Notes on Operations

Arranging Roots: Classification and Subject Headings for Genealogical Collections

Linda Blake and Evelyn T. Stallings

Because genealogical researchers find ancestors by looking for them by place and not subject, the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) *was not fulfilling the needs of researchers. After investigating possible manipulations of* DDC *to fit genealogical collections, a new system was developed at Rowan Public Library. The classification system in its entirety is given and the narrative is illustrated with examples. Also given are suggested additions to the* Library of Congress Subject Headings *to provide geographic orientation.*

$\mathbf{T}$he Edith M. Clark History Room of Rowan Public Library (hereinafter referred to as the History Room) in Salisbury, North Carolina, attracts family historians from across the nation as well as avid local researchers. The current History Room librarian, Cherry (1996), notes that "history and geography combined to make Rowan County a nexus for genealogical research." Two major thoroughfares of early America, the Pennsylvania Wagon Road and the Indian Trading Path, crossed there (Brawley 1953). Those migrating on these passages to the frontier often left records of their sojourn in Rowan County, which—combined with research files, abstracts, and later publications—have made the History Room one of the finest family research collections in the South. The History Room draws nearly 9,000 visitors a year. One librarian and one paraprofessional staff the room along with a group of volunteers, an arrangement that makes it possible to maintain evening and Sunday hours.

The collections consist of nearly 12,000 items including monograph and periodical volumes, microfilm, maps, software, and manuscript and file collections. The service area was expanded in 1989 from a small room to an area four times its previous size. Two collections of note are the family histories contained in the Mamie McCubbins files and the Archibald Henderson Collection of books and pamphlets. The Henderson Collection presented some interesting classification problems described later.

THE PROBLEM

Stallings, Cherry's predecessor, recognized the need for genealogists to approach their investigations by geographic

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location. Finding information about one's forebears is extremely difficult without some knowledge of the places in which they settled or through which they passed. Records of life events such as births, deaths, and marriages trace the existence of individuals and are recorded in specific locales. According to the Reference and Adult Services Division of the American Library Association (1996, p.74), one of the first steps in genealogical research is to "focus on one locality where ancestors lived, and identify it in terms of the jurisdictions to which it belongs (county, state, district, province, etc.)."

Moreover, Stallings had reached the same conclusion as had many other local history room librarians: the *Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)* and the *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)* do not meet the needs of family history researchers (National Society Daughters of the American Revolution 1996; DeBoer 1992). In a collection of any size, the *DDC* numbers for genealogy (929.1-929.3) are soon long and unwieldy or redundant after being applied to almost every item in the collection. In *DDC*, court records, wills, birth and death records, and land records are all classed in 929.3, with the addition of four digits for the county where records originated. Supervisors of genealogical collections and their technical services counterparts, including those at the State Library of North Carolina, had managed to twist and extend *DDC* numbers through the use of geographic notation to group some of the materials geographically. However, the call numbers that result are long, unwieldy, and make materials difficult to locate on the shelf. For example, the *DDC* number for Anson County, North Carolina, deed abstracts would be classed in 929.376753, and court records for Powell County, Kentucky, would be classed in 929.3769585. The fact that location is specified only at the end of the number also eliminates any possibility of grouping items first by location on the shelves.

Until 1990 History Room materials from all states and counties were classified according to subject. The censuses were classed in 317, deeds were in 333, wills were in 347, some abstracts were in 929 with family histories, and local histo-

ries were in 97x.xxx. A family historian would ask, "Where are your Rowan County (or Buncombe County, or Virginia) records?" The only answer was, "All over the place." With only two paid staff members providing most of the expertise and assistance in the Room, something had to be done to refer patrons more quickly to materials from their antecedent's geographic area. The increase in use of the Room exacerbated the problem.

CLASSIFICATION BY LOCATION

When Stallings learned of an ingenious classification system for the small genealogy collection at the Arlington Public Library in Texas (Arlington Public Library 1996), she knew she had found a system that could be modified and used for the History Room's larger collections. In the Arlington system, materials were basically classed according to two-letter postal abbreviations for states and then subdivided numerically by material type. Stallings felt that expansion to county level and further development for specific types of records would provide Rowan Public Library with a workable genealogical classification.

