

Rereclassification at a Semipublic Library

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We have found it advantageous in our facility to change the old and cumbersome Library of Congress system into a rationalized, user-friendly system that greatly eases patron stress.

Studies have shown (Geraldo, last Tuesday) that patron blood pressure can rise up to a hundred points when faced with the frightening prospect of asking a librarian for help in finding a book. In the Boston area alone, twenty-eight patrons dropped dead in front of a reference librarian (or assistant) in the first six months of 1989—up thirty-two percent from 1988.

In order to end this senseless slaughter, we did an extensive eight-hour study of the techniques patrons use to find books. Here are the results our study (adjusted for statistical anomalies):

Catalog: 1% (thought it was little tiny bookshelves)

Shelver: 4% (looked pretty harmless, but spoke no English)

Big, red book near the end of that shelf on the left with the mustard stain on the floor next to it under the picture of that old guy: 95%

One patron not included in the above statistics became lost in the stacks and was found two weeks later suffering from exposure and malnutrition in the back area of the Urdu and Swahili Rooms.

As a result of this study (supported by NIH Grant 919-555-1212), we undertook an extensive rereclassification of our entire collection. Although the SCG (Size-Color-Graphics) system is subtle and difficult to grasp as a gestalt, its basic outlines can be simply described. Books are placed in the following categories:

Size

- RB:** Real big
- Ta:** Tall
- LTa:** A Littler Taller than Average
- R:** Regular
- Sm:** Small
- RS:** Real Small

Sk: Skinny

Th: Thick

>Th: Very thick

LI: Like, immense

Color

R: Red

Bk: Black

D: Dirty

Gn: Green

OP: Old Paper

Bl: Bluish

LG: Light gray

G: Gray

DG: Dark gray

CcO: Cellophane coming off

Graphics

NP: No pictures

SP: Some pictures

OBW: Only black and white pictures

POG: Pictures of old geezers nobody has ever heard of

G: Graphs

SB: Sketches of bugs

PBC-G: Photographs of bugs, in color, totally gross

L#: Lots of numbers

PP/L: Pictures of people in loincloths

CAD: Cute animal drawings

???: Equations

PfL: Pictures of paintings of fat ladies

PB&S: Pictures of paintings of blobs and stuff

A little thought will convince you that from its SCG (Size-Color-Graphics) classification any volume whatever (or one just as good) can be found quickly and easily, particularly if staff members desist from moving the books from where the patrons left them.

Since we completed rereclass, not a single patron has suffered so much as a mild coronary. Moreover, the time saved by staff members has permitted them to carry out more ambitious and progressive projects than they had dreamed of a few short months ago.

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