Dewey Thinks Therefore He Is: 
The Epistemic Stance of Dewey and DDC

Abstract: The acceptance of a traditional Cartesian epistemology confined Melvil Dewey and his classification to a narrow consideration of knowledge while assuming the necessity of a universal language to describe it. The result is that the Dewey Decimal Classification marginalizes groups and topics outside of canonical knowledge. A feminist critique of Dewey's introductions to DDC and examples from The Electronic Dewey illustrate this problem. By taking a poststructural perspective, variation becomes theoretically possible and necessary for ethical practice.

1. Introduction

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) structures the organization of knowledge in libraries according to its own world view. Editors of DDC address problems of marginalized areas, but because of the constantly changing nature of knowledge and local differences in focus their task is overwhelming. To address these problems globally and locally we must understand the underlying view of knowledge that has shaped DDC and consider other epistemic perspectives. In attempting this task I will first define the problem; second, explain my approach which is feminist and poststructural; third, identify Dewey's and DDC's epistemic stance; and fourth, suggest ways to develop strategies for ameliorative change.

2. The problem

DDC is a system for the organization of recorded knowledge primarily on the basis of subject covering the universe of knowledge in general as a universal language or code. From the perspective of DDC's user public, it is a narrowcast code—the signification of its notation is known to only a relative few. It is also an arbitrary code determined by a central authority. By its nature as a language or code it is a system with limits that define which subjects are centred and which are marginalized. DDC is not intended to cover the universe of knowledge exhaustively. One parameter of marginalization is specificity—which subjects are treated in detail and which are not.

Another parameter is the de facto marginalization of subjects not fitting DDC's originating society. A.C. Foskett (1971) wrote that classificationists inevitably bring the bias of their times and themselves to the scheme. He critiqued DDC and other subject schemes with examples of women and sex. He later noted (1984) that despite significant changes the same generic problems continued to exist relative to "sensitive subjects." Jessica Milstead Harris and Doris Hargrett Clack (1979) discussed problems in both DDC and Library of Congress Classification (LCC) relative to Puerto Ricans, Chinese and Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, Jews, Native Americans, Third World peoples, gays, teenagers, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and alternative lifestyles. Mowery (1995) stressed problems of application in the inconsistent use of LCC and DDC numbers for "Mexican American literature."

Problems of marginalization, exclusion and colonialist bias of Africana classification were addressed by H.O.M. Iwuji (1989) in religion, ethnography, social sciences, language and

Steve Wolf documented (1972) how DDC lumped "gayness" with crime and sexual disorders, prostitution, pornography, character disorders, rapists, seducers, and perversions through context and references. Family and sex within marriage are set up as norms. Fran Steinberg (1974) noted improvement in the classification of women in DDC17, but found many ghettoised classifications that implied a male norm. Ishbel Lochhead (1985) concluded that women continue to be treated as a minority with intellectual boundaries hindering classification of multidisciplinary women's studies literature.

These and other issues have been addressed by the editors of DDC over the years with improvements. As a poststructuralist I see the task as not only infinite, but unachievable. However, it is possible to address the infinite problems of a finite system to produce manageable ameliorative change.

3. The Approach

My approach draws on feminist interpretations of deconstruction, the philosophy of language, and the politics of location. Feminist legal scholar Drucilla Cornell (1992) describes deconstruction as "the philosophy of the limit," recognizing any system's inherently constructed and exclusionary nature. From this recognition she concludes that replacing a system with another one is possible, but will still be exclusionary. Rather, we must make the system permeable, create spaces through which the voice of the Other outside of the limit has the opportunity to be heard inside it. Making these spaces requires strategies to address particular issues in particular situations. Such strategies can be devised for DDC.

Feminist philosopher Andrea Nye (1987) examined philosophers of language since Plato and concluded that all have believed the diversity and subjectivity of language must be standardized through a universal language. They ignore as unintelligible what is not or cannot be expressed in that language. Assuming a universal language is license to disenfranchise the marginalized. If we accept that DDC needs to be a universal language or code then we are free to ignore marginalized subjects.

