

**“PEOPLE SEEM TO
UNDERSTAND NUMBERS
BETTER THAN THE
ALPHABET”**

**Experiences and effects of reclassification
from SAB to Dewey at a university library**

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Title

”People seem to understand numbers better than the alphabet”: Experiences and effects of reclassification from SAB to Dewey at a university library

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the effects and experiences of reclassification from the Swedish SAB system to the Dewey Decimal Classification at one of the faculty libraries at Lund University. The background for this study is the National Library report from 2006 where advantages and disadvantages of switching to the DDC were outlined. The theoretical framework is based on Bowker and Star’s infrastructure theory. Six librarians were interviewed about their experiences with the reclassification and the new system. The study analyzes the results from the perspective of classification systems as infrastructures. The results show that librarians were affected the most by the reclassification, whereas there was little impact on patrons and physical spaces. The study also finds that the librarians mostly agree with the advantages and disadvantages of reclassification from the National Library report.

Keywords

Library, Information, Knowledge Organization, Classification Systems, SAB, Dewey Decimal Classification, DDC, DDK, Infrastructure, Infrastructure Theory

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1. Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, there was an American librarian called Melvil Dewey. He was an efficiency fiend. He not only advocated for a spelling reform of the English language that would eliminate redundant letters (over the course of his life, his name changed from *Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey* to *Melvil Dui*) (OCLC 2023b); his biggest ambition was creating a classification system that would be able to classify all the knowledge in the world. The system would be based on numbers—a revolutionary solution at the time—and Dewey proclaimed, “These numbers ar the only international languaj of perfectly definit meaning among all civilized nations” (Dewey 1876). Although the system has not reached the universal status Dewey dreamed of, it has still spread internationally and has become the most popular classification system used in libraries today (OCLC 2023a).

The inspiration for this thesis comes from the decision made by the Swedish National Library (*Kungliga biblioteket*) in 2008 to change its classification system from the Swedish SAB system (*Klassifikationssystem för svenska bibliotek*) to the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) (Kungliga biblioteket 2008). The decision followed the National Library’s research into the advantages and disadvantages of switching to the DDC. The report on the research project recognized that such a conversion would carry more advantages for research libraries compared to public libraries (Svanberg 2006), which is why this thesis focuses on a university library. It is part of the study’s objective to analyze if the advantages and disadvantages outlined by the National Library have been observed by the library staff. The advantages highlighted in the report are: the internationality of the system, the potential for rationalization, and knowledge sharing. The disadvantages are: the costs of the conversion, the need for modifications, the problematic transition phase, and the cultural bias of the DDC. They will be explained in more detail further on in the Background chapter.

1.1. Research aim

The problem area of this study is the role of classification systems in the functioning of libraries. The objective is to analyze a research library’s change from one classification system to another, while looking at classification systems as an important infrastructure for libraries. The main goal of the study is to

determine the influence the reclassification has had on the functioning of the library and the librarians' work with the collections, as well as the consequences it might have had for the physical space and for the patrons.

The study builds onto the existing collection of analyses of libraries in Sweden that have switched from the SAB to the DDC. The most recent such analysis was written in 2016,¹ which has created a gap in this kind of research. This study will try to fill that gap by analyzing the effects of the reclassification after a longer period of time, now that fifteen years have passed since the official adoption of the DDC in Sweden.

The aim of the thesis is to build on the already existing knowledge and contribute to the collective process of analyzing libraries in Sweden that started using the DDC and potentially serve as a guide and analysis tool for other research libraries who are considering the switch. The thought behind this study is that the more such studies are available, the more we will be able to reach broader and more general conclusions about the workings of the DDC in Sweden.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the notion of classification systems as infrastructures, as described by Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (1999), among others. As classification systems are deeply rooted in the institution of a library, this study will analyze the repercussions of redesigning such an infrastructure.

The study analyzes the effects of reclassification on the functioning of the library from the librarians' perspective and consists of interviews conducted with the library staff. The objective here is to observe and analyze the experiences of the librarians with both the old and the new classification systems, their opinions, testimonies on the process of reclassification, their own personal experience with working with the library's collections, as well as their observations on how the change affected the library's patrons and physical space. Finally, I relate the findings of the study to the advantages and disadvantages of switching to the DDC mentioned above.

¹ There are more recent such analyses (see Lindgren and Larsson 2021 or Johansson and Mähler 2022), though they are bachelor's theses and are therefore not included in this study.

1.2. Research questions

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the reclassification and the new infrastructure impact the functioning of the library (the librarians' work, the public spaces, and the patrons) from the perspective of the librarians?
2. Have the advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the National Library been observed by the librarians?

The results will be analyzed through the lens of infrastructure theory, looking at classification systems as infrastructures. The analysis will incorporate the characteristics of infrastructures (see chapter 3, Theoretical framework) and how they have manifested themselves in the process of reclassification at the library.

1.3. Limitations

This study was limited in a number of aspects. Time constraints affected the size and scope of the study. The research is limited only to Sweden, and does not look into the international context of libraries switching from one classification system to another, apart from the studies mentioned in the Literature overview. Furthermore, only two of the three HT Libraries are included in the study, a decision which is explained later in the Background section.

1.4. Disposition

This study began with introducing the area of interest, the research aim, and the research questions. Next, I present the background of the thesis, describing shortly the object of the study and the history of the two classification systems in question, the Swedish SAB system and the international Dewey Decimal Classification. Later, I present the aforementioned report from the National Library.

The background is followed by the literature overview of research relevant to this study, where I look at the discourse on classification systems both in Sweden and internationally. I also present the previous analyses of individual libraries conducted in Sweden.

In chapter 4, I introduce the study's theoretical framework, which is based on infrastructure theory. The chapter discusses those aspects of the theory which are relevant to this study, focusing on the characteristics of infrastructures, which are later the basis for the analysis. Afterwards, I describe the methodology, which is based on semi-structured interviews with librarians working at the HT Libraries, as well as discuss the ethical aspects of the study.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the study, and in chapter 7 I analyze the interviews through different themes identified during the coding process, as well as through the lens of the theoretical framework. The final chapter is the discussion, followed by suggestions for further research. The thesis ends with a short summary of the study.

2. Background

This chapter briefly presents the library that is the object of the study, as well as the two systems, the Swedish SAB system and the Dewey Decimal Classification. Later, the aforementioned National Library report is discussed in more detail, where the advantages and disadvantages of the DDC are introduced.

2.1. The HT Libraries

This study is a case study of a particular library. The library in question is actually three libraries, as they are the Libraries of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology (*HT-biblioteken*) at the University of Lund in Sweden. Due to the fact that they operate as one institution, have one manager, and the staff usually works at more than one of them, for simplicity reasons the whole institution is referred to as “the library” in this study. In some contexts, it is also referred to as the “HT Libraries.”

The HT Libraries consist of the SOL Library, located at the Centre for Languages and Literature, and the LUX Library at the Humanities and Theology faculty. The third library, the Asia Library, has been excluded from this study due to its small size and the fact that none of the informants work there.

The library started the process of changing its classification system from the Swedish SAB system (*Klassifikationssystem för svenska bibliotek* or *SAB-systemet*) to the Dewey Decimal Classification in 2010. As of March 2023 the process is still underway, although it is now in its final stage with only the Reference collection at the SOL Library left to be reclassified. The project is predicted to be completed in the following months.

2.2. The SAB system

The discussion on the choice of a classification system for Swedish libraries that took place in the early 2000s was not the first one. About a century earlier, the library sector was also looking for an appropriate alternative, motivated by the spread of libraries across the country and the creation of the public library (*folkbibliotek*). At the time, no uniform classification system existed, and each library organized and cataloged its books according to its own organic system,

although the majority chose to use some form of an alphabetic classification (Hansson 1995).

It was decided that a unified system should be established to make the library sector more organized. The DDC was considered as one of the alternatives, as it was already known internationally back then. In the end, it was decided that a new system should be created that would reflect the Swedish context, circumstances, and society (Hansson 1999), as well as build on the already existing traditions of cataloging at Swedish libraries (Berntsson 1997, Hansson 1995).

In 1921 it was announced by the organization now known as the Swedish Library Association (then called *Svenska Allmänna Biblioteksförening*, now *Svensk biblioteksförening*) that the creation of the SAB system was complete (Hansson 1995). Since then, it has been in use at the majority of Swedish libraries (Berntsson 1997).

