty to the classifier are discussed". The compilation (327-397) of tables in current form is highly useful (analogous to the fine compilation of subdivisions in her recent book of LCSH⁷); some of them, though, will be so specialized as to get less use than may justify their inclusion. There are of course occasional lapses: an unnecessary headline internally retained in a table reproduced on 186; an index that, while what it lists is accurate, misses several appropriate entries; and a use of parenthesized ordinal numbers (indicative of successive subject-Cutter-numbers) on 50 with no explanation of their function till 90 (see further in the next section).

4. Subject-Cutter-Numbers

A device used far less in most general classification systems than in LCC is that of an alphabetical array of names (not only of persons, which is quite acceptable, but also) of topics. These are usually called, in LCC, subject-Cutter-numbers, because they consist of the same features as do the Cutter-numbers that shelflist books by author and/or title, namely three notational species, (a) a decimal point (explicit or implicit), (b) a capital letter, and (c) one or more numerical digit(s) to place the name in correct alphabetical order among those beginning with the same letter. The inherent deficiency in such a device is that it is not a classification, and accordingly does not aid browsing and can lead to cross-classification. Note the example on 128, where Browning and the Christian Faith is cuttered .R4 for the poet's relation to religion; one wonders whether some cataloguer might later class one on Browning and Catholicism at .C3, having not noticed that just as this second one is a (conceptually) second-order specification (hierarchically) of .R4, so the first was already a first-order specification of it - a generic-nodal example would be Browning and Religion. It is not that I object to this classing together of all religious topics under Browning, but that there is no guarantee that such grouping will be consistently honored in future: once hierarchy is ignored, the way is open for subject-Cutter-numbers that are notationally all on the same level, but are conceptually of as many hierarchical orders as one culd care to shudder at. What, for Browning and the Christian Faith, was to prevent using .C4 for Christianity, or even .F3 for

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faith? Two changes are announced in certain Cutternumber practices: (a)

In the past, the Library of Congress used "A" Cutter numbers for government or official publications under many class numbers even when there were no explicit instructions in the schedules to do so. ... Now, the "A" Cutter numbers are used only when there are specific instructions for their use. (89)

This misleads, in that, since LCC is a system so much more geared to precedent than to principle, any such usage is to be guided (both at the home office and out in the trenches) by whether the practice had been used in this class before — and should, if the answer is 'yes', be continued (and, we can only hope, be noted in Additions and Changes and in any new edition). (b) The method of using parenthesized ordinal numbers to indicate successive Cutter-numbers, $(1)(2)(3) \equiv .M3.M4$. M5 or the like, is, we are told (90), now obsolete.

Successive Cutter numbers are now announced in the manner shown below . . . :

- x General works
- .x2 Government hospitals. By author
- .x 3 By state, province, etc., A-Z
- .x4 By city, A-Z

— but the result is precisely the same — and the practicing cataloguer, not in possession of up-to-date editions of all the schedules to be applied, must know how to interpret the constantly encountered parenthesized ordinal numbers (not yet editorially expunged) to get the job done.

There are now three devices that look so much like ordinary subject-Cutter-numbers that Chan (and LCC) takes considerable care to distinguish (some of) them from the real thing: (a) "book numbers" in class QB (astronomy) (243-244), (b) "subject letter-numbers" in class G (geography . . .) (101, 174-178), and (c) the third is indeed called a "very detailed table using Cutter numbers . . . for material concerning West Point" in class U (military science) (258). There are several strange anomalies here that are not pointed out: (a) the astronomical "book numbers" have nothing to do with books but simply represent years; further, "The use of book numbers precludes the use of the first decimal point for the first Cutter number" (244), as in QB 544 .54 U68, and there is no decimal before U6 - though how anyone is supposed to perceive the difference between these mislabelled "book" numbers and any other decimal extension I do not know, nor why they should "preclude" the Cutter-number decimal any more than in the example Z 695 .1 .E3 C36 1978 on 104. (b) Each "subject letternumber" is specifically called "not a Cutter number . . . and [has] no alphabetical significance" (174); the first statement is indeed true because these "subject letternumbers" do form a hierarchical classification of forms and subjects of maps and atlases; but the second is not, because they do, notationally, function precisely as do Cutter-numbers: they alphabetize numerically. (c) The so-called "table using Cutter numbers" for West Point is in every regard analogous to "subject letter-numbers" for maps — except that they are called Cutter-numbers!