Discussions at regional conferences in the late eighties did not reveal an existing system suitable for adoption. Lee Albright, supervisor of the Genealogy Room at the North Carolina State Library, sent a complete description of her system, but its geographic orientation was too limited because it arranged only abstracts, not other materials or records, by geographic location. Other local schemes were adaptations of *DDC* that more often than not consisted of adding geographic notations to already long call numbers. And the Arlington Public Library scheme did not support geographic location at the county level. Every librarian who visited the Roman Public Library from 1988 to 1990 was queried about possibilities. While some seemed to think we were delusional to even try, they all saw the possibilities.

HISTORY ROOM
GENEALOGICAL CLASSIFICATION

The resulting classification system (cur-

rently known as the RPL History Room Classification), was developed by Stallings after consultation with experienced genealogists and local history librarians. The classification affords arrangement of materials first by geographic area, then by subject content, followed by cuttering by author and time period. Such a system is more in consonance with genealogical methodology, which must begin with place, no matter what subject is being pursued. While it might seem logical to most library users to place all of the deed books or will abstracts together no matter where they originated, that practice scatters the evidence genealogists seek. All types of History Room materials, except the manuscript collections, are cataloged according to the classification system described here.

In addition to geographic arrangement of genealogical materials, the classification system also facilitates inclusion of genealogical materials not confined to a geographic area, local history materials, and collections of miscellaneous materials. Even though the system exhibits an eastern coastal state orientation that reflects the History Room collection, it can be adapted to accommodate the special needs of any region or collection. For example, the classes for the colonial wars and Revolutionary War (.42 and .43) could be adapted by Western states to accommodate the Indian wars. The list of religious groups in .5 could be modified to reflect the groups specific to an area.

The primary arrangement of genealogical materials in the new system is geographic, with the two-letter postal abbreviations for states being term 1 and the first three letters of the county name being term 2. For example, terms 1 and 2 for Rowan County, North Carolina, are NC and ROW. The three-letter abbreviation used for counties allows the county materials to be filed alphabetically. If more than one county for a state starts with the same three letters, the rule for determining a county abbreviation is to use the first and second letters and the first different consonant and make necessary adjustments to retain alphabetic order. Therefore, terms 1 and 2 for Henrico County,

Virginia, are VA and HEC; and terms 1 and 2 for Henry County, Virginia, are VA and HEY. If the material is related to several counties, then AAA is used for term 2. Terms 1 and 2 for the book *Tennessee Towns: From Adams to Yorkville* are TN and AAA. If the material is related to several counties, and recounts historical facts, but is not genealogical (i.e., does not contain listings of names or family lineage), then ZZZ is used for term 2. Terms 1 and 2 for the book *Crossties through the Carolinas* are NC and ZZZ. County abbreviation decisions are recorded in a copy of *The Handy Book for Genealogists* (Everton 1981), which contains a complete listing of all U.S. counties and their original boundaries.

Term 3 (see table 1) of the call number is a decimal number and is determined by form of material (directories, bibliographies, indexes, periodicals, etc.); subject matter (heraldry, commerce and labor, culture and social life, etc.); type of record (marriage, cemetery, land, etc.); time period based on war records (colonial wars, Revolutionary War, Civil War, etc.); church records by denomination (Baptist, Catholic, Quaker, etc.); and ethnic group (Celtic/Gaelic, African-American, Teutonic/Germanic/Scandinavian, etc.).

Some examples of classification numbers consisting of terms 1, 2, and 3 are shown with the titles they represent in table 2.

Term 4 of the call number is based on the first three letters of the author's last name. There are noted exceptions. For example, with census data, the date of the census is inserted to enable chronological arrangement and then is followed by the first three letters of the author's last name. These instances occur infrequently and are specifically noted in the classification schedule.

Sometimes there is no primary author for a work according to the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2d ed. 1988 revision (*AACR2R*), but there is an abstractor, compiler, indexer, or transcriber. Although *AACR2R* does not generally afford main entry to abstractors, compilers, indexers, or transcribers, because of their importance in genealogical research, the

librarians decided to assign term 4 letters to these individuals. Many valuable genealogical tools are the work of compilers who provide abstracts of public documents that are difficult for most historians to decipher. These individuals are often noted by historians and are important access points. Several examples of full call numbers, including terms 1–4, are shown in table 3.