Feminist theory has a manifold concern with situatedness: for example, the dichotomy of public sphere/private sphere; hierarchies that position some above others; the existence of women and other nondominant groups at the margins as opposed to the centre. Blunt and Rose (1994, 7) survey the development of feminist geography from spatial considerations of public/private (mainly relevant to white middle-class women) to an idealized global sisterhood to a postcolonial politics of location recognizing "that certain political projects construct spaces according to their strategic context and needs." This uncovers the previously transparent agenda behind spatial boundaries. "Mapping operates in hegemonic discourses as a form of mimetic representation—it textually represents the gaze through transparent space—but this form of mapping is contested in discourses of resistance. Mapping thus appears to be a spatial image that directly addresses the politics of representation as they are bound into the politics of location" (p. 8). Classification, especially in North American libraries with dictionary catalogues and open stacks, is a mapping of recorded knowledge. It physically (and electronically) structures collections for browsing,
determining proximity and distance, gathering and separation. It determines positionality.

4. Dewey's and DDC's Epistemic Stance

By epistemic stance I mean a view of or belief relating to the nature of knowledge and knowledge creation. Melvil Dewey and DDC both accept a concept of knowledge based in Cartesian epistemology. They accept that a single knowable reality exists and that we come to know it by discovering universal truth. If this assumption is so, then a universal language reflecting it is theoretically possible. Universality of language is an epistemic indicator of this tradition. The notational universal language of classification maps the topography of recorded knowledge structuring a space to reflect the single knowable reality and universal truth. Poststructuralism, on the other hand, rejects the possibility of universal explanations and accepts the possibility of multiple realities and multiple truths. If such a stance is employed, then DDC cannot be expected to be universal. Poststructuralism explains the exclusions and marginalizations of a "universal" language. The constructed system that is DDC reflects one or more realities and may, because it is constructed, be adapted to reflect others.

Did Melvil Dewey employ a traditional Cartesian epistemic stance in establishing his classification? Does DDC still tacitly accept this stance? I will seek Dewey's epistemic stance in his introductions to the first (1876—DDC1) and thirteenth (1932—DDC13) editions of the classification. Quotations are from DDC13 in Dewey's "simpler spelling." Parallel quotations in DDC1 are noted in square brackets. I will examine DDC in the form of the Electronic Dewey (EDewey, 1994).

Dewey manifested a traditional Cartesian epistemic stance in the necessity for a universal language:

Classification is a necessity if all material on any given subject is to be readily found . . . . By adopting the scheme in general use by libraries . . . numbers are in harmony with those of thousands of other catalogs and indexes in which the same number has the same meaning; . . . these numbers are the only international language of perfectly definite meaning among all civilized nations; and also cheapest and quickest in application. (DDC13, 43)

Some type of universal language is necessary for gathering all relevant documents. The classification brings order to documents by supplying a standard of sameness. It creates a one-to-one relationship between the number and its meaning. And as a universal language for use by the whole world it additionally achieves harmony and efficiency. For this result, Dewey seeks a one-to-one relationship with a place for each subject and each subject in its place. "All geometries are thus numbered 513, all mineralogies 549, and so throughout the library all books on any given subject bear the number of that subject in this scheme" (DDC13, 15; also DDC1, 3). The result is universality of location. Each book is treated the same as each other book having the same subject as an attribute—they are gathered together under one number always and under all conditions; not only a universality of location, but also a temporal universality. "Thus all books on any given subject stand together, and no additions or changes ever separate them" (DDC13, 22; also DDC1, 7). The subject will be gathered for all time.

Dewey's goal was to impose a universal language to overcome individual diversity. "Different librarians, or the same librarian at different times, classify the same or similar books in widely different places. Where one man did all the work for many years, there was a degree of uniformity; but even then there was danger of looking at the same book at different times from different viewpoints, thus causing confusion." (DDC13, 13) Difference is a threat to understand-
ing, resulting in confusion. A universal language is the answer to the confusion of diversity. This language is a notational language of base 10 numbers with the result that a relatively small range of options exists within each category. Because of this restriction some means of determining the relative importance of any given subject is required in building the classification and adding new subjects. Decisions have to be made to establish the lateral relationships between subjects: which subjects should be placed in proximity. The importance of subjects and their relationships to each other structure a body of knowledge, interpreting and constructing its meanings. Dewey used two means for structuring knowledge: canonical knowledge and expediency.

