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Short Communication

Revision of Colon Classification

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In the special issue of *Annals of Library and Information Studies* (V.64, no.4), devoted to Philosophy and Teachings of S R Ranganathan, K. S. Raghavan[1], M. P. Satija[2] and Parveen Babbar[3] urged for the revision of Colon Classification (CC), which will be its 8th edition. Raghavan has enumerated eight broad principles for the revision. Satija has provided as many as ten suggestions including formation of a Colon Classification Association for the revision, use survey, manual publication, etc.

Providing guidelines, suggestions, plans for the revision of a classification scheme do not take much time. If suggestions are invited for the revision of CC from LIS professionals, hundreds will come. The problem is with the implementation, which may take years and involve a number of library professionals, long man hours, and huge finances. None of the three authors have touched upon these points.

It can be seen from Table 1 that the time gap between two successive editions ranged from two to eleven years. The large time gap between 2nd and 3rd edition was 11 years probably due to 2nd World War (1939-1945). As long as Ranganathan was alive, except the last decade of his life, revision of CC was a continuous process and Ranganathan was actively involved in it.

The moment Ranganathan came across a new concept in a book or any other document, he used to deeply ponder over it, consulted reference sources to have a clear cut idea about the concept and finally he used to decide its position in the classification scheme and the class number. The cumulative effect of this process largely paved the way for bringing out a new edition.

The same process is being followed for the revision of Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and the Library of Congress Classification (LC). The moment a book is received for OCLC WorldCat, it is given the class number according to DDC and LC. If the book dwells on a concept not covered by any of the classification schemes, then the classificationists take up the matter and decide its position in the schedule and assign the number. The process is a continuous one and it immensely helps in the revision of the classification schemes.

Table 1—Year of publication of the different editions of Colon Classification

Edition	Year of publication	Remarks
1st	1933	
2nd	1939	
3rd	1950	
4th	1952	
5th	1957	
6th	1960	
6th (with an appendix)	1963	It as not declared as a revised edition
7th (Incomplete)	1987	The index and a guide to classifying with CC7 never came out.
7th Revised bilingual edition: Kannada – English	2010	The extent of revision is not known to me.

It seems that the process of continuous classification followed by Ranganathan stopped sometime in 1960s. Thereafter, bringing out the 7th edition became a gargantuan task. The 7th edition brought out in 1987, 24 years after the publication of 6th edition with an appendix, was not complete. At that time M. A. Gopinath was involved in the revision. He had the necessary facilities such as classificationists, funds and so on. Still a complete edition could not be brought out.

If it is decided to bring out a revised edition of CC with the addition of a few hundred concepts, it is possible. However, if it is decided to bring out a thoroughly revised edition, it will be a hugely difficult task.

Nearly three decades have passed after the 7th edition saw the light of the day. Thousands of concepts have emerged during this period which is to be collected from DDC, UDC and other databases. Then they are to be clearly understood and their positions in the classification schedule are to be decided. Finally the class number will have to be assigned. Once the main part is ready, then job of index preparation and writing of guide for classification is to be undertaken. Undeniably this is a tall order.

To accomplish the task, lots of manpower comprising library professionals including classificationists, classifiers, computer specialists, data entry operators, project leaders and others are needed. DRTC at one time produced a good number of classificationists and DRTC produced lots of research papers on classification. Every year hundreds of papers on LIS are published from India but papers on classification research are non-existent. Classificationists by and large seem to have vanished from the Indian LIS scene. Can we think of revision of a classification scheme without expert classificationists?

For the revision, an organization is a *sine qua non*. Satija has suggested the formation of an association for the job. We have lots of LIS associations in the country including national, state, local etc. The active associations in them are but very few. Keeping in view the sorry state of Indian library associations, it is doubtful whether such an association will be able to accomplish the arduous work revising CC.

An enthusiastic and knowledgeable young or middle age professional is needed who can guide the entire team to accomplish the job. The seasoned experts of CC are either gone or octogenarians or near-octogenarians. I feel the finding of a devoted leader would not be an easy job.

The use of CC is continuously dwindling may be because of its highly belated revision and the growing complexity of the scheme. Once upon a time JNU library was using CC. They do not use it now. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library has of late gone for DC reclassifying more than 200,000 books from CC to DC. Ranganathan's ardent disciples and followers who used to vigorously advocate the use of CC are all either gone or retired. The following generations, as bibliometric indicators suggest, have not shown much interest in CC.

Irrespective of whether Colon Classification is revised or not, it will always remain a great Indian heritage.

References

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3. Babbar P, Web CC: An effort towards its revival, *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, 62 (4) (2015) 249-254.