

Introduction

This work was written in an attempt to simplify the initial study of classification as used for knowledge organisation and information retrieval.

The text adopts a gradual progression from very basic principles, a progression that, hopefully, will enable the reader to gain a firm grasp of one idea before proceeding to the next. It describes the different types of classification scheme, the way in which they are compiled, and the features that may be required. Practical examples are provided as illustration and reinforcement at each stage.

This revision takes account of developments that have taken place since the previous edition. Where published classification schemes are concerned, for instance, a 22nd edition of the *Dewey Decimal Classification* appeared in 2003 and a new edition of the *London Classification of Business Studies* in 2005. There are also other important, recently developed schemes designed for the electronic transfer of subject and business information. Examples are *BIC Subject Categories* and *BISAC Subject Headings*, intended for use in the book trade, and *UNSPSC (United Nations Standard Products and Services Code)*.

It must, however, be stressed that the book constitutes an introductory study only; as such it should provide a gateway to more advanced treatises and to a more detailed study of specific schemes or information handling processes.

In information work, classification may be used in various ways: for coding in computerised data processing; for the organisation of files and catalogues; and for shelf arrangement in libraries and information services. It can constitute a basis for the production of alphabetical authority lists of subject terms, or thesauri, and can be applied to other subject indexing and search techniques, including those used in online systems and the World Wide Web. Where the latter is concerned, as noted above, classification can facilitate e-commerce; the accurate coding of goods and services for electronic interchange is becoming essential and some form of categorisation can also be very helpful to the Internet shopper. The approach adopted here is a wide one and is not limited to classification for one specific purpose.