CLASSIFICATION NOT BY LOCATION

Despite the primary emphasis on location in genealogical research, not all materials have a geographic orientation. Therefore, in addition to those source materials (and compilations) that are geographical in nature, the classification system has to accommodate the nongeographically oriented resources. These include historical and instructional materials, family histories, biographies, church and ethnic group histories, items on historic preservation, and other materials. Also, items that have no obvious genealogical significance have to be accommodated, as these are retained in the History Room due to provenance or relevance in understanding an ancestors' time period.

A special sub-scheme was needed to accommodate these materials. It was decided to construct this part of the classification system so that nongeographically oriented materials would not only be shelved together but also so they would be shelved before the beginning of the geographically oriented numbers. Because term 1 listings for all geographically oriented materials run from AK to WY (as per state postal abbreviations), the letters AA through AJ were selected as the term 1 designations for all nongeographical materials. Table 4 delineates this section of the classification system; the table shows how the letters AA through AJ are used in term 1 and subdivided by various three-letter combinations in term 2.

As with the geographically oriented numbers, the use of multiple terms brings out various aspects of the cataloged materials. Term 3 (see table 1) further subdivides the topic and term 4 arranges the title by author. Following are two examples drawn from the AA category:

AA HER.1 ELL
Who Are You?: The Romance Of Your Name / Ruby Haskins Ellis
AA INS.13 BOY
How to Publish and Market Your Family History / Carl Boyer.

For a biography (whose term 1 is AB), term 2 is constructed out of the first seven letters in the name of the individual profiled. This method corresponds with the classification used for fiction and biography in the library's other collections. AB SCHOOLF KIN is the call number for *Robert Addison Schoolfield (1853–1931): A Biographical History of the Leader of Danville, Virginia's Textile Mills During Their First Fifty Years*, by Robert E. King. The KIN in term 3 is for the author of the biography.

In categories such as church history (whose term 1 is AC), historic preservation (term 1, AD), or ethnic and immigration (AE), a term 2 of AAA is used as an alternative to the usual term 2, which designates a state or county location. The use of AAA as term 2 is based on the Arlington Public Library system and places materials relating to more than one county at the beginning of each division of the classification. This serves as a place holder to which the the cataloger can attach a term 3 (table 1), including decimal numbers for specific denominations, types of buildings, or ethnic groups.

Several examples follow. The call number for *Presbyterians in the South* by Ernest Trice Thompson is AC AAA.58 THO.

The Care and Identification of Nineteenth Century Photographs, by James M. Reilly, is classified in AD AAA.13 REI with AD AAA designating the preservation of documents and .13 indicating "how to."

The call number for *The 1884 Hester Roll of the Eastern Cherokees*, compiled by Barbara Crumpton, is AE AAA.67 CRU. AE AAA designates ethnic and immigration materials and .67 indicates the Native American ethnic group.

Family histories are subarranged under AF by the first seven letters of the family name. Thus, the call number for *The Saunders Family of Lincoln County,*

TABLE 1

TERM 3

Decimal	Subject	Decimal	Subject
.1	General information charts	.48	World War I
.12	Directories	.49	World War II
.13	How to	.491	Late 20th century
.14	Bibliographies	.5	Church records and histories
.15	Immigration/emigration	.51	Baptist
.16	Indexes	.52	Catholic
.17	Sources (i.e., guides to holdings)	.53	Quaker
.18	Not used	.54	Episcopal
.19	Gazetteers, atlases, and maps	.55	Lutheran
.2	Collective biography	.551	Reformed Church of Christ
.21	Heraldry and name dictionaries	.56	Methodist
.22	Compiled genealogies	.57	Moravian
.23	Travel description and geography	.58	Presbyterian
.24	Education, training, and apprenticeships	.59	Other
.25	Commerce and labor	.6	Ethnic records—general information about ethnic character of the United States
.26	Culture and social life		
.27	Arts and sciences (further divided under AJ AAA by *DDC*)	.61	Celtic/Gaelic/Scots
		.62	English/Anglo-Saxon
.28	Law and legislation, politics and government	.63	Teutonic/Germanic/Scandinavian
.29	Architecture	.64	Baltic/Slavic
.3	Censuses (date comes before the author designation)	.65	Latin/Romance countries
		.66	African-American
.31	Vital statistics combined records (i.e., death and birth records)	.67	American Indian
		.68	Semitic
.32	Bible records	.69	Other (e.g., Melungeons)
.33	Court records	.7	County and area histories
.34	Marriage, divorce, and cohabitation records	.71	Heritage books
		.72	Eastern Standard Time Zone, North
.35	Cemetery records	.73	Eastern Standard Time Zone, South
.36	Wills and estate records	.74	Central Standard Time Zone, North
.37	Deeds and land records	.75	Central Standard Time Zone, South
.38	Tax records and voter registrations	.76	Mountain Standard Time Zone, North
.39	Newspaper abstracts, obituaries, etc.	.77	Mountain Standard Time Zone, South
		.78	Pacific Standard Time Zone, North
.4	Military records and pension lists	.79	Pacific Standard Time Zone, South
.41	Pre-discovery wars	.8	Preservation
.42	Colonial wars	.81	Historiography
.421	Add 1 to any two numbers to indicate materials that fall between designations	.82	Oral history
		.83	Documents
		.84	Photographs
.43	Revolutionary War	.85	Buildings
.44	War of 1812	.9	Periodicals
.45	Mexican War	.91	Genealogical and other society records
.46	Civil War		
.461	Reconstruction	.92	Community development
.47	Spanish-American War (1898)		

