Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA

Federal Office of Culture FOC
Swiss National Library NL

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To the
OCLC Headquarters
6565 Kilgour Place
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Statement from the Swiss National Library on the use and development of the DDC

The Swiss National Library has a long tradition of using the Dewey Decimal Classification. At the very end of the 19th century the subject indexing was based on the DDC 5th edition and its relative index. Slightly later, at the beginning of the 20th century, the subject catalogue was organized along the lines of DDC schedules and so was the cumulative index of the Swiss national bibliography, but after 1920 the DDC was gradually abandoned in favour of a homespun version of the UDC.

In the course of the reorganization of the SNL and after the introduction of verbal subject cataloguing, the project "Klassifikationssystem" – essentially aimed at a more satisfactory shelving system for the open stack collection and for the reorganisation of the national bibliography – led again to the choice of the Dewey Decimal Classification in 1999. It met all the important criteria in that it is a widely used classification system, that it is an international standard not just for organizing the documents but also for information retrieval, that it is constantly developed by an expert team of editors, and that it has been translated in many languages (a very important feature for multilingual Switzerland).

The Swiss National Library was closely involved in the German translation project of the DDC under the auspices of the German National Library and has since actively contributed to expansions of certain aspects and Swiss specificities.

The Swiss National Library uses the DDC to classify its open stack collection, including the reference books and bibliographies, the collections of the Swiss Literary Archives and of the Department of Conservation.

The second summary of the DDC is used to assign subject categories to all our documents (including electronic publications) and since 2001, it has been used also for the 'Schweizer Buch' (Swiss national bibliography). Since 2004, all the German-speaking countries have adopted the same subject categories - a slightly modified version of the DDC second summary - for their respective national bibliographies.
Dewey classes are also an underlying basis for the organisation of the Bibliography on Swiss history (BSH).

Several other libraries in Switzerland, both in the French and in the German speaking part, use the Dewey Decimal Classification, mainly for the shelving of their collections.

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- As a National Library we need a consistently maintained and developed DDC of high quality so as to support libraries using DDC in Switzerland
- As providers of open data we need open and free access to DDC for added value
- As classifiers we need a consistently maintained and developed DDC, as well as the support and help of expert editors
- As DDC users we need an open access to DDC captions to provide our users with verbal access to our classified collections
- As DDC users and as members of EDUG we need the cooperation and the expertise of editors to take into account Swiss and/or European specific needs and help develop the DDC into a more international classifying tool and thereby offering our users documents of topical interest that are appropriately classified
- As developers and subject cataloguers, we need the unrestrained use of the DDC for the mapping of our local classification
- As classifiers and subject indexer we need a flexible WebDewey application, that allows various uses, e.g. a tool to attribute subject categories for our national bibliography
- As subject indexers whose native language is French and not German, we need the German National Library's efforts for their CrissCross project to be supported so that we can continue to benefit from it
- As suppliers of library services we need the German National Library's efforts for their CrissCross project to be supported so that we can provide access to our data in our national languages

The Swiss National Library has invested many resources into adopting the DDC and, as a member of the German translation team and of the European User Group, into developing it these past sixteen years. The DDC is by now a well-established classification and information-retrieval system at our library, appreciated by the classifier/indexer, and by the user alike, as a standard tool. We strongly feel that an open use of DDC can be an asset, especially in the domain of open data. In order to maintain and further develop its use, we depend on the continuous update of content and further technological development by a competent and reliable DDC team.

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