

Dewey in Italy
The role of the National Central Library of Florence
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EDUG Naples 17.04.2015

1 DEWEY IN ITALY

2: The beginning in the early 1950s

Since 1886, with the publication of the *Bollettino delle pubblicazioni italiane ricevute per diritto di stampa*, the National Central Library of Florence took on the role of the National Bibliographic Agency. In 1958 the new Italian National Bibliography was published. It was arranged according to the main classes of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

Irma Merolle Tondi and Alberto Giraldi, directors of the National Central Library of Florence from 1956 to 1958, had recognized this system as the most widely used for organizing and providing access by subjects to the records of catalogues and of national bibliographies.

3: BNI 1958-1959-1960 arranged by the 15th and 16th DDC ed.

The printed issues of the first year included records classified with reference to the notations of the 15th edition, using three mainly digits. The relative headings were adjusted one by one, so that different headings could correspond to the same number, according to a specific subject. Further the issues of the following two years, based on the 16th edition, confirmed this choice.

4: “BNI tables” : editions 1961-1970-1977

In 1961 the editorial staff of the National Bibliography standardized the headings, according to each number. The National Central Library of Florence self published the first edition of the “*Schema*” or “*abridged Tables*” of these classes, used until 1967.

From 1968 to 1972 the National Bibliography adopted the 17th edition of the DDC. On this foundation the second edition of Tables was elaborated and published in Florence in 1970. It was used until 1972.

Then, from 1973 to 1984, the 18th edition became the reference frame. In 1977 the third edition was published at last; it included the complete series of the thousand sections, with all the numbers that were lacking in previous editions.

These frames, named “*Schema di classificazione*” or “*Tavolette*”, did not translate exactly the original text of the Dewey Decimal Classification but were only the notations applied by the Italian National Bibliography as simple cataloguing tools.

5: BNI YEARS AND DDC EDITIONS - FIRST PERIOD

This frame for classification have been circulate in the Italian libraries by the subscribed index cards and by the monthly issues of the Italian National Bibliography. Thus the first knowledge of the Dewey Decimal Classification became official in Italy, applied to an actual context of documents and together with the subject indexing in the Italian language, following the pragmatic method of Emanuele Casamassima, director of the National Bibliography in the 1950 and then director of the Central National Library of Florence between 1965 and 1970.

6: Casamassima e Maltese TWO FAMOUS DIRECTORS...

The bibliographical records were arranged according to the frame of classification, to reach a global and essential consistency, as claimed by Diego Maltese, who directed the National Bibliography in the 1960 years (1964-1970 ca.).

7: innovation!

In the year 1985 the National Bibliography applied the notations of the 11th abridged edition. It was a period of transition towards the study and the application of the full edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

The real innovation was in 1986, when the National Library Service (SBN = NLS) was born and the National Central Library of Florence took part in the national cooperative on line catalogue. At the same time each record of the Italian National Bibliography was made in this new context, and classified with the full system of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

The National Central Library of Florence was the first centre of the National Library Service, with that of Ravenna, thus it tackled the problem of planning a classified archive for the on line catalogue. I will talk about this aspect later.

8: BNI applies the full editions 19 e 20.

From 1986 to 1993 the 19th full standard edition has been used, both in the National Library's on line catalogue and in the National Bibliography, keeping the numbers of the 11th abridged edition for the arrangement of the records in the print issues.

In 1993 the 20th Italian edition was published, the first of the full

Italian editions, edited by Luigi Crocetti and Daniele Danesi. This edition was applied by the Italian National Bibliography from 1994 to 1999, using the 12th abridged Italian edition for the arrangement of the records.

9: BNI and every full italian edition 20-23

In 2000 and 2009 the 21st (*twenty first*) and 22nd (*twenty second*) Italian editions were published, translated by the same editing group of the Italian National Bibliography. It was the outcome of scientific competence and experience thanks to the direct and constant relation with the national editorial production.

The 21st Italian edition was applied from 2000 to 2008, using the 13th abridged Italian edition for the arrangement of the records. The 22nd Italian edition was applied from 2009 to 2013, then in 2014 the WebDewey Italian version began.