by Dwight G. Saunders, is AF SAUN-
DERS SAU. The family name spelling is
that used by *LCSH*, not the spelling in the
work, unless there is no listing in *LCSH*.
In that case, the spelling in the work being

cataloged is used. A discussion of the fam-
ily name used as a subject heading appears
later in this article.

Likewise, a three-letter code for a lo-
cation larger than a state (e.g., USA, EUR,

TABLE 2

SAMPLE CLASSIFICATION NUMBERS

Classification number	Title
WV WYO.16 (Index)	Genealogical index and gazetteer for Bowman's reference book of Wyoming County history
TN ROB.29 (Architecture)	Robertson County's heritage of homes
KS KIN.34 (Marriage, divorce etc.)	Kingman County marriage records
KY MON.43 (Revolution)	List of known soldiers of the Revolution buried in Montgomery County, Kentucky
VA CHA.58 (Presbyterian)	Cub Creek church and congregation 1738–1838
NC CAB.66 (African-American)	History of African Americans in Cabarrus County
SC YOR.7 (County...history)	City without cobwebs: A history of Rock Hill, South Carolina
PA AAA.9 (Periodicals)	Pennsylvania genealogical magazine

AFR) is used to classify general genealogies (term 1, AG). The call number for *Twenty-one Southern Families*, by Elizabeth Pryor Harper, is AG USA.73 HAR, with .73 indicating the Eastern Standard Time Zone, South, of the United States.

These three-letter codes for locations larger than a state are also used to classify general histories (term 1, AH). The call number for *The Story of the Irish Race: A Popular History of Ireland*, by Seamus MacManus, is AH EUR.61 MAC, with .61 indicating Celtic/Gaelic. The object of the latter two classifications is to continue the geographic grouping on a more generalized scale.

A MISCELLANY CATEGORY

AJ AAA was added later to classify all of the miscellaneous materials that are not genealogical, historical, or geographical but that are housed in the History Room because of provenance or known interest to genealogical researchers. *Textile Unionism and the South*, by Sinclair Mitchell, is classified in AJ AAA.273 MIT. Its decimal numbers come from the term 3 list (see table 1). In this call number, the .27 is for arts and sciences. The third digit (3) is added to represent the first level (social sciences) of the *DDC*. This expansion of the new classification using the AJ class was devised in order to keep all materials in the History Room in the same system. Although it would have required less work for the cataloging staff to accept and use *DDC* numbers found on existing records, it was felt that expanding the single classification to all the room's col-

TABLE 3

SAMPLE CLASSIFICATION INCLUDING THE FOURTH TERM

Classification number	Title with author
TN ROB.29 HEN	Robertson County's heritage of homes / Deborah Kelley Henderson
VA CHA.58 GAI	Cub Creek church and congregation, 1738–1838 / Elizabeth Venable Gaines.
SC YOR.7 BRO	City without cobwebs: A history of Rock Hill, South Carolina / Douglas Summers Brown
NJ AAA.3 1774–85 STR	Revolutionary census of New Jersey: An index based on ratables of the inhabitants of New Jersey during the period of the American Revolution / Kenn Stryker-Rodda.

