A WebDewey 'wish list': suggestions to improve the user experience

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Good morning. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Jo Maxwell, Training Manager at Bibliographic Data Services based in Dumfries, Scotland. I work in BDS' book division, which has been creating library quality metadata for public and academic libraries, and the British Library, since 1995. We also supply data to publishers and booksellers. On average, we create 180,000 'Cataloguing-in-Publication' records a year, and every record includes Dewey Decimal

Classification.

Working with Dewey Decimal Classification daily and training new professionals in this system, has led to a keen interest in Dewey development. I am a member of the UK DDC User Forum, the UK representative and current chair for the Dewey Editorial Policy Committee, and I am also BDS' representative member of EDUG and the current secretary. I like to think of myself as a Dewey enthusiast, but at home my kids often refer to me as 'The Dewey Geek.'

I am here today to present some suggestions, a 'wish list' of sorts, to improve WebDewey user experience in the English language version.

Overview

- RATIONALE FOR SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTS
- NEW NUMBERS, TERMINOLOGY & VOCABULARY
- HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE & NOTES WITH HIERARCHICAL FORCE
- COLLECTIVE ADD INSTRUCTIONS & INTERNAL ADD TABLES
- LITERATURE ADD INSTRUCTIONS
- LAYOUT & VISIBILITY OF ADD INSTRUCTIONS
- BUILT NUMBERS & CREATE BUILT NUMBER TOOL

I will briefly look at the reasoning behind the 'wish list' and why I feel it is important to address these longstanding issues. I will then cover the suggestions in more detail to show the positive impact these changes would have to WebDewey users, and those of us who have a training role. These suggestions cover new numbers, terminology and vocabulary; hierarchical structure and notes with hierarchical force; collective add instructions and internal add tables; literature add instructions; layout and visibility of add instructions; and built numbers

and the 'Create built number' tool.

Rationale for suggested developments

Training new classifiers - patterns in errors due to layout, missing add instructions, terminology and vocabulary.

Feedback from seasoned classifiers who have transitioned from print to WebDewey.

Online vs print – improving user experience by moving away from the restrictions posed by printed schedules.

Streamlining and optimising processes.

The suggestions in this presentation stem from repeated issues that crop up when training classifiers from scratch, as well as feedback from experienced classifiers, who have transitioned at some point in their cataloguing career from the print schedules to the online product.

The English version of WebDewey has been around since 2002, and, as we know, is in a constant state of flux. Recent updates include the most welcomed Synthesized number components, which has been a great visual guide for users, especially when in training, to better

understand built numbers, and the new Built Numbers page for built number management. But I would like to make some suggestions which address some of the issues encountered when training and using the online schedules on a daily basis.

As many institutions are streamlining operations and processes, I believe there are some improvements that could be made in WebDewey to optimise the classification process, which should not be tied to print restrictions.

New numbers, terminology & vocabulary

- Establish more new numbers.
- Look at terminology & vocabulary used.
- Clearer explanation of rules such as 'Approximate the Whole' and 'Hierarchical Force.'
- More examples.

- May alleviate the 'Approximate the Whole' issue?
- 'Centered headings.'
- Trainees have commented on the language used in explanations of complex rules which impede understanding.
- We all appreciate examples, trainees and seasoned cataloguers alike, to ensure correct application of rules, add instructions, etc.

In our recent EDUG 'Approximate the Whole' discussions, questions arose regarding establishing new numbers quicker and whether having more numbers would alleviate some of the 'approx' issues. First and foremost, we would like to see more new numbers for topics which have literary warrant – the suggestion last year was to take a pilot approach and look at a certain area and the topics that sit in including notes. This would still be fruitful, but we are conscious how much resource would be needed to get this

underway.

A clear throwback from the printed schedules is the term 'centered heading' which doesn't really make much sense in the online product as it doesn't appear in the center of a page. Even though the glossary and introduction explanation make it clear why it is called 'centered', relating it to the printed editions, it feels off to still have this as a term used in WebDewey. Many new users will never see a print version of Dewey Decimal Classification, so referring to the print, when it is now print-on-demand and not the 'main' product, seems strange. Of course, I understand and accept there is a continued need for a print product, but those who solely use the online version should not have to contend with terms which only make sense in the print schedules.