For canonical authority, Dewey began with the classes used by the St. Louis Public School Library: a reversed order of Francis Bacon's classification of knowledge \((DDC1, 10)\). Bacon identified three human faculties of memory, imagination and reason with the categories of history, poesy and philosophy. The Baconian modern scientist objectively distances himself from the object of his study, eschewing emotion (Keller, 1985, 33-42). Berwick Sayers (1926, 137-138) and John Comaromi (1976, 21-25) suggested that the relation between Bacon's classes and Dewey's is tenuous at best. However, Dewey follows Bacon's separation of reason and emotion, classifying memory/facts and philosophy/reason by topic, but imagination/poesy/emotion, the fine arts and literature, by the tangible aspect of form, not by the subjective attribute of topic. Dewey relied on contemporary experts to fill in his Baconian outline \((DDC13, 14)\). The result is a canonical map that reifies established perspectives—a hegemonic discourse in its politics of location, reflecting the authority of mainstream experts, who, like Bacon, contrast masculine science to feminine emotion.

Dewey's second mapping criterion is expediency which ultimately determines universal language. The order needed to avoid confusion must be given a structure that would meet other criteria. It must be comprehensible and efficient and, to achieve universality, it must have unlimited potential for expansion. To fulfill these criteria Dewey chose Arabic numerals in a base 10 or decimal arrangement. "Arabic numerals can be written and found quicker and with less danger of confusion or mistake than any other symbols. . . by exclusiv use of arabic numerals through shelves, and indexes, catalogs and other records, there is secured the greatest accuracy, economy and convenience" \((DDC13, 26; also DDC1, 8)\). Dewey accepted that this exclusivity introduces the possibility that the universal scheme does not appear to treat subjects equally. "Theoretically division of every subject into just 9 parts is absurd. Practically it is desirable to class as minutely as possible, without use of added figures; and decimals, on which our scheme hinges, allow 9 divisions as readily as fewer. This has proved wholly satisfactory in practice, tho apparently destroying proper coordination in sum places" \((DDC13, 16; also DDC1, 4)\).

Dewey notes that the same theory, an absolute theory, will not work for every library. "Theory keeps numbers in strict sequence; but a hyer rule everywhere is 'sacrifice any theory for a substantial gain'. Practically there are few libraries where it is not best to break order of classes. " \((DDC13, 39)\) Local variation is not only possible, it is desirable, but only on Dewey's terms: "Even sum who has used the sistem longest has been misled into adopting changes which on tral they were compelled to reject, going bak to original form at cost and confusion of 2 changes. . . . The only safe rule is to make no changes or subdivisions without submitting them to the editor, who will gladly advise on such matters without charj, . . . " \((DDC13, 34)\) Dewey's aversion to relocation has been adopted wholeheartedly by contemporary librarians who balk at change in the classification because of the cost of reclassification, regardless of the unquantifiable cost to the public of outmoded or inappropriate location.

Dewey uses two explanatory images of expediency: the businessman and the railroad. The businessman uses order to create meaning out of chaos.
A successful man is usually a classifier and chartmaker. . . . A large business or work unclassified or uncharted is not a worthy organization but mere material from which a clever brain may construct one. It differs in efficiency from the ideal as a mob of men differs from a well disciplined army. Piles of brick and mortar are not a temple any more than heaps of type are Shakespeare's works, though classified and set, each in right relation to the rest, the transformation is brought about (DDC13, 43-44).

With examples from business (and three other institutions based on canonical authority: the military, religion and literature) Dewey indicates that classification can overcome chaos: a "clever brain" can chart a classification and thereby create meaning.

Dewey accepts that universality and reason are necessary to make sense of chaotic diversity. He seeks to impose a universal language of classification on information characterized by mainstream Western scholarship. The resulting marginalized Others typically include non-Christian religions, non-European languages, and regions and countries with the least geopolitical influence. The politics of their location is justified by efficiency.

The scheme gives us for each topic, as it were, a case of 9 pigeonholes, with a large space at the top; and we use them as every practical business man uses such pigeonholes about his desk. If, as in 220, there are less than 9 main topics, it is often convenient to use the extra spaces for subdivisions. . . . Then in 280, having more than 9 topics, if we are using only 3 figures we put Congregational in the same space with Presbyterian, and small denominations together in the last box, just as a business man puts his papers in his pigeonholes. If he insisted on having a different case made to order for each use, it would cost over twice as much; he could not group them together or interchange them, and they would not fit off the shelves (DDC13, 21).

Expediency dictates structure. Dewey does not, however, discuss allocation of space for content in a broader sense (for example why does Christianity alone occupy 220-280 and all other religions together, 2907). He does not invoke literary warrant at any point. We are left with perceptions of how important a subject is in some absolute sense as the determinant of its pigeonholing, its spatial positioning.

Dewey's other image of efficiency is the railroad, another spatial image.