5. Author classification. Tables

The explanation of the use of tables, in particular of the most complicated of them all, the ten-column "Tables of Geographical Divisions" in class **H** (social sciences)

(182-185), and a fortiori of the use of ordinal tables for topics interrelated to one or other of those columns, is all that could be desired — almost a substitute for a blackboard demonstration in its clarity, step-by-step explicitness, and concession to the need for reinforcement through repetition. (Its placement is better in Chan, too, though the text is Immroth's.)

And the comment (126) that "Beginners may feel a desire to cutter for [an author whose corpus is represented by a range of numbers] or for [a title represented by a schedule-designated number in that range] but either would be redundant" is eminently salutary.

There are flaws, of course. The table on 100 shows the typical (numerical) codes for translations:

- .x Cutter number of work in original language
- .x13 English translation
- .x14 French translation
- .x15 German translation
- .x16 Italian translation
- .x17 Russian translation
- .x18 Spanish translation

— but then she says "If a Hebrew translation [is to be inserted prior to a German or an Italian one's having been catalogued], .x15 or .x16 [may be used for the Hebrew version]"; but if any table in LCC has achieved the canonic status of a 'general category' (de Grolier), this is it: it were better to treat the numbers shown in it as reserved, and thus better to give .x155 or the like for Hebrew even in the absence of German and Italian.

On 93 we are told that

work marks based on the titles of the works ... are not used, except in the classification of juvenile belles lettres. ... Works by the same author on the same subject (i.e. with the same class number) are differentiated by adjusting the book number.

Therefore, presumably, we should expect .H437 or the like rather than .H43 S4 or the like for Sein und Zeit by Heidegger. But in fact it is only when we get to 309–313 that we are shown "work marks" strictly speaking, e.g. A59 Be, which stands for Best Nature Stories by Annixter. But the point is, as she goes on to show on 93, that the general outline from Cataloging Service for "works of an individual author under a single class number" includes the line "Separate works. By title", which is exemplified (e.g.) on 148 by .R93 09 for An outline of Philosophy by Russell. This is not strictly a work mark, but is even less an adjusted book number.

The good point is made on 286 that a volume containing selected (as against collected) works should receive subject headings with the form division — Addresses, essays, lectures, just so long as it does not contain all of this author's works on this topic (i.e., its not containing all of his/her works simpliciter is not the necessary condition) — in which case the correct form division would be —Collected works.

From the table on 146

Collected works.

- .R9 Original texts. By date.
- .R91 Partial editions, selections, etc. By editor or date.
- .R92 Translation. By language, A-Z and date.
- .R93 Separate works, A-Z.
- can be derived both correct and incorrect applications to a particular author, in this case Lord Russell. Chan shows both but makes no distinction, not commenting (e.g.) on translatedness being given priority over partiality in .R92 S66 for a selection from the works of Russell

translated into Spanish; but indeed the layout of the table cannot but confuse:

If .R9 is for *complete* works, where do translations of such sets go? in .R913 etc.? but then is there not conflict with .R91 for partial editions?

Is .R92 for translations of *partial* editions only? or, since its indention is parallel to that for partial editions, for complete editions only?

Since each separate work can get its own translation number (e.g. .R93 P516 (148-149)), why bother with the .R92 line at all, since the same possibility applies to .R9 and .R91 (once we figure a way around the .R913 problem mentioned above)?

The general outline table quoted on 93 from Cataloging Service gets around these difficulties handsomely:

Collected works. By date Translations. By date Selected works. By date Translations. By date Separate works. By title Under each: Original editions. By date Translations. By date By date Selections. By date Translations. By adapter, A-Z... Adaptations.

 it's only a pity such logic does not prevail more in actual practice.