Returning to 'Approximate the Whole'', we would like to see a clearer explanation of this concept and for the explanation to appear in a more logical place in the Introduction. It was noted in our EDUG discussions last year there can be misconceptions about its application since the main description appears in the section on

standard subdivisions in the Introduction. Another tricky concept for new users to navigate is 'hierarchical force' and a clearer explanation with examples would be appreciated by all users.

With regards to examples, the more the better! Being faced with a complex add instruction or manual note can leave trainees and sometimes experienced classifiers scratching their heads. Clear examples reassure new users they are on the right track and experienced classifiers will determine quickly if they are at the correct number or if they need to search again. The UK DDC User Forum especially appreciated the reworking of the manual note with added examples for the changes to 304.8 Movement of people following feedback given at the EPC144 meeting.

There are many advantages to using WebDewey rather than the print version, but one disadvantage is the inability to see the overall hierarchical structure, which means it is easy for a user to view a DDC record in isolation. The main schedule seems to take up such a small part of the screen, and even though we now have the addition of the very helpful downward arrows to see subordinate classes, the overall hierarchy is still less 'visible' than in the print. Users would like the classification to be more prominent on the

interface. There has been some discussion in the British Library about the need to see more of the classification at any given point, effectively a 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' of the hierarchy. To use an English idiom, 'we can't see the wood for the trees" – focussing on the details and potentially missing the overall context.

Returning to the concept of 'hierarchical force', currently users cannot see notes which have hierarchical force unless they click back up the hierarchy to see if there are any that apply. Classifiers need to see any note that has hierarchical force *where* it has hierarchical force, to ensure correct classification.

Collective add instructions & internal add tables

▶ "When a note says 'Add as instructed under...', it could show us the Note from that section instead of making us click through...I am not advocating for enumerating everything and getting rid of number building, but we don't need to save space in the way the print resource did."

635.932 *Perennials

600 ▼	Technology
630 ▼	Agriculture
633-635 ▼	Specific plant crops
635 ▼	Garden crops (Horticulture)
635.9 ▼	Flowers and ornamental plants
635.93-635.97 ▼	Groupings of plants
635.93 ▼	Groupings by life duration; taxonomic groupings
635.932	*Perennials

History

Updates
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UPDATES (1)

Notes

*Add as instructed under 633-635

One frustration amongst users, both trainees and experienced classifiers, is the losing of place in the schedules when clicking through for add instructions - either collective add instructions which can involve using an internal add table, or from instruction which doesn't have links to the source number(s). If we follow this Perennials example at 635.932, we click away from the base number and add instruction to access the add table at 633-635, which is on the next slide.

Classifiers can no longer see the base number, nor the initial add instruction.

It would be preferable to see the add table at 635.932.

Collective add instructions & internal add tables

Notes   ⊹ ▾

Add to base number 808.39 the numbers following T3C--2 in notation T3C--22-T3C--27 from Table 3C, e.g., characters in fiction 808.397

Class fiction of specific scope and kinds displaying specific elements in 808.31-808.38

▶ "More linking in notes would be helpful, particularly with notes that say "Add to base number x, the numbers following y in [range]…" It would be helpful if the range of numbers from which you can append was linked."

The same has been said about missing links to ranges of numbers that can be added to a base number (slide 9).
It would be preferable for these to appear as a pop-up style link, so a user does not lose their place when classifying or is forced to open multiple tabs.

Literature add instructions

T3B--301-T3B--308 Fiction of specific scope and kinds

T3B--0 ▼	Table 3B. Subdivisions for Works by or about More than One Author
T3B--1-T3B--8 ▼	Specific forms
T3B--3 ▼	Fiction
T3B--301-T3B--308	Fiction of specific scope and kinds
T3B--301	*Short stories
T3B--308 ▼	Specific kinds of fiction

Notes

Add to each subdivision identified by * as instructed under T3B--102-T3B--107, e.g., collections of short stories dealing with travel T3B--3010832

Class comprehensive works in T3B--3

Notes

Add to base number T3B--300 the numbers following T3B--100 in notation T3B--1001-T3B--1009 of this table, e.g., collections of fiction dealing with travel T3B--3008032

Segmentation Instruction: Segment as shown in table under T3B--1-T3B--8, e.g., T3B--3008/032

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Most classifiers will acknowledge the complexity in building literature DDCs. Navigating between the 800s and Tables 3A, 3B and 3C is time consuming and can confuse trainees and experienced cataloguers alike. The collective add instructions in T3B are particularly confusing for trainees – classifying an anthology of British science fiction starts in fiction but ends in poetry (following the collective add instruction)!