TABLE 4

NONGEOGRAPHICAL ORIENTATION

Term 1: Use the following when material does not relate to a state

AA-   General information subdivided by type

Term 2

BIB-   Bibliographies

DIC-   Dictionaries

DIR-   Directories

HER-   Heraldry and name dictionaries

IND-   Indexes

INS-   Instructional

AAA-   Everything else genealogical; decimal number (term 3) narrows location to specific time period, ethnic group, or region

ZZZ-   Everything else historical not genealogical; decimal number (term 3) narrows location to specific time period, ethnic group, or region

AB-   Individual biographies followed by the name of the subject and a three letter designation for the author

AC-   Church histories national; decimal number indicates denomination (see .5 in term 3)

AD-   Historic preservation of documents, buildings, artifacts, and oral histories

AE-   Ethnic and immigration/emigration materials; decimal number indicates ethnic group (see .6 in term 3)

AF-   Family histories followed by the family name

AG-   Genealogies not specific to any state subdivided by location (e.g., USA, EUR, AFR, ASI, etc.); decimal number narrows location to specific time period, ethnic group, or region (See .4, .6, and .7 in Term 3)

AH-   General history subdivided by location (e.g., USA, EUR, AFR, ASI, etc.); decimal number narrows location to specific time period, ethnic group, or region (See .4, .6, and .7 in Term 3)

AJ-   Miscellany: Neither genealogical nor geographical
AAA with .27 and the first subdivision of *DDC* number

    .27 Generalities
    .271 Philosophy and psychology
    .272 Religion
    .273 Social sciences
    .274 Languages
    .275 Natural science and math
    .276 Technology and applied science
    .277 Fine and decorative arts
    .278 Literature

lections would prove the easiest way to explain (or not to explain) the system to genealogical researchers. The staff also recognized that by making the system all-inclusive, online catalog users in other parts of the library would immediately identify materials as being located in the History Room and restricted to in-house use.

The class AJ has been particularly useful in accommodating the arrangement of the library's largest special collection of books and pamphlets, the Archibald Henderson Collection, which contains more historical than genealogical materials. Dr. Henderson was a scholar of Bernard Shaw, historian and mathematician, and the contents of his collection reflect his varied interests. An example from this collection is the book *Is Bernard Shaw a Dramatist?* It is classified in AJ AAA.278 HEN where the 8 represents literature from *DDC*.

SUBJECT HEADING ACCESS

Stallings also found that *LCSH* limited access to genealogical materials when the geographic location was the main subject heading. *LCSH* provides few subdivisions that are appropriate to genealogical materials and authorized for use under geographic headings. She decided to define and add local geographic subject headings (tag 691) that enable researchers to access genealogical records at the county level more easily. The new headings generally follow the format: County name, (State)—Type of genealogical record. These locally created subject headings are simple to construct and do not require changes as extensive as those made in setting up a new classification system.

For those items where the assigned subject heading begins with the topical subject followed by geographic location, Stallings likewise felt the system was cumbersome for genealogical researchers seeking data by county location. For example, "Marriage records—North Carolina" fills many screens before a searcher comes to "Marriage records—North Carolina—Wilkes County." However, the locally devised subject heading "Wilkes County (N.C.)—Marriage records" provides quick access to the area the patron

needs and mirrors the geographic emphasis of the classification. As such, these local subject headings permit researchers to find records from one area under a single heading. The starting point on screen is the local geographic location rather than the topic or larger geographic location. With its local subject headings, the classification system allows for the consolidation of materials from specific geographic locations on the shelf, as well as in the online catalog.

Every book containing genealogical material for a particular county is assigned a geographic subject heading with the subdivision "genealogy," which is a free-floating term authorized for use under geographic names. For example, the book *Maury County Remembers World War II* receives the heading "Maury County (Tenn.)—Genealogy" because it provides names that might be of significance to the genealogy researcher. The genealogy subdivision is used freely so that all materials for a specific county are listed in the catalog together under county name.

In copy cataloging at the Rowan Public Library, *LCSH* headings occurring in the record are retained; in our own original cataloging, we assign them to maintain national standards. In addition, the locally defined subdivisions (see table 5) are added to the established form of geographic headings from the national authority file or are established locally if not found.

