

**ABRIDGED DECIMAL  
CLASSIFICATION AND RELATIV  
INDEX FOR LIBRARIES,  
CLIPPINGS, NOTES, ETC.**

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Abridged decimal classification and relativ index for libraries, clippings, notes, etc. by Melvil Dewey

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**MELVIL DEWEY**

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"To learn to classify is in itself an education" — ALEX. BAIN

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ABRIDGED

# Decimal Classification

and

# Relative Index

for libraries, clippings, notes, etc.

By

Melvil Dewey, M. A. (*Amherst*)

*Director New York State Library and Library School*

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The simplified spellings used in this book are selected from the list recommended for general adoption by the foremost living scholars in English and by the latest and most authoritative dictionaries; i. e. the English philological society, the American philological association and the *Century* and *Standard* dictionaries. The latter gives all the amended forms in alphabetic order among its regular entries, while the *Century* and all issues of *Webster* since 1894 append the full list of 3,500 words.



# Abridged Decimal Classification<sup>a</sup>

## EXPLANATION

Before beginning to use the classification at least the paragraphs in large type should be carefully read. Those interested will find still fuller explanation in the smaller type.

This abridgment is made in answer to a strong demand for a short form adapted to the needs of small and slowly growing libraries. They wish short class numbers, but it is a mistake to assume that they will have only works on general subjects. Even the smallest library is likely to have a few books or pamphlets on the most specific topics of the omitted subheads, and as these minor subjects will differ in each library, it is obviously impossible to make any abridged classification that will meet every want. Cases will certainly arise that can be met only by the unabridged classification, which aims to include all subjects treated in books, pamphlets, or articles.

(See also *Relativ subject index*, p. 7; *Use of index*, p. 13.)

**Change from short to full form.** These short (three-figure) forms can be changed to the full class numbers at any time without other alteration than adding extra figures to those here given.

**Plan.** In this classification the field of knowledge is divided in nine main classes, numbered 1 to 9. Cyclopedias, periodicals, etc. so general in character as to belong to *no* one of these classes, are marked 0 (naught), and form a tenth class. Each class is similarly separated into nine divisions,

<sup>a</sup> The confusion and annoyance to the many users of this system caused by printing unauthorized variations have forced the publishers to insist strictly on the protection afforded by the copyright laws. Every library and individual user has, however, entire freedom to make such variations as he thinks he needs, under the simple restrictions found necessary to protect the rights of others as explained on page 19, *Letter notations for changes*.

general works belonging to *no* division having 0 in place of the division number. Divisions are similarly divided into nine sections, and the process is repeated as often as necessary, but in this abridgment 0 is not used beyond the third figure. Thus 512 means Class 5 (Natural Science), Division 1 (Mathematics), Section 2 (Algebra), and every Algebra is numbered 512. This class number, giving class, division, section and sub-section, if any, is applied to every book and pamphlet belonging to the library.

Where 0 occurs in a class number, it has its normal zero value. Thus a book numbered 510 is class 5, division 1, but *no* section; i. e. the book treats of division 51 (Mathematics) in general, and is limited to no one section, while geometry which is so limited is marked 513; 500 indicates a treatise on science in general, limited to no division. A naught occurring in the first place would in the same way show that the book is limited to no class; e. g. a general cyclopedia which treats of all nine classes.

The books are arranged on the shelves in simple numerical order, all class numbers being decimal. Since each subject has a definite number, all books on any subject must stand together. These tables show the order in which subjects follow one another. Thus 512 Algebra precedes 513 Geometry, and follows 511 Arithmetic.

**Summaries.** The first page of tables shows the 10 Classes into which all topics are divided. The next page shows the nine Divisions of each of the 10 classes, and is useful as a bird's-eye view of the whole scheme.

**Tables.** Following these two summaries is the abridged classification, which repeats, in proper order, all the classes, divisions, and sections, with such sub-sections as are used in this abridgment. Synonymous terms, examples, brief notes, dates, and various catch-words are often added to the simple heads for convenience of users, who thus get a fuller and clearer idea of the field which each number covers. Therefore all references to numbers should be looked up in the tables; never in the summaries, which are really only a table of contents of the complete tables.

**Choice and arrangement of heads.** The selection and arrangement of heads can not be explained in detail for want of space. In all the work, philosophic theory and accuracy have been made to yield to practical usefulness. The impossibility of making a satisfactory classification of all knowledge as preserved in books, has been appreciated from the first, and theoretic harmony and exactness have been repeatedly sacrificed to practical requirements.

**Sequence of allied subjects.** Wherever practicable, heads have been so arranged that each subject is preceded and followed by the most nearly allied subjects, and thus added convenience is secured both in catalogs and on shelves; e. g. Building (690) follows Mechanic trades (680) at the end of Useful arts, and Architecture follows near the beginning of Fine arts.

The student of Biology (570) finds fossil life or Paleontology (560) before, and vegetable life or Botany (580) after, this followed in turn by animal life or Zoology (590), ending with Mammals (599); while Useful arts (600) begin with human Anatomy (611) under Medicine, thus giving a regular progression from the fossil plant thru the vegetable and animal kingdoms to the living man.

**Coordination.** Theoretically, the division of every subject into just 10 heads is absurd. Practically, it is desirable that classification be as minute as possible, without use of added figures; and the decimal principle, on which our scheme hinges, allows 10 divisions as readily as less.

This principle has proved wholly satisfactory in practice, tho apparently destroying proper coordination in some places. In the full classification this difficulty is entirely obviated by the use of another figure, giving nine sub-sections to any subject of sufficient importance to warrant closer subdivision. In history, where classification is made chiefly by countries, a single figure is added, as in the other classes, to give a tenfold geographic division. Wherever naught followed by another figure is added, it indicates a division into periods.

As all history is by countries, and as close geographic subdivisions are needed for local history and various other uses, the rule is whenever the same number is subdivided both geographically and by periods, to insert naught before the time or period figure; the 0 showing a change from geographic to period division, e. g. 942.05 England in time of the Tudors.

As in every scheme, many minor subjects are under general heads to which they do not strictly belong. In some cases, these heads are printed in a distinctiv type; e. g. 429 Anglo-Saxon, under English philology. The rule has been to assign these subjects to the most nearly allied heads, or where it was thought they would be most useful.

**Catch-titles.** In naming heads, strict accuracy has often been sacrificed to brevity, for short familiar titles seemd more important than that the heads given should express with fulness and exactness the character of all books catalogd under them.