There has been pernicious misapprehension of this feature, and critics oftenest stumble over 'procrustean 10'. In fact, this is an element of usefulness. A railroad also has the fault that it is procrustean in its path and in its times. It cannot come to your door nor wait your convenience, as does the automobile; it cannot go to the fields for its loads of produce; it cannot turn out for obstacles; but because it is procrustean it can do its large-scale work much better and quicker and cheaper. The parallel could be fairly extended to many other cases, but any thoughtful mind will recognize that the economy and ease of working the Decimal system are largely dependent on its being procrustean (DDC13, 21).

Railroads map space differently than automobiles. They create stricter limits to access. Possible destinations are determined by economic discourse. Railroads flatten the landscape, cutting through hills, tunnelling through mountains, bridging valleys and avoiding curves. Automobiles are far more flexible. Streets and roads cover the landscape, leading to towns that have lost their rail service, to the front door. They, too, structure the map. Their economic discourse is related to vehicle ownership and they too have changed the landscape with suburban shopping malls, fast food "drive-thrus," and vast expanses of concrete and asphalt. Automobiles as an image are also
limiting. Either metaphor would be of a universal language based on the epistemic stance of a single knowable reality.

Does Dewey's stance continue in contemporary DDC? What does today's railroad look like? Probyn (1990, 178) offers a poststructural image of location as both defining and transient. Location orders knowledge according to established patterns, but it also allows that "any part of the world can be recreated or made to stand in for another... like in the movies as Canadian locals are dressed up in American location" (p. 183). In DDC ethnic and national identities are determined on the basis of a power politics of location. DDC Table 5: Racial, Ethnic, National Groups is described in the manual to the classification as preferring ethnic group over nationality. The exception is Canadian:

... for Canadians of French and British origin, the prescribed citation order is nationality first (T5--11 Canadians), then ethnic group: T5--112 for Canadians of British origin, T5--114 for Canadians of French origin... In the absence of specific instructions to the contrary, however, use the citation order given at the beginning of the table, e.g., Canadians of Ukrainian descent T5--91791071 (not T5--11). Note that the same number is used for both Canadians of Ukrainian descent and persons of Ukrainian descent who are in Canada but not Canadian citizens. This lumping together of citizens and noncitizens is typical for Table 5 because of the low priority normally given to nationality; the developments for Canadians of British and French descent are atypical (Edewey).

This arrangement reifies the power of the federal government of Canada in defining nationality in relation to the "founding nations": Canadians of French or English descent. However, living as I do in a part of Canada in which Ukrainian Canadians are more numerous and prominent than French Canadians the example strikes me as made on arbitrary rather than sound historical grounds. Also, by privileging "founding nations" over "first nations," aboriginal peoples, it is a clear instance of Eurocentrism. English and French ethnicity have been "dressed up in [Canadian] location."

The manual in Edewey also describes my own ethnicity:

Normally the same number is used for both the majority ethnic group of a nation and the total population viewed as a national group, e.g., T5--94541 for both ethnic Finns and all citizens of Finland viewed as a national group. In such cases the question of priority between ethnic and national affiliation arises only for minority ethnic groups. Finnish citizens who are ethnic Swedes, a minority ethnic group, are classed in T5--39704897 (T5--397 Swedes + [notation from Table 2] T2--4897 Finland) because their ethnic group takes priority over their nationality (Edewey).

Finnish and Swedish are as much official languages of Finland as French and English are of Canada. Nonetheless, my "Swede-Finn" grandfather's history is classified separately from that of my other Finnish ancestors.

That DDC can accommodate variation is apparent not only from the Canadian example, but also from that for African Americans. "Special developments that allow expression of both ethnic and national affiliation are typically made only for the majority ethnic group in a nation, under the rubric 'national group'... An atypical development for United States Blacks (T5--96073) gives extra emphasis to nationality for a minority group, while still preserving the usual citation order of ethnic group before nationality..." (Edewey) While African Americans are not grouped with the "majority" of US citizens, this exception allows for recognition of African-Americanness in
African Americans who have relocated to other countries. Whether African Americans who have moved to another country prefer to be recognized primarily as of African descent via the US, or as citizens of the US who happen to be African American, or as Black people without national affiliation, is a question likely to produce a diverse answers. The uniform exception made here indicates the practical possibility of making exceptions where a need is recognized. These exceptions are to the generalization that the citizens of a country considered in general should be classified with the majority ethnic group of that country, an example of the tyranny of the majority that allows the majority opinion to override all others (Tocqueville, 1835/1966, 227-240).

