

EDUG - 25 April 2024

Life without “Approximate the whole”?

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The rule – Glossary definition

When a topic is nearly coextensive with the full meaning of a DDC class, the topic is said to "approximate the whole" of the class. The term is also used to characterize topics that cover more than half the content of a class. When a topic approximates the whole of a class, standard subdivisions may be added. Topics that do not approximate the whole are said to be in "standing room" in the number. *See also* **Class-here note; Standard-subdivisions-are-added note; Standing room.**

The rule and other DDC elements

- Governs the use of standard subdivisions
- Topics in a class-here note approximate the whole
- Topics so named in standard-subdivisions-are-added notes do
- Topics in an including note do not

The rule – Assumptions

- Some topics are close enough to the scope of a class that we treat them the same
- Some topics are just a smaller part of the class
- Number building should only occur when the topic approximates the whole
- Reclassification is easier when all works move from Point A to Point B

Reclassification – Example

- Royal tennis does not approximate the whole of 796.34
 - *A history of royal tennis in Australia* [0994]
 - *A history of the royal game of tennis* [09]
 - *The Royal Tennis Court Hampton Court Palace* [0942195]
- If royal tennis continued to 796.341...
 - With rule: Only check 796.34
 - Without rule: Check 796.34 and all subdivisions (or at least 796.340*)

The case against

- Important aspects of a work hidden
- Ambiguity in application
- Digits less important without spine labels

What do users say?

- I don't hear much
- Feedback is usually negative or expresses confusion
- Classifiers add in violation of the rule
 - Unaware of rule?
 - Differing judgments on what approximates?
 - Simply ignoring the rule?

Life without the rule

- Update guidance and training
- What becomes of the including note?
 - Continue use to signal which topics may get their own number
 - Stop their use
 - Immediately move topics to class-here notes
 - Deal with them as editors get to them
 - Grandfather existing notes
- All or nothing?
 - Pilot period
 - Special exceptions

Moving forward

- Status quo: The rule remains
- Discussion paper or exhibit?
- Argue against the rule or for an alternative?
- Even a recommendation of no change is helpful

Statistics

- Records with including notes: ~5700
- Records with class-here notes: ~8100
- Records with both: ~1550
- Records with “standard subdivisions are added”: ~1350
- Records with “subdivisions are added”: ~860

Workflow impacts

- Likely less work in the long run
- Heavier impact early on
 - Depends on chosen solution
 - Balance between consistency and amount of initial work
- My preference: Consider workflows, but don't let them drive the decision