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New Horizons: Law Librarians: Constant Learning and Adapting to Ever-changing Realities (report on AALL annual meeting)

Ellen McGrath
emcgrath@buffalo.edu

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New Horizons: Law Librarians:

Constant Learning and Adapting to Ever-changing Realities

by Ellen McGrath

University at Buffalo Law Library

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) annual meeting in Anaheim, California, July 11-16, 1998 was rather an unusual meeting from my perspective. There were a couple reasons for this. The first was that I was more involved in the AALL organizational structure this year. As an elected OBS-SIS (Online Bibliographic Services) Member-at-Large, I spent more time at the OBS table in the activities area of the exhibit hall. I also attended more OBS meetings, including two OBS Executive Board meetings and the OBS Education Committee meeting. In addition, I had been appointed to my first AALL committee this year, the Call for Papers Committee. All of this meant I missed a number of TS-SIS (Technical Services) meetings that dealt with cataloging that I normally would attend, but could not, due to conflicts.

The second reason this year was different for me was that there was not one "formal" session in the entire program that had to do with cataloging! I did attend the all-day Saturday workshop "New Horizons, New Schemes for New Regimes: Understanding and Implementing JZ and KZ." But as a separate registration fee that brought with it one more hotel night, I don't really count that. There was a general hue and cry from the technical services factions in Anaheim lamenting the lack of technical services programs. Fortunately the fact that before we even arrived in Anaheim, a separate technical services track was planned for 1999 in Washington, DC seems to make it clear that we were heard and something is being done to address the problem. At both OBS and TS-SIS meetings, the discussion centered around the issue of coming up with strong technical services programs for DC so as to justify the separate track and perhaps even make it permanent. In early August as I am writing this, I have just sent off a program proposal for OBS--I'll let you know if anything develops with it.

The JZ/KZ workshop was helpful, though the general tone seemed to be one of everyone trying to figure out what everyone else was going to do in terms of reclassifying their JX collections. There is some comfort in knowing that we are all in the same boat and that became apparent during this day. For me, this workshop was probably premature, as we do not plan to tackle our JX reclass anytime soon. This is due to the fact that we are still in the process of reclassing our entire collection to Library of Congress classification (LCC) from our own local class scheme. We are at about the halfway point with approximately five years to go. But I did think that the JZ/KZ workshop would also be helpful to me in terms of simply assigning such class numbers to new works and this did turn out to be the case.

I felt pretty good after hearing some of the comments during the workshop in terms of our own reclass efforts. I think the bottom line is that the anticipation of a reclass project is often the worst part. At the University at Buffalo Law Library, we finally just jumped right in after deliberating over reclassing to LCC for about five years. It has been tough at times, but we are making steady progress in-house. And we feel confident that we are giving our users a better system, while at the

same time cleaning up our local database. In addition to saying "Just do it!" I would add another bit of advice regarding communication between reclass staff and shelving/shifting staff. It is essential and it must be constant! We have often deviated from our systematic cataloging plan to reclass pockets of the collection that would accommodate shifting efforts better.

The speakers at this JZ/KZ workshop were Carol Shapiro (NYU), Jolande Goldberg and Rebecca Guenther (Library of Congress (LC)), Brian Striman (University of Nebraska), and Christina Tarr (University of California, Berkeley). The morning was devoted to Ms. Goldberg and Ms. Guenther describing the development and structure of JZ/KZ, along with providing a look at the features of the internal automated versions of the LCC schedules at LC. Then in the afternoon, Mr. Striman and Ms. Tarr focused in on the more practical details of actually applying the schedules and the participants worked on classification exercises in small groups.

Ms. Goldberg's knowledge of the law LCC schedules is of course unparalleled, as she is the person who is mostly responsible for their creation in the past two decades or so. Her level of comfort with the law schedules is amazing to me and her discussion of the specifics of them, I must admit, often goes right over my head. But she did have some practical hints on how to know which schedule to use. Ms. Goldberg also had some interesting asides that explained certain titles ending up with certain class numbers as a result of whichever section at LC gets the piece first and classifies it. It seems LC politics has played a big role in the development of the schedules as well as their application! And the history schedules (D,E,F) have also been greatly affected by the overhaul of the J schedule and the creation of KZ.

There was a good deal of time spent on actually walking through the KZ schedule with some parts highlighted by Ms. Goldberg. She emphasized the importance of understanding the international terminology in order to classify correctly. I know this is one of my problems. As a small part of our collection, I do not encounter enough new international material to become comfortable with the terminology. But this is one of the good points I have noticed about systematically reclassing any collection. It is more likely that one can become knowledgeable about the topic at hand and reclassing all the material at once makes it all fit together more easily. Of course, this assumes that all one is doing is reclassing, which is rarely the case. Most law libraries have small cataloging staffs that must do the old and the new simultaneously. Another point that was made is that individual treaties no longer need the awkward imbedding of the treaty dates within the class number. The treaty date is now reflected in the class number itself.

