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The KF Canadian Adaptation

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THE KF CANADIAN ADAPTATION

by

Judy Ginsberg

For a few days during the summer of 1968, several very determined law librarians met in a warehouse on Finch Avenue in Toronto (the temporary home of Technical Services for the new York University Law Library). These individuals -- Shih-Sheng Hu, Manitoba Law Library, who really generated the idea, Roger Jacobs, University of Windsor Law Library, Balfour Halevy and Diana M. Priestly, York University Law Library (I was present in my capacity as the recently hired Cataloguer at York)-- were meeting for the purpose of trying to determine how to adopt 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 for those present resorting to the adaptation of a schedule designed for one 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 Canadian Adaptation**.

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, United States as well as any other common law jurisdiction. For example, a general treatise on U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. Constitutional law materials. As a case in point, there is nowhere in the original KF

schedule to fit material on the 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, the KF Canadian Adaptation was put on York's AES Word Processor and is currently updated quarterly. Updates include LC's Additions and Changes for U.S. KF as well as revisions and additions generated by an Editorial Board which oversees changes to the Adaptation, helps 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 which is a Special Interest Group of C.A.L.L. (Canadian Association of Law Libraries). Subscriptions to the KF Canadian Adaptation, which include the basic set plus quarterly updates, are available through the York University Law Library. 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 loose-leaf format and is updated regularly. Currently, there are 68 subscribers to the schedule representing all types of law libraries across Canada.

I believe it is safe to say that the Adaptation has grown to become Canada's national law classification scheme, and has come a long way from the time it was just an idea in the heads 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 Canadian Adaptation 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 Canadian Adaptation 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.