In the print version, collective add instructions make sense, as it helps to conserve space, but in

an online environment this doesn't sit well with me. I feel the number building instruction needs reworked, so a user builds a number from the literary form they require instead of navigating away to a different literary form. This would hopefully make notes, like the T3B—300 example at the bottom of the slide, a thing of the past! [Read out bottom note].

Layout & visibility of add instructions

▶ "Bolding or highlighting 'Including' would go a long way in making fewer mistakes."

▶ "Could there be a 'View add instruction' button as an option in a Notes box, so it jumps to or highlights the important add instructions? Especially useful in much longer notes where instruction seems to get lost."

Notes

The following numbers are never used alone, but may be used as required (either directly when so noted or through the interposition of notation T1—089 from Table 1) with any number from the schedules, e.g., civil and political rights (323.11) of Navajo Indians (T5—9726 in this table): 323.119726; ceramic arts (738) of Jews (T5—924 in this table): 738.089924. They may also be used when so noted with numbers from other tables, e.g., notation T2—174 from Table 2

In this table racial groups are mentioned in connection with a few broad ethnic groupings, e.g., a note to class Black people of African origin at T5—96 Africans and people of African descent. Concepts of race vary. A work that emphasizes race should be classed with the ethnic group that most closely matches the concept of race described in the work

Except where instructed otherwise, and unless it is redundant, add 0 to the number from this table and to the result add notation T2—1 or T2—3-T2—9 from Table 2 for area in which a group is or was located, e.g., Germans in Brazil T5—31081, but Germans in Germany T5—31; Jews in Germany or Jews from Germany T5—924043. If notation from Table 2 is not added, use 00 for standard subdivisions; see below for complete instructions on using standard subdivisions

Notation from Table 2 may be added if the number in Table 5 is limited to speakers of only one language even if the group discussed does not approximate the whole of the group specified by the Table 5 number, e.g., Bavarians in Brazil T5—31081 (because German is the primary language spoken by Bavarians), but Amhara in United States T5—928 (not T5—928073 because Amharic is not the only language spoken by the peoples included in T5—928)

Notation from Table 2 may be added for either present or past specific location of the group discussed if only one specific location is relevant, e.g., sociology of Jews from many different countries now in United States 305.8924073, contributions to music around the world of Jews who previously lived in Poland 780.899924438

If both present and past specific locations of the group discussed are relevant, then notation from Table 2 is added only for present location of the group, e.g., Jews from Germany in the United States T5—924073 (not T5—924043). An exception occurs when the present location of the group is defined by the class number to which ethnic or national group notation is added, e.g., Jews in United States history 973.04924. The area notation added to Table 5 numbers is then available to show the past location of the group, e.g., Jews from Germany in United States history 973.04924043, Jews from Germany in United States higher education 378.73089924043

Standard subdivisions may be added to Table 5 notation when that notation is added directly to the base number, e.g., periodicals about sociology of Irish Americans 305.8916207305. However, standard subdivisions are not added to Table 5 notation when that notation is used through interposition of notation T1—089 from Table 1, e.g., an exhibition of ceramic arts of Russian Jews 738.089924047 (not 738.089924047074)

When Table 5 notation is not followed by 0 plus notation from Table 2, use 00 for standard subdivisions, e.g., periodicals about sociology of Japanese 305.89605, collected biography of Irish Americans in New York City 974.71004916200922. When Table 5 notation is followed by 0 plus notation from Table 2, however, use 0 for standard subdivisions, e.g., periodicals about sociology of Japanese Americans 305.895607305. (For the purpose of this rule, notation T5—96073 African Americans is treated as Table 5 notation, e.g., periodicals on sociology of African Americans 305.896073005, periodicals on sociology of African Americans in Ohio 305.896073077105)

Except where instructed otherwise, give preference to ethnic group over nationality, e.g., United States citizens of Serbian descent T5—9182073 (not T5—13). In this table "ethnic group" most often means a group with linguistic ties, but it can also mean a group with other cultural ties