6. Summary

LCC is a general classification system deeply flawed, more than anything else by its lack of unifying principle and by its subsistence almost entirely upon precedent; but the fact is that this is the very moment when the advent of computerized literature searching is going to require that classification systems either (a) be amenable to such techniques and assist in such manipulations, or (b) consent in effect to be relegated to the status of antiquated relics or at best that of housekeeping functions — in any library that aspires to the rank of a research establishment. And at this crucial moment, when Chan's penetrating mind could well have spurred the Library to begin to consider joining the present (may we even whisper about its daring to look to the future?), she has produced instead a consummate guided tour of the expiring past.

Too bad — but, still, consummate: if it is your fate to use LCC, there is nothing else remotely approaching this Guide for currency, clarity, and general usefulness.

Notes:

I realize that in reviewing this edition (Immroth's Guide to the Library of Congress Classification, 3d cd. by Lois Mai Chan. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1980. 402 pp. LC 80-16981 ISBN 0-87287-224-6 \$ 22.50) I am being far more critical than in my treatments of the earlier editions. Perhaps it is because, while when Immroth first appeared it was not only the only but also so clearly a good introduction

to a confusing system that nothing but gratitude could be expected from teachers of classification - but that was twelve years ago, and one could hope for something more penetrating, given all that has been so admirably documented in the way of criticism and research on LCC in the excellent chapter-bibliographies (which are not merely updated, but show signs of a thorough Chan-reworking of the whole available literature). - I shall consider, because of the thoroughness of review, that everything here is Chan's, though in most places no change at all has been made, in many an improvement of an example, in some the insertion of new details or even of whole new chapters . . . But since Chan is so capable of more than mere reproduction or improvement of a good thing (Immroth's text), why is she not also capable (as I know she is) of an over-archingly fresh look at it, a look that would point the way to salutary change? For, surely and sorely, LCC needs such an approach: alone of all the major available general classification systems, it seems to take the arrogant attitude that if it is illogical, so much the worse for those who adopt it (they were not asked to); the attitude that whatever goes on in the wider world of research into classification theory or of the improvement of other major systems in practice, they need not concern themselves - because they never claimed to be perfect or even to be logical! - It is just not a good enough excuse.

- 2 Except for synthesis as carried out with tables: specification of place, period, or form; see further below s.v. "Author Classification. Tables".
- For those not familiar with it, I will briefly outline:

linguistics PA classical languages and literatures PR Celtic languages and literatures PC Romance languages - - -PD old Germanic dialects, Scandinavian ... PΕ West Germanic languages-PF PG Slavic etc. languages and literatures PJ-PL Oriental and east Asian languages and literatures PM American Indian languages ... PN PO Romance literatures _ - - - - - - - -PR English literature · · · · · PS PT Germanic literatures

PZ fiction and juvenile belies lettres

Note both (a) the split between language and literature for the 'major' languages, and the consolidating treatment for the 'minor' ones, (b) the different order among 'majors' as against 'minors', (c) the placement of the general subject 'literature', and (d) the non-parity of principal subclasses allocated to the Germanic and English languages as against their literatures.

- 4 I.e., other than Paris, which is allocated the span DC 701-790.
- 5 It is also regrettable that DC 611 .141-43 (subdivisible by a table that enumerates e.g. Periodicals. Societies, Biographies (Collective), Antiquities, and History [...] By period) means specifically Indre-et-Loire; for DC 611 .T721-289, on the other hand, means specifically the very nearly territorially equivalent Touraine and has a much more detailed subdivision into subclasses than the table gives, with every subclass that is available to subdivide Indre-et-Loire also available to subdivide Touraine and more! —: what an opportunity for cross-classification!
- 6 Chicago: American Library Association, 1968; pp. 135-161.
- 7 Cf. J. M. Perreault, Library of Congress Subject Headings: a New Manual. In: Intern. Classificat. 6 (1979) p.158-169.
- 8 Note that the .54 means simply 1954, very much as is common practice in class P, e.g. "E85' is the appropriate date letter from Table IIIa meaning 18.85" (227)