The SAB system consists of two complementary parts. The first part is a systematic subject classification, divided hierarchically by 25 main classes and more specific subdivisions, with classes marked using letters (for example, H stands for fiction, Hc for Swedish fiction, and then Hcg for Swedish children's fiction, etc.). The system also uses various punctuation marks to make the notation more precise, such as hyphens (geographic division), periods (chronological division), or colons (aspects) (Berntsson 1997). The second part is a keyword register, a resource created to support catalogers when placing subjects in the system (Viktorsson 2013).

2.3. Dewey Decimal Classification

The Dewey Decimal Classification, also known as the DDC, was first published by its creator, Melvil Dewey, in 1876 under the title *A classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library* (Dewey 1876). The main advantage of the DDC over the already existing systems was that it had a hierarchical structure. The existing systems arranged books according to various categories and serial numbers, which meant that if the collection expanded and a category grew larger than its dedicated space, the classification had to be redone. With the DDC, a book could be classified once and for all, and its physical location on a shelf did not influence the classification code (Olson 2001, Svanberg 2006).

The DDC has gone through many changes over the years, and the edition currently in use is the 23rd one, published in 2011. The system is owned by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) but is developed and maintained by an editorial team at the Library of Congress in the USA. The majority of changes and revisions in the system are introduced through the electronic edition, WebDewey, and that is where one can find the most recent edition of the DDC (OCLC 2023a).

In contrast to the SAB system, the DDC uses Arabic numerals instead of letters for its notation, as Dewey saw them as superior to other symbols (Olson 2001). The system consists of ten main classes (for example: 400 Language, 700 Arts and recreation, etc.), one hundred divisions (480 Classical & modern Greek languages, 750 Painting, etc.), and one thousand sections (482 Etymology of classical Greek, 752 Color, etc.). There are also six numbered tables for additional notation to provide more detail in the class numbers (OCLC 2023a).

As mentioned before, the DDC was already considered as an alternative in 1921. Although it was not chosen then, almost a century later the debate circled back, and the DDC appeared on the radar of the Swedish library sector again.

2.4. The National Library report

In 2008, the Swedish National Library (*Kungliga biblioteket*) made the decision to change its classification system from the SAB, to the DDC (Kungliga biblioteket 2008). The decision followed the National Library's research into the advantages and disadvantages of switching to the DDC. The research stemmed from the need to make both the cataloging work in Swedish libraries and the decision-making processes more efficient. The first plans for the research project came up in 2004 during one of the Bibsam board meetings (Kungliga biblioteket 2005). The Bibsam Consortium is a body negotiating agreements with vendors; 95 organizations (libraries) are part of it (Kungliga biblioteket 2023). The project was completed and its results presented in 2006.

The research project consists of three separate studies. The first study analyzes the cataloging work done within the Libris database (the Swedish national union catalog maintained by the National Library) and the possibilities of making it more efficient. The second study focuses on the communication and the decision-making processes regarding classification and cataloging work within the Bibsam libraries. The third study, titled *A switch to Dewey Decimal Classification. What*

would it entail? (Svanberg 2006, translation mine), discusses the possible change from the SAB to the DDC, and it is this part that is the background for this thesis.

The report recognizes that the switch to the DDC would carry more advantages for research libraries compared to public libraries. This study focuses on a research library in order to analyze whether the library staff has observed the advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the National Library, which were as follows:

The advantages

1. **The internationality of the system:** the DDC is widely spread (at the time of the report around sixty countries used it in their national bibliographies); it is revised regularly; there is a wide array of resources available to help librarians with cataloging; and the rules for classification are clear and easy to understand. Here it is also mentioned that it is difficult for such a small country as Sweden to maintain its own classification system. This is visible in the fact that the SAB system is outdated and, according to Svanberg (2006), should be redone from scratch, but resources to do so are lacking.
2. **The rationalizing potential:** about 80% of foreign literature at university libraries comes from countries that use the DDC. This means that the literature is already classified and there would be no need to re-classify it in another system. This, in turn, would free up time and resources (this advantage, however, does not apply as widely to public libraries, where the percentage of foreign literature is much lower).
3. **Knowledge sharing:** with the use of the DDC it becomes easier to share and market Swedish research on the international arena, as the classification codes are not bound to the Swedish language and are recognized internationally.

Svanberg (2006) also mentions the DDC's clear hierarchy as an advantage over the SAB system, which means that it is easier to introduce new classes as well as new subjects in the already existing classes. She also points out that the DDC has a greater number of classes than the SAB, which means that it is organized in a more detailed way. This makes it easier to catalog material, as the classes contain a more manageable number of subcategories (here it is