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A Note On The KF Classification Modified For Use In Canadian Law Libraries

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Essays to honour DIANA M. PRIESTLY

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A NOTE ON THE KF CLASSIFICATION MODIFIED FOR USE IN CANADIAN LAW LIBRARIES

Judith Ginsberg

Much of the history of the *KF Classification modified for use in Canadian law libraries (KF Modified)*¹ is described in Ann Rae's essay on KE. In this article I will describe the first meeting of the librarians who developed *KF Modified* and give an overview of the way the schedule works.

During the summer of 1968, Shih-Sheng Hu, University of Manitoba Law Library, who really generated the idea; Roger Jacobs of University of Windsor Law Library; Balfour Halévy and Diana M. Priestly, of York University Law Library, and I — in my capacity as the recently hired cataloguer at York — met in Toronto in a warehouse on Finch Avenue, the temporary home of Technical Services for the new York University Law Library. The purpose of the meeting was to determine how to adapt the working draft of the Library of Congress KF Classification for United States Federal Law to fit all common law jurisdictions.

There were two main reasons why those present decided on the adaptation for all jurisdictions of a schedule designed for a single jurisdiction. The first was that, at that time, it was felt that there was no viable existing scheme for the classification of legal materials. It is important to remember that before this time, most law libraries in North America were unclassified, and treatises, etc. were usually arranged alphabetically within broad subject areas such as Contracts and Criminal Law. The second reason was that it was generally felt, and I believe, on the whole, still is, that it was preferable, given the way the library is used in Canadian law schools, to classify all common law material together by subject rather than use a jurisdictional approach, which would have resulted in each jurisdiction having its own classification schedule.

In 1968, the Library of Congress was in the process of developing law classification schedules based on this jurisdictional approach (KF was the first) and has since gone on to complete quite a few, including KE for Canadian law and KD for law of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Those present at that original meeting in Toronto firmly rejected the idea of the jurisdictional approach, and, having only the draft KF in hand, set about developing what we now know of as the *KF Modified*.

¹ *KF Classification modified for use in Canadian law libraries*, North York, Ont., York University Law Library, 1982-

There are basically three ways in which the KF schedule is modified for purposes of providing for all common law jurisdictions:

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 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' 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 ZA2, and an Australian text would be classified in KF 6499 ZD2.

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 original KF 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 being revised as the needs arise.

In 1982, *KF Modified* was put on York's AES word processor. York now issues quarterly updates that include both the *Additions and Changes* for United States KF, as issued by L.C., and the revisions and additions generated by an Editorial Board which oversees changes to the *KF Modified*. The Board also advises users with classification problems and interprets classification numbers to those in need of assistance. The Editorial Board functions as part of the KF Users' Group, a Special Interest Group of the Canadian Association of Law Libraries/Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques de Droit.

Subscriptions to the *KF Modified*, which include the basic set plus quarterly updates, are available through the York University Law Library. Currently, there are 68 subscribers to the schedule, representing all types of law

libraries across Canada. The recommended index, *Library of Congress Classification Class K Subclass KF Law of the United States Cumulative Index*, is published by Rothman's in a looseleaf format and is updated regularly.

I believe it is safe to say that the *KF Modified* has grown to become Canada's national law classification scheme, and has come a long way from the time it was just an idea of a few far-sighted law librarians facing the formidable task of classifying or reclassifying their libraries.

As of April 1987, the National Library of Canada has allowed the addition of *KF Modified* numbers to CIP (Cataloguing In Publication) data on a trial basis for Canadian material published in Ontario and Quebec, excluding the Ottawa region. Hopefully, this experiment will be expanded to include Canadian material published all across the country and will continue to provide classification information for an ever-increasing number of users.

The *KF Modified* is a viable common law classification scheme which is flexible and responsive to ever-changing needs, and which owes its existence to the foresight of the original few, as well as to the persistence and dedication of those who have followed.