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# KF Classification Modified For Use In Canadian Law Libraries

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# Classification Schemes Used in Law Libraries in Canada

All too often we focus on the public service aspects of librarianship. In so doing, we overlook the technical processes that allow for a more efficient and effective public service. With this as one consideration, the CALL Newsletter Editorial Board came up with the idea of a special feature article on Classification Schemes Used in Law Libraries in Canada.

In this article, we have drawn from the expertise of law librarians in the academic, private and public sectors. Their responses are appreciated and as you will see upon reading the following, their experience is varied.

Suzan A. Hebditch,  
Features Editor

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## KF Classification Modified For Use In Canadian Law Libraries<sup>1</sup>

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Judith Ginsberg  
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### Historical Perspective

The KF Classification Scheme Modified for Use in Canadian Law Libraries (KF Modified) came into existence during the summer of 1968. It was really the brain child of Shih-Sheng Hu, then Law Librarian at the University of Manitoba, who at that time was looking for a classification scheme for his library. A meeting of concerned academic law librarians was held in the temporary warehouse quarters of the Technical Services Department of York University Law Library. In attendance were Roger Jacobs (University of Windsor Law Library), Balfour Halevy, Diana M. Priestly and myself (York University Law Library) and, of course, Shih-Sheng Hu from the University of Manitoba.

All of those present were actively attempting to find a solution to the problem of the need for a viable law classification scheme for their expanding, largely unclassified libraries. It is important to remember that, before this time, materials in most law libraries in North America were unclassified, treatises being arranged usually alphabetically by author or title within broad subject areas such as *Contracts* or *Torts*. This arrangement worked fairly well while collections remained small, but by the late 1960s, with the increase in the amount of legal publishing, particularly in Canada, the old tried and true scheme had begun to break down and material became almost unfindable. The card catalogue had begun to take on new dimensions of importance with regard to aiding the accessibility of this burgeoning mass of writing. New rules (*Anglo-American Cataloguing rules 1967<sup>2</sup> (pre*

1 KF Classification Modified for Use in Canadian Law Libraries, North York, Ontario, York University Law Library, 1982.

2 Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Chicago, American Library Association, 1987.

AACR2!)) proclaimed the need for uniform standards in forms of main or added entries and in the way items were described all with an eye to the need for greater and more straightforward access. The search for a workable, viable classification scheme which would group legal materials logically and which would benefit researchers browsing on the shelves or within a classed list was a sensible step in the same direction.

The law librarians attending the initial meeting in the summer of 1968, rejected the available law classification schemes on the basis of their lack of potential and workability and decided instead to modify the Library of Congress class KF for U.S. Federal Law to fit all common law jurisdictions. The consensus of those present was that it was highly preferable, given the nature of legal research in Canadian libraries, to classify all common law materials together by subject rather than use a jurisdictional approach which would have resulted in each jurisdiction having its own classification schedule. The Library of Congress has since gone on to develop classification schemes for other common law jurisdictions, notably KE Canadian Law and KD, Law of Great Britain, United Kingdom and Ireland, but most of the libraries using the KF Modified scheme do not follow these other schedules.

### How The KF Classification For U.S. Federal Law Was Modified

I am not going to go into any detail on how the KF Modified works. H. Rashid from the University of Toronto Law Library has written a fairly extensive article explaining the procedures which was published in the Canadian Library Journal.<sup>3</sup> But I will explain the three basic ways in which the KF Classification for U.S. Federal Law was modified so that it could fit the law of all common law jurisdictions. I am taking this explanation verbatim from my article "A Note on the KF Classification Modified for Use in Canadian Law Libraries" which was published as part of *Law Libraries in Canada: Essays to Honour Diana M. Priestly*.<sup>4</sup>

1. In many areas, such as *Domestic Relations*, KF 501-505, the same number or number span is used for all jurisdictions, the United States as well as for any other common law jurisdiction. For example, a general treatise on United States Family Law and one on Canadian Family Law would both be classified in KF 505. Only the implementation of the Form Tables is modified for use with jurisdictions other than the United States.

2. A Geographical Division, or G.D., is applied to certain specific numbers within subject areas. There is one G.D. for each common law country as well as for major political divisions within these countries. The United States material is classified where it would naturally fall, without the use of a G.D. This mechanism, which is primarily used in subject areas which tend to be crowded because of the amount of writing done in the area, allows for differentiation by jurisdiction without sacrificing the subject approach. Because the G.D.s all begin with a 'Z'

3 H. Rashid, "One Decade Later — KF Canadian Adaptation Scheme" in: *Canadian Library Journal*, 1984, pp. 75-77.

4 J. Ginsberg, "A Note on the KF Classification Modified for Use in Canadian Law Libraries" in: *Law Libraries in Canada: Essays in Honour of Diana M. Priestly*, Toronto: Carswell, 1988, p. 160.