Mr. Striman described the YRATs (Yale Reclassification Adventure Team) of which he was a member. In this project, the Yale Law Library contracted with Cassidy Cataloging Services to reclass their international collection. Four Cassidy staff were involved as were 34 independent contracted catalogers and 227,000 records were done in 16 months, though the books were not physically relabelled. Review of the work is currently ongoing at Yale. The YRATs used the draft schedules before they were implemented at LC, thus bringing forward lots of problems that were then fixed in the current version.

Mr. Striman also discussed how to approach JX reclassification. A few points he mentioned are: starting with identifiable subsets (active serials, new editions of monographs along with previous editions, just new titles, small topics that can easily be reshelved, etc.); be sure to get into the schedules often--the more we use them, the more confident we will be; and/or an arbitrary date cutoff could be selected and everything after that date could be reclassified. Whatever approach is taken, it is important to plan with the input of all library staff members, to have the administration's support for the plan, and to communicate with everyone each step of the way.

Ms. Tarr looked at the options presented by JZ/KZ in dealing with United Nations (UN) documents. JZ can accommodate the UN document number quite easily if that is the approach that is preferred. It was generally agreed upon that the JZ approach is better suited to very large UN collections where users may be more likely to access it by UN document number. If that is not the case, the subject approach seemed preferable. Even if the JZ option is taken, Ms. Tarr had some good advice about how to rearrange the components of the UN document numbers slightly to make for a more meaningful shelf arrangement. She reiterated the theme of the day, which was that one must do whatever will suit one's users best, while utilizing the flexibility inherent in the new, parallel LCC schedules.

The new edition of J should be out in print by the end of the year and the K form tables revision should also be complete soon, making them simplified and more consistent across all the K schedules. There are some very good tables that illustrate the parallel nature of the new JZ and KZ in the *Library of Congress Classes JZ and KZ: Historical Notes and Introduction to Application* book that was prepared by Jolande Goldberg in 1997 and is published by LC. I would encourage everyone to get a copy of this. I was glad I attended this workshop and I have some good handouts. Please contact me if you are interested in them. Hopefully there will be some follow up at AALL in the coming years as law libraries gain some experience in using JZ/KZ and reclassing collections.

I was able to attend the TS-SIS sponsored Cataloging Issues Roundtable and so I was able to hear some news about cataloging there. Marie Whited (Yale) gave a report in her capacity as AALL representative to the SAC (Subject Analysis Committee of the American Library Association (ALA)). There has been a lot of SAC discussion concerning form/genre headings and subdivisions and LC records with the subfield (I) v for form subdivisions should start appearing in November 1998. We will need to be sure that our local systems can handle this subfield, in terms of indexing and displaying it properly. Authority records will also be created to deal with form/genre headings and subdivisions. All of the ALA groups which deal with cataloging rules and standards are talking about metadata (basically "data about data"). I believe at least one program on this is being proposed for next year's AALL in DC. It is important that we all become familiar with metadata and its relationship to cataloging.

The MARBI (ALA's Committee on the Representation in Machine-Readable Form of Bibliographic Information) report at the OBS business meeting also mentioned metadata frequently. It seems that MARC (MACHINE-Readable Cataloging) changes will not be possible for a while at LC due to the problems that this would cause in LC's implementation of their new system, for which LC has contracted with Endeavor. Content vs. carrier and other issues resulting from the Conference on

AACR held last fall are being handled in many cases jointly with MARBI and CC:DA (ALA's Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access). MARBI has initiated discussion about defining the 856 field for authority records, but no resolution has been reached as of yet. Another proposal has been made to add language information to authority records, so that it will be possible to tell the authoritative form in the host language vs. the variant forms, all of which are treated equally at present as cross references when English is the form of the established heading.

The OBS/TS-SIS Research Roundtable, of which I am co-coordinator, was held again this year and was well-attended. Brian Striman, chair of the Joint Research Grant Committee (JRGC), updated the group on what had happened with the joint grant during the year. There were two applicants with very interesting research projects who had applied and it was anticipated that the grants would be approved by each of the OBS and TS SISs. This was very encouraging news. If you have an idea for a project having to do somehow with technical services, please consider applying for this grant. Information should be available on both SIS Web pages or you can contact the new chair of the JRGC, Corinne Jacox (University of Orlando).

I did attend an excellent program called "Honor Among Thieves (Not)" which presented a case where approximately 400 rare law books were stolen by a San Francisco Law Library staff member. Some of the participants described the situation as it unfolded, even including a sting operation that took place at the rare book dealer's shop when the thief tried to sell the stolen books. The narrative of the events was very compelling because this was a true life occurrence and the speakers relating the tale conveyed the emotion of it all extremely well.

Otherwise, much of my time was spent in the meetings I mentioned at the start of this report, as well as in a number of formal programs having to do with management. This topic was one of the identifiable tracks this year. Some of these programs were well-done, however, I find myself feeling rather overwhelmed with management buzzwords and programs these days. Our University's Information Technology administration has sent us all to Covey and learning organizations programs, so I seem to get it everywhere. I realize that process is important, but at this point I feel almost too removed from the product, in my case, cataloging. I really missed the nitty gritty cataloging programs this year that I have come to rely upon AALL for in the past. Let's hope they return next year!

