

Introduction to the Bahá'í World Centre's Draft Classification for the Bahá'í Faith

Based on the Dewey Decimal System

The Bahá'í World Centre Library in Haifa, Israel holds the best collection of published material on the Bahá'í religion. Bahá'í publishing has burgeoned, with over 30 publishing trusts, other private publishing firms, and large numbers of institutions issuing publications. In addition, non-Bahá'í commercial and academic publishers provide scholarly, introductory and polemical literature.

In the early 1980s, the Bahá'í World Centre Library developed draft Bahá'í classification systems adapted from the Library of Congress and Dewey classification schemes. The Library of Congress version was adapted from BP300-395 in that library's classification, and was ultimately chosen as the organizational method for the books in the Bahá'í World Centre Library.

The Dewey Decimal System has a single number for the Bahá'í Faith, 297.93, to which may be added additional decimal numbers to refine the subject. This is inadequate to a collection focused solely on Bahá'í materials. The draft classification based upon Dewey was patterned after the M200 classification for Mormonism developed by the Utah Library Association. It has been refined over the years and was published: "Classification for Materials on the Bahá'í Religion: A B200' Schedule Based on the Dewey Decimal Classification - Part 1," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, v.16 no.4 (1993), pp. 103-121; "Classification for Materials on the Bahá'í Religion: A B200' Schedule Based on the Dewey Decimal Classification - Part 2," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, v.18 no.2 (1993), pp. 71-86.

This most recent version of the Dewey-based classification employs many of the standard Dewey devices, such as geographical tables [DDC table 2], ethnic groups [DDC table 5], languages [DDC table 6], and groups of person [DDC table 7]. The classification also permits borrowing of decimals from elsewhere in the classification to create numbers, as in B290-299. There is a complete treatment of Bahá'í Scriptures, similar to that used in the Bahá'í Classification based upon Library of Congress, as well as a reasonably full coverage of the many areas of concern covered in Bahá'í scriptures and interpretation.

For those familiar with Dewey classification, the system should be self-explanatory. Every book cataloged must include the number in this classification

schedule, and a "cutter" number (book number) that is based upon the main entry (usually author, sometimes title, according to established cataloguing codes) of the cataloguing record. The cutter number/book number is the first letter of the main entry followed by a number that collocates the book alphabetically among the other books on the same subject. In libraries using the Dewey Decimal Classification, there are usually books of standard assigned cutter numbers that match most American/English last names.

This classification was not developed merely as an exercise. Some parts of the world are quite unfamiliar with the Library of Congress classification. Those Bahá'í libraries that are more comfortable with Dewey may well find this classification useful.