Cutter, the United States material in a subject falls first on the shelves (no G.D.), followed by other common law jurisdiction materials arranged by the 'Z' G.D. Cutters. For example, a treatise on United States Income Tax Law would be classified in KF 6369, a Canadian text on the same topic would be classified in KF 6499 ZDZ.

3. Special tables are used for more complicated areas where the breakdowns provided for the United States material are totally inadequate for other common law jurisdictions. In the *Constitutional Law* area, for example, a special table was developed to meet the specific problems inherent in the classification of non-United States constitutional law materials. As a case in point, there is nowhere in the KF U.S. schedule to fit material on the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The special table assigns specific numbers for this material.

The Constitutional Law table, as well as the tables for History, the Quebec Civil Code and Parliamentary material, were all developed some years after the initial meeting and are constantly revised.

## Viability

The *KF Modified* scheme is being maintained through the *KF Users Group*, a Special Interest Group of the Canadian Association of Law Libraries/Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques de Droit. An Editorial Board headed by the Chair of the Users Group oversees any formal additions and changes to the schedule and answers questions regarding the use of the scheme.

Quarterly additions and changes, incorporated into those published by the Library of Congress for the KF Federal scheme are compiled at York University Law Library and distributed to libraries and individuals holding subscriptions to these updates (approximately 70 at last count).

## Pros and Cons

### 1. LIBRARY USERS

#### Pros

We, at York University, feel that the users of the Law Library benefit greatly from the arrangement of the materials that has resulted from the use of one classification scheme for all common law jurisdictions. When they are researching in an area of law, they are able to find, wherever possible, materials dealing with that topic together on the shelves, regardless of common law jurisdiction. The subarrangements created by the use of the Geographical Divisions and the Special tables do not seem to hamper their ability to browse effectively. If we had followed the Library of Congress approach with its separate schedules for each jurisdiction, library users would be forced to move sometimes several ranges over or even to another floor for other jurisdictional material on the same topic.

#### Con

In a large academic environment such as that found at York University, main libraries usually follow the Library of Congress pattern. Therefore, the Scott Library at York University uses the KE and the KD etc. classification schedules for legal materials where warranted, making it more difficult for users to move back and forth between libraries. (I would have to say, however, that the incidence of this is rare.)

### 3. STAFF

#### Pros

The major pro relates to the fact that in a shared environment (use of the UTLAS utility for example or in any other kind of networking, formal or informal) it is possible for staff responsible for classification to take advantage of the

numbers assigned by other libraries using the *KF Modified* scheme. Another pro is the fact that the scheme, once learned, is relatively easy to apply and minimizes the need for indepth learning of the mechanics of using the many other schemes published by LC. However, these other schemes, for example KD, should be consulted by classifiers when attempting to "translate" from one topic within one jurisdiction to the same topic in *KF Modified*.

Another large advantage is that the KF Editorial Board is able to meet the needs of the users in fairly short order. New areas in law can be accommodated due to this responsiveness and flexibility.

#### Cons

Getting back to the question of a shared environment, libraries using UTLAS, for example, are faced with the fact that all source agencies, LC, National Library of Canada (NLC), U.K. Marc for example, use the LC schedules for classification. Libraries using *KF Modified* often have only these source records as a form of copy, and must assign *KF Modified* numbers themselves, thus adding to the cost of cataloguing the item in hand. Copy contributed by other UTLAS users, depending on the library, often has classification numbers that reflect their own in-house schemes, LC schemes or inaccurate *KF Modified* numbers.

This last point brings out a major problem, and that is that many libraries use the *KF Modified* scheme inaccurately because of their own local modifications or because of confusion in interpreting the scheme. A manual on how to use *KF Modified* which I am in the process of writing, would certainly help.

Although the Editorial Board works well as a responsive watch dog/facilitator/adjustor etc., members come from libraries all across Canada and, the mechanism for communication could use some adjusting — food for thought!

## The Future of KF Modified

*KF Modified* has grown to become Canada's national law classification scheme. As of April 1987, the National Library of Canada has allowed the addition of *KF Modified* numbers to CIP (Cataloguing in Publication) data for Canadian material published in Ontario and Quebec, excluding the Ottawa region. H. Rashid's article on *KF Modified* in CIP data is included in this issue. Hopefully, the National Library will see fit to continue this service and will expand it to cover all publications across the country.

Thanks are due to all who have participated and will in future participate in making *KF Modified* the useful, beneficial classification scheme that it is.

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## Why Moys?

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Anne Beresford  
Ladner Downs

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"The common law systems are widely considered to be homogeneous at the core with local differences of detail. That there is indeed a sort of general common law applicable in several countries is proved by the fact that judges can and frequently do consult decisions from other common law ju-