In addressing the tyranny of the majority, the liberal approach of instituting equality has been followed more often than accommodating diversity. An instance is the general number for women in DDC:

CLASS NUMBER: 305.4
CAPTION: Women
NOTES: Class here interdisciplinary works on women, on females
Add to base number 305.4 the numbers following 305.3 in 305.32-305.38 (Edewey).

The result is that women (305.42-305.48) are treated in the same way as men (305.32-305.38): the "men's liberation movement" becomes the model for the women's movement. The problem of equality is its homogenizing assumption that the same model will always apply. The men's movement, while sometimes simply a reaction to feminism, in its more productive form establishes that the gendered status quo is not a healthy situation for men. The women's movement has the inescapable difference that women are marginalized on the basis of sex, but in DDC the difference is erased. "The political notion of equality thus includes, indeed, depends on, an acknowledgment of the existence of difference. Demands for equality have rested on implicit and usually unrecognized arguments from difference; if individuals or groups were identical or the same there would be no need to ask for equality. Equality might well be defined as deliberate indifference to specific differences" (Scott, 1988, 44). Both men and women can be marginalized on the basis of other characteristics, and local situations govern the degree and nature of marginalization. "The sameness constructed on each side of the binary opposition hides the multiple play of differences and maintains their irrelevance and invisibility" (p. 46). The way gender operates in conjunction with other discourses of power is hidden by efforts at equal treatment.

Other examples of hiding the dichotomies follow from Dewey's suggestions on "viewpoints." He describes ways of using letters (not Arabic numerals) to add variations for local emphasis and convenience, and even a way to introduce what is clearly the viewpoint found in the "daily press":

Pro and con division of topics It is very useful in many cases to separate books on a topic with strongly marked sides, so either set of views and arguments may be seen by itself. This has been done in sum cases by subdivision, e.g. 337 Protection and free trade. In others it is equally useful, and can be indicated by an added mark, e.g. 324.3 Woman suffraj. The number may be used for general works, giving facts etc. and advocates and opponents may be separated by + and - for positiv and negativ, or by p and c. (DDC13, 39)

The examples of women's issues and free trade make it clear that we cannot discount his views on the grounds that things were less complex in his time, or that he could not anticipate the kinds of problems faced in classification today. Protection and free trade are given separate subdivisions as major economic issues, while women's suffrage is given one number. The library must tinker
with the result to show different perspectives—unequal issues in his day as in ours.

Another way to consider the issue of equality and difference is to treat different groups differently. An example is the number for women workers: 331.4. The subdivision of 331.4 includes some of the problems peculiar to women in the paid workforce (such as maternity leave). There is no parallel section for men—men are the norm and women the exception. This section on workers also demonstrates that some differences are privileged over others. "331.3-331.6 Labor force by personal characteristics" instructs: "Unless other instructions are given, class complex subjects with aspects in two or more subdivisions of this schedule in the number coming first . . . " (EDewey). Age as a difference takes precedence over sex, sex (if female) over ability, and ability (if disability) over race. The young Chinese women workers (DDC's example) will always be allied with young people—not with other women or other Chinese workers. In this way, DDC creates a canon of differences.

Further examples showing the depth of DDC's dichotomizing occur in the sections dealing with metaphysics (110-119) and epistemology (120-129).

CLASS NUMBER: 111/82
CAPTION: Unity
NOTES: Including part-whole relationships
DDC INDEX TERMS: Identity (Principle of); Part-whole relationships; Unity

CLASS NUMBER: 113/8
CAPTION: Philosophy of life
NOTES: Origin and nature of life . . .
DDC INDEX TERMS: Death--philosophy; Life--philosophy, . . .