10: the second phase of innovation: clearness, brevity, good use of the language!

The Italian translation team included expert semantic cataloguers, working together sharing (many!) discussions and taking decisions, with the special contribution of Luigi Crocetti.

11: Luigi Crocetti and the BNI team (foto 2000)

The team applied its translation guide lines, expressed since the publishing of its 11th Italian abridged edition: the criteria were clearness, brevity and good use of the language. The team endorsed these aspects, together with terminological consistency and uniformity, to reach both a correct translation from English to Italian and to correspond to the cultural and bibliographic environment.

The National Central Library of Florence, as the national

bibliographic agency and centre of research about librarianship, goes on to make its competence available to the Dewey Classification system, thanks to the wide bibliographic guarantee obtained from the legal deposit of the Italian publications. So it was possible to make suggestions, changes and developments in the tables and schedules, especially in history, geography, art and politics, adapting to Italian culture.

12: a third phase begins now

Today the National Central Library of Florence holds its scientific coordination in a different way. The Italian National Bibliography has adopted the WebDewey Italian edition since 2014, and its semantic cataloguers offer the external translation team scientific advice.

At the same time the on line classified catalogue has been adapted to the different editions, for each past stage: a 30 year history.

13: The on line classified catalogue of the Central National Library of Florence

In the initial period of 1985-1986, the group of semantic cataloguers had given themselves two objectives: on the one hand the adoption of the full edition of the Dewey Classification, with the abandonment of the so-called practice of the abridged “Frames” or “Tables”, on the other the construction of a real classified catalogue, based on the 19th current full edition, in the new National Library Service.

14: the other side of the moon

The criteria that were defined at the time, with regard to the structure of an archive of classes in an online catalogue, stood the test of time, even if with subsequent adjustments, with respect both

to the growth of the Library database, and also the succession of the various editions of the Dewey Classification.

15: From the Dewey numbers to the documents

In our opinion, what was needed was first of all to construct a pre-coordinated archive of Dewey classes that would provide the bone structure, the framework for the on-line classified catalogue. Our on line catalogue (OPAC) thus allows the research based on the Dewey classification, both by numbers and keywords from the verbal descriptions of the numbers. A filter by editions is also available.

16: Dewey browser - navigatore dewey

There is another application, widely used, Dewey Browser (Navigatore Dewey).

It is inspired by OCLC Dewey Browser and based on the Italian editions of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

17: Browsing the classes divisions sections

At first we browse in the ten main classes, then in their divisions and sections and so on, with the correspondent verbal descriptions. On the right we find the number of records for each Dewey number. Clicking on the verbal description or on the number of records we can see the brief list of the documents, then we can see the full record of a specific document.

18: software's evolution

The new various editions have required the evolution of the software for the on line classified archive, with different solutions in time, from 19th edition to 23rd (*twenty third*) edition and for the correspondent abridged editions. The tables used formerly have been recovered also, indexing the correspondent original full edition

between the 15th and 18th.

19: searching into the different editions

The records classified with each edition have a different flag in the data base, so it's possible to choose through a specific filter in the on line catalogue (Opac).

The classifiers of the Italian National Bibliography revise and update the on line archives of the numbers and their verbal descriptions, with a careful selection of the words, a useful activity both for the library's catalogue and the index of the National Library Service, and for the mapping with the Nuovo soggettario.

20: mapping from Nuovo soggettario universal Thesaurus to DDC

The librarians of Nuovo soggettario, supported by the data processing Service of the library, attend to the interoperability between the indexing terminology of the Thesaurus and of the WebDewey.

The mapping criteria are formulated in compliance with ISO 25964 and are under constant debate and review. The Nuovo soggettario term has been matched to only one DDC notation, which represents the interdisciplinary or comprehensive number, found in the index or in the schedules of the DDC.

21: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

At the same time the Italian National Library of Florence has maintained constant relations with the international context, with the Dewey Editorial Policy Committee (EPC), being present in the Indexing and classification Committee of International Federation Librarians Association (IFLA) , and in the European Dewey Users Group (EDUG), especially with Federica Paradisi for many years in the past.

We hope to work together now and in the next years.

Thanks for your attention!

22: THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION