

Statement to OCLC from Italian user of DDC

By Italian WebDewey translation group

1. Background: DDC in Italy

In Italy Dewey Decimal Classification is used by all kinds of libraries: national libraries, public libraries, university libraries and special libraries.

The Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, one of the two Italian central libraries, has been using DDC to classify books in the Italian National Bibliography (Bibliografia Nazionale Italiana) since 1958. BNI uses WebDewey since 2014.

The BNI adopted the Dewey numerical notation starting from the 15th English edition. In 1961 BNI published the table in the "Schema di classificazione", with the sponsorship of ICCU (Istituto catalografico per il catalogo unico), in order to standardize the model.

As the classification system was immediately used by many different libraries, many DDC editions have been translated and published.

The complete edition (Nineteenth Edition) was adopted in 1986, when BNI enter in SBN (Sistema Bibliotecario Nazionale).

The 20th edition was translated on 1993, on behalf of Associazione Italiana Biblioteche, by Prof. Luigi Crocetti, with the help of Daniele Danesi and a team of BNCF librarians. it was adopted by the BNI. Then, in 2000 and 2009 the translation of the 21st and 22nd editions were published by AIB, translated by the same editing group of BNI with Prof. Luigi Crocetti.

Some of the Abridged Editions (11th, 12nd and 14th) were translated and they are more frequently used by public libraries.

Nowadays Italian cataloguers use WebDewey, that from its official publication on January 2014 has already been used by more than 50 institutions which account for several hundreds of libraries.

For example, the following institutions subscribed to WebDewey in 2015:

- Senato della Repubblica (Italian Senate)
- Camera dei Deputati (Italian House of Representatives)
- Banca D'Italia (Italian central bank)
- 19 Universities (in Italy there are about 80 universities)

Almost all public and university libraries that use DDC are using it both for indexing and for shelving. But, as Dewey notations are usually shared in the bibliographic records of SBN (Nation Library system), many libraries that use different ways of shelving add Dewey notations in their catalogs.

The Nuovo soggettario, Italian general subject heading schema and thesaurus, has created links to DDC and now Webdewey, since its publication in 2008, in order to enable the interaction between the two different semantic tools. The linked open data version of the thesaurus contains the links to dewey.info project (now stoped).

2. User stories

As a library user, I want an efficient classification scheme, so that I can easily and intuitively find the books I need in all libraries with open shelf.

As a public librarian, I want to have a logical and structured classification scheme, so that I can organize my book collection.

As a university librarian, I want a continuously upgraded classification scheme, so that I can correctly classify books and resources on new scientific fields.

As a specialist librarian, I want a detailed classification scheme, so that I can classify each book as specifically as its characteristics require.

As a catalog IT technician, I want a linked open data classification scheme, so that I can enrich my data and publish them in the semantic web.

As a metadata specialist, I want a classification scheme based on rules, so that I can expect where I could find a subject.

As librarians, we want Dewey Decimal Classification scheme, so that we can use a standard to classify our documents.

3. Conclusion

Our opinion is that Italian libraries are going to use DDC for indexing and managing their collection for a long time. There already are thousands of open shelves libraries that organize their rooms using DDC. As a consequence, the majority of their users identify their collections with a DDC arrangement. Many Italian library users do not know what DDC is, but they know for example that 853 is the call number for Italian novels, and 813 for American novels.

Moreover, DDC is more popular than subject headings as a tool for semantic research. This is due to the fact that many public and university libraries use DDC but they do not insert subject headings in their catalogues.

The developing of semantic web is changing the structure of our catalogues: our challenge is to maintain the coherence of our data and to offer our users enriched data and reusable information. Dewey.info is a very powerful service to our community and we are sure that developing that will make DDC more and more used.

To conclude with, DDC is of the utmost importance as a coherent, structured and comprehensive tool which all Italian libraries can use and make reference to. Not being able to use DDC would represent a huge loss in terms of functionality of libraries.