CLASS NUMBER: 122
CAPTION: Causation
NOTES: Class here chance versus cause . . .
DDC INDEX TERMS: Causation--philosophy; Cause--philosophy; Effect--philosophy

CLASS NUMBER: 128/1
CAPTION: Soul
NOTES: For origin and destiny of individual souls, see 129
DDC INDEX TERMS: Body and soul; Soul; Soul--philosophy

CLASS NUMBER: 128/2
CAPTION: Mind.
NOTES: Including mind-body relationship
DDC INDEX TERMS: Body and mind--philosophy; Mind--philosophy; Mind (EDewey; emphasis added)

Two things emerge from these five examples. First, they portray concepts as oppositions. Other entries in this range dichotomize "finite and infinite," "goodness and evil," "possibility and limits," "subjective and objective," and "determinism and indeterminism." Opposites are collapsed into one number regardless of standpoint. However, these five examples go further to hide the subordinate of the binary under the dominant. Works that treat the two together are spatially mixed with the dominant. There is no number for the philosophy of the body alone. Numbers for the body occur only in the 300s, 500s and 600s. The standard subdivision for philosophy can be added to these numbers, but the body is mapped far away from the mind and mind/body relations. Dewey's premise that "Not only ar found together all books on subject sought, but most nearly allyd subjects precede and follow, they in turn being preceded and followed by other allyd subjects as far as practicabl" (DDC13, 22 [DDC1, 7]) is observed in this situation only if mind/body relations are
considered allied to the mind and not to the body.

Other considerations might also be included in this analysis are much like the procrustean railroad keeping the classification on the rails instead of straying like the locomotive in the children's story, *Tootle*, to smell the flowers and play with the animals in a nearby meadow. These examples seem sufficient to point out that the Cartesian epistemology of a single reality knowable through reason—Dewey's stance—is still reflected in *DDC*.

5. Developing Strategies for Ameliorative Change

It is easy to critique a structure—in accepting a poststructural epistemology I reject the possibility of a universally applicable structure. This my epistemic stance does not reject the possibility of ameliorative change, but calls for changes that are local, partial and dynamic. To develop strategies for such changes I return to Cornell's philosophy of the limit. I seek ways of making the limits of the system open for the voices of marginalized Others, strategies for permeability, in two contexts: *DDC* and its local applications. These contexts are crossed by two types of action: deconstructive critique and reconstructive change. The result is a reflexive process occurring constantly and synchronically.

Global change includes the responsive adjustments that took women out of 396, lodged between etiquette and outcast races, and put us into 305.4 with other demographically-defined groups. A more encompassing type of change is that which sets up options for local definition. Some such provisions already occur in *DDC*, as in the 800s options for Canadian literature. Similar options could be readily devised for giving primacy to the histories of different countries (perhaps colonial powers and former colonies could trade places). More radical changes can be introduced gradually with libraries following the suggestion from *DDC20* (1989, xiii) to "implement the revised schedules and tables on an ongoing basis, instead of in more massive projects." Other changes might allow for mapping works about native peoples instead of dispersing them geographically by white people's geography. Different sequences could be used simultaneously, designated by letters or other symbols with precedent, again, in the 800s.

Established methodologies such as citation analysis can inform remapping interdisciplinary territories, escaping the limits of mainstream disciplines and allowing in the voices of marginalized authors.

Local libraries could easily privilege different differences: gathering by race or ethnic origin is likely to be of more use in some libraries than by age. Young Chinese women workers could be located with other Chinese workers simply by a local policy giving precedence to national-ethnics. Facets present only in the tables, such as gay and lesbian workers, could be given priority through a policy to place those facets first. Or precedent could be determined document by document according to the cataloguer's judgment (as in the use of 970.004 for specific American native peoples). However, judgment can be informed not only by the content of the document, but also with the library's users in mind. Each of these options requires libraries to reclassify existing collections and to edit copy for incoming materials. If libraries have a serious commitment to serving their users the workload imposed by such changes will be cost effective in terms of improved use.

Canadian history and literature variations of *LCC* are examples of successful adaptations for which libraries share copy, making application more economical. Such variants need to be restricted to geographical Otherness. Options could be devised such as rewriting the philosophy section to reflect the holistic, rather than dualistic, perspective common in North American native cultures.

Another departure would be to reintroduce a version of the classified catalogue to North
America. It would not include serendipity in physical browsing, but with the union catalogues that make up the "virtual library" multiple classified entries would give wide scope to electronic browsing.

Tootle, the naive young locomotive, had to learn why the rails were necessary. He had to be tricked to stay on the tracks so the soup in the dining car wouldn't spill, so the wheels wouldn't get clogged with grass, so the destination would be reached on time. Our electronic setting could allow the locomotive to cross the meadow without spilling the soup. We might need to invest in reclassification as ongoing maintenance for browsing to periodically clean the grass out of our wheels. And perhaps we can learn to cope with being a bit late since no system can be perfect and we would rather have one that smells the flowers along the way.

References


Cataloging & Classification Quarterly, 5/3, 57-66.