Except where instructed otherwise, when choosing between two ethnic groups, give preference to the group for which the notation is different from that for the nationality of the people, e.g., a work treating equally Hispanic and native American heritage of bilingual Spanish-Guaraní mestizos of Paraguay T5—9838220892 (not T5—68892)

Except where instructed otherwise, when choosing between two national groups, give preference to the former or ancestral national group, e.g., people from the former Soviet Union who became United States citizens T5—917073 (not T5—13)
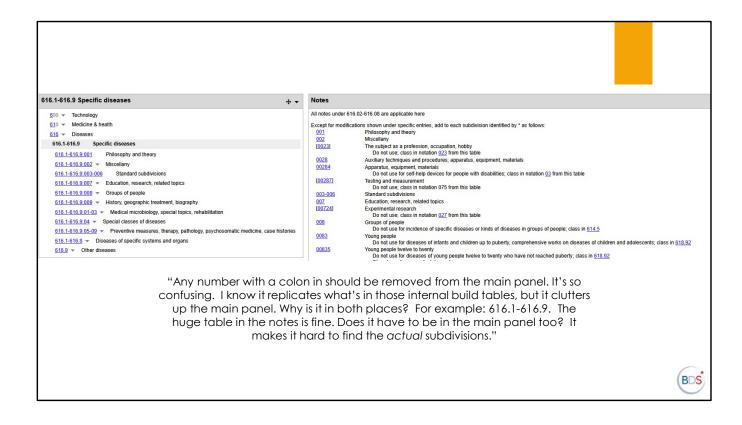
See Manual at T5—0

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The online schedules would benefit from some changes to layout, potentially using different font or emboldening text to highlight key instruction or information. In training the mantra is "always read the notes/never ignore a note" and as experienced classifiers we must do the same, especially in subject areas we are less familiar with. But using different font to make certain instruction stand out or emboldening the word 'Including' or the start of add instructions which are hidden in amongst lots of other notes, would go a long way to helping users of WebDewey. Is there a way to

incorporate a 'View add instruction' button when there is a considerably large note, which would highlight the add instructions in the text?

008	Groups of people
[0089]	Ethnic and national groups
	Do not use; class in notation 004 from this table
009	Areas, regions places in general; collected biography
	Notation T1--09 from Table 1 as modified below
	Do not use for history, geographic treatment, biography together; class in 930-990 without adding from this table
	Do not use for historical periods; class in notation 01-09 from this table
	Do not use for individual biography; class in notation 01-09 from this table, plus notation T1--092 from Table 1
	Do not use for specific continents, countries, localities; class in 930-990 without adding from this table
00909	Archaeology
	Unless other instructions are given, observe the following table of preference, e.g., a periodical of statistics 00909021 (not 0090905):
	Biography
	Museums, collections, exhibits
	Collecting objects
	Illustrations
	Statistics
	Dictionaries, encyclopedias, concordances
	Serial publications
	Class archaeology of a specific period with the period in notation 01-09 from this table, plus notation T1--09009 from Table 1, e.g., archaeology
0090902	Statistics and illustrations
00909021	Statistics
00909022	Illustrations
	Including cartoons, drawings, pictures, pictorial charts and designs, sketches; graphs; maps, plans, diagrams
	Class statistical graphs in notation 00909021 from this table
	Class humorous cartoons in 930-990 without adding from this table
0090903	Dictionaries, encyclopedias, concordances
	Regardless of format (print or electronic)
	Including thesauri (synonym dictionaries)
0090905	Serial publications
	Regardless of format (print or electronic) or frequency
	Class here house organs, magazines, newspapers, yearbooks
0090907	Museums, collections, exhibits; collecting objects
00909074	Museums, collections, exhibits
	Class here exhibitions, fairs, festivals; catalogs, lists regardless of whether or not articles are offered for sale; guidebooks; history and descripti
	Add to 00909074 notation T2--4-T2--9 from Table 2, e.g., collections in Pennsylvania 00909074748, collections of Brazilian objects in Pennsylv
00909075	Collecting objects
	Class here collectibles, memorabilia, price trends for collectors
0090909	Biography
	Class here archaeologists
	Class archaeologists specializing in a specific historical period of a specific area with the historical period for the area studied, plus notation T1-
	who specializes in United States Revolutionary War 973.3092
	See also notation 007202 from this table for historians and historiographers
	See Manual at 930-990: Biography
0091-0098	Areas, regions, places in general
	Add to 009 the numbers following T2--1 in notation T2--11-T2--18 from Table 2, e.g., urban regions 009732
0099	Collected biography
	Description, critical appraisal, biography of people associated with the history of the continent, country, locality but limited to no specific period
	Class collected biography of a specific period in notation 01-09 from this table, plus notation T1--0922 from Table 1

Other comments on layout have been in relation to add tables, including the 930-990 table in History (slide 12), where better use of indentation or different font would help classifiers identify subdivisions correctly and prevent misclassification. It can be common for trainees to add, for example, 00909022 Illustrations because they see the caption Illustrations without realising this is Illustrations in Archaeology, not Illustrations in general. The subordinate topics should be indented to the right underneath Archaeology to make that distinction clear to the

user.

Danny Joudrey, current vice chair of EPC and Professor and Director of Libraries and Librarianship Concentration at the School of Library and Information Science, at Simmons University, Boston kindly asked his new cohort of students for some feedback after completing their DDC orientation with him. Some of the quotes I have included in this presentation are from his students, who are new to the DDC, about what they found difficult or what they felt could be improved to the make WebDewey work better for them. One common observation was the use of

the built numbers with colons which can fill the main schedule window or appear in add notes which confuse users. I know Alex has received this feedback before, but it is an issue that keeps cropping up, especially in Danny's teaching and when I am training new classifiers. (slide 13)

Built numbers & 'Create built number' tool

▶ The recent addition of the Built Numbers section is useful for those institutions looking to manage their built numbers but is there a way to highlight in the main schedules what built numbers have been 'authorised' by the Dewey Editorial team? Are all built numbers 'verified'?

▶ Could there be a way to 'hide' built numbers?: "Integrating built numbers directly into the results going through the schedules causes confusion as well. They can crowd out the actual entries, so it becomes unclear how to continue building a number correctly."

▶ "Every time I try to use the 'Create Built Number' to improve my working with WebDewey, I seem to get the [This span can't be used in number building]."

A major benefit to DDC users is the volume of built numbers in the English WebDewey, currently nearly 21,000. The ability for institutions to share their built numbers and have them validated in WebDewey enriches the schedules and helps classifiers, as they are more likely to find built numbers they can use without having to reinvent the wheel. Some users do find the sheer volume of built numbers overwhelming and it could be beneficial to have an option to hide these in the Preferences setting, especially for trainees when

they are just getting to grips with the Dewey basics.

One colleague has suggested different coloured jigsaw icons, so it is clear what is a 'verified' built number or built number created by the Dewey Editorial team, as opposed to user-contributed built numbers. The recent addition of the Built Numbers section is welcome but not an area subject classifiers will be regularly dipping in and out of.

A number of WebDewey users tend to shy away from using the 'Create built number' tool, as it can allow users to keep building even when Dewey rules would prevent further number building. It does seem to be a tool aimed more for the experienced classifier, who is au fait with all the Dewey rules and their complexities, rather than new users who are just starting their DDC journey. Does this tool need more development?

As I said at the beginning of the presentation, this is just a wish list, and of course it is easy for me to suggest improvements, but I understand implementation would be a complex affair. I am also aware the focus is on one language version, when there are, of course, many, and making changes in the English language version would impact the translations.

Weeding out complexities in the DDC should be easier to do in an online environment, which is

something I hope will be worked on in future developments. As a trainer, I come across areas of the schedules which worked to a certain extent in the print edition but haven't adapted well to the online resource – or to phrase differently, **could** and **should** be less complex, in WebDewey, especially for new users.   For example, the add instructions in literature or the ability to see notes with hierarchical force. It is very different working in an online tool rather than turning a page to see the hierarchy. And on that note of difference, it seemed fitting to conclude with a quote from Tina that sums up working in and with WebDewey: [Read out Tina's quote.] "The reality is we work differently with the DDC today than we did when there was only a print edition. In my opinion, the DDC has missed some steps here to create a seamless transition. I sometimes feel that we are still too busy settling into the new world of digital Dewey and closing those gaps so that we can work smoothly with the system today. However, this sometimes seems to prevent us from envisioning the future of the DDC."

Thank you.