The following examples indicate the combination of appropriate *LCSH* headings entered in the 65x MARC (Machine-Readable Cataloging) tags and locally created headings entered in 69x tags assigned to genealogical materials. For the *List of Known Soldiers of the Revolution Buried in Montgomery County, Kentucky*, several subject headings were assigned:

Montgomery County (Ky.)—Cemetery records

Cemeteries—Kentucky—Montgomery County

United States—History—Revolution, 1775–83—Registers

Montgomery County (Ky.)—Genealogy

Family names used as subject headings are taken from *LCSH* with references

made to and from variant spellings according to national cataloging practices. For example, the *LCSH* heading for the Klutz family is "Klotz family." All materials about this family are found in the online catalog under "Klotz," with cross-references from Clutts, Clutz, Klutts, and Klutz. If there is no listing, then the spelling of the name in the work being cataloged is used. In addition to the primary family, subject headings are added for all other family names listed in a work's table of contents; family names in indexes are often included, as are names of particular local importance identified by Rowan Public Library staff and genealogical researchers frequenting the library. The additional entries represent other families, not variant spellings of the primary family name.

CATALOGING WITH A LOCAL SYSTEM

This classification system is an organic one. Many decisions have been made as the system was applied, and call numbers have been changed after careful deliberation. Close consultation, mutual respect for individual expertise, and collaborative decision making have made this possible. For example, genealogical reference materials, which are classified in AA with subarrangement by type (directory, handbook, etc.), are cuttered according to the author chiefly responsible for the text as determined by the rules of *AACR2R*. However, the History Room librarian has wanted all annuals, alumni directories, handbooks, and the like to be shelved in all cases by the institution. With this collection, a primary factor in its shelving has been the concern to maintain ready access by the public and the collection librarian, who also knows and represents the needs of these end users. This concern led therefore to these materials being cuttered under the name of the institution, even in the presence of a personal author.

When deciding to use this system, or any locally created system, there are practical implications to be considered as well. Variations from national cataloging rules subsequently require continual modification of bibliographic records incorporated

TABLE 5

LOCALLY DEFINED SUBDIVISIONS BY
TYPES OF RECORDS

Apprentice bonds
Baptismal records
Bastardy bonds
Bible records
Birth records
Cemetery records
Church records
Cohabitation records
Court records
Death records
Estate records
Guardian records
Land records
Marriage records
Probate records
School records
Tax records
Voter records
Wills

from other sources, and these local variations make it less feasible to outsource subject cataloging. Cataloging done externally will not carry your classification system or additional subject headings. Catalogers at an external cataloging source will need time to learn the system, which is simple enough to learn quickly, but such outsourcing also eliminates the cooperative effort between the information and technical services specialists that allows special consideration of unique problems on the spot. Perhaps this latter consideration is of primary importance in a developing system, but we envision ongoing revision and hence foresee the need for ongoing collaboration. Discussions can, and do, take place between an outside contractor and the library information specialists, but collaboration is greatly enhanced by the physical proximity of reference and cataloging.

Above all, it should be noted that we

did not consider embarking on this project without careful investigation of possibilities and problems. From the beginning, the idea was the product of many minds. The system was first mentioned to Stallings by Dr. Elizabeth Drake, who directed the genealogical division of the Mississippiana Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi. Patricia Rosenthal, former librarian in charge of the History Room, was consulted and gave excellent advice, especially about breaking down the religious denominations. Shirley Hoffman, a staff member who had worked with visitors to the collection for ten years, also gave valuable advice. Members of the Genealogical Society of Rowan County had often stated the need for a better shelf arrangement, and they agreed that organization by geographic location would facilitate research. Edith M. Clark, the former director of the Rowan Public Library and esteemed librarian for whom the History Room was named, gave her approval to the project.

GETTING STARTED

Before the system could be applied, Stallings needed the approval of Philip K. Barton, director, Rowan Public Library, who had to consider whether the benefits of a more accessible system would outweigh the disadvantages of it being locally created. However, Barton understood that the better arrangement of materials in the History Room would improve access to the collection for the thousands of patrons who used the room every year. This was especially important because the History Room staff has limited time to spend with each researcher. With retrospective conversion of the History Room collection forthcoming, the time was opportune to migrate to a more functional classification system and to create local subject headings that would expedite access to materials for genealogists.

By the time the retrospective conversion of History Room materials started, the catalog for the library's main collection had been converted to machine-readable records and the materials had been barcoded. The History Room catalog had

never been merged with the main collection's catalog in previous retrospective conversion projects and therefore, it still remained in card form. Additionally, whether or not the director decided to adopt a new classification, the entire collection of the History Room had to be recataloged because the cataloging itself was inadequate. The old catalog cards often consisted of only author, title, one subject heading, and a call number. No additional name or subject access points were included. After two years of considering local processing requirements in the context of an easier-to-use collection, the decision was made to proceed with this massive and unconventional project.

Blake, the technical services supervisor, and her staff gave their full cooperation. Cataloging staff, not familiar with the research methodology of genealogists, did not initially understand the reason for such a wide divergence from the standard classification and subject heading systems. However, as the project advanced, the logic began to appear, and positive feedback from the vast majority of users helped propel the tedious process. Even those most averse to moving away from a standard classification system could not deny the logic and the simplicity of the system in its final form.

The long process began with the Virginia materials for several reasons. The moderate number of items, the fact that it included a broad range of records and materials (not only books), and its location in an area that facilitated easy retrieval made it an ideal group for the test run. Stallings did the cataloging for those materials. Conversion was accomplished using the Bibliophile automated system for the MARC format. The new records were then uploaded to the Rowan Public Library's automated online catalog. The flexibility of the MARC system, with its room for multiple fields, allowed for local call numbers and subject headings, and eased the conversion.

After the Virginia section was completed, the technical services staff joined the effort and the process moved along efficiently. Some copy for genealogical materials was found in the Bibliophile da-

tabase and needed only an added local call number and local subject headings. The in-house printed barcode sets included a call number label so the new call numbers and barcodes could be applied at the same time. Over a three-year period, the staff, with some volunteer assistance, attached barcodes and spine labels to approximately 90% of the books. Approximately 70% of the records being converted were not in the Bibliophile database, however, and required original cataloging. The other collections (maps, microfilm, and pamphlets) are still being entered into the database.

RESULTS

According to interviews with local genealogists and volunteers staffing the History Room, the new classification system was easy to use and patrons were pleased that materials for one county are all together. Although the History Room has a limited staff, local genealogists and volunteers regularly use the collection and often are able to assist others, especially novices, in starting preliminary research until the staff can provide more assistance. The only patrons who seem to have difficulty with the system are those who try to understand how it works before they begin to use it, which might happen when one tries to understand exceptions as well as general rules. To users not familiar with the LC alphanumeric classification system, the call numbers looked especially strange. Once they realized that the classification brought everything together by geographic location, their problems disappeared.

When entering the History Room, users are invited to register and provide their names, addresses, and comments. This list of names and address was subsequently used to conduct a survey of out-of-county users (RPL 1997). The survey, which gathered information relating to the economic impact on the local community of these visitors as well as information on possible future use, was mailed to every fourth name on the list. In the survey, users were also asked whether assistance was sought and whether the services

received were satisfactory. Although the questions did not specifically inquire about the new classification and arrangement of materials in the History Room, some users nevertheless praised the system in their comments. Some comments received were:

Liked the way you organized resources.

The accessibility of material and the helpfulness of the staff are two [of] its strongest points.

The arrangement of materials by state and county is so much easier that [sic] by author! Thank you.

Your library is the most well organized of any library I visit.

I particularly like the fact the books are organized by states, wars, etc. rather than the Dewey decimal system.

In addition, members of the Western Piedmont Local History Room Supervisors Association expressed a wish that their collections could be so arranged.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of a new classification system and the reclassification of the History Room collections has been a major undertaking, one that is not yet completed. Volunteers are still correcting old call numbers and new decisions call for subsequent changes as well. However, both History Room users and staff have enthusiastically welcomed a system they perceive as easy to use, and that reception has made the project well worth the effort. All parties involved in the decision to employ a locally developed system have worked cooperatively and productively with one goal in mind: to serve the public using the History Room collections better. That goal has been reached.

The History Room assisted visitors from thirty-nine states in 1995, and the number of researchers who are trying to find a little piece of the larger story of their family histories continues to grow.

Librarians are well advised to provide access to collections through a classification system whose basic structure expedites this research process. As Cherry (1996, p.5E) said regarding genealogy research and tourism for the area, "You need only to stop and look at the number of campers in the library parking lot each summer to know that genealogy is one of the most popular hobbies in America, and it's expected to grow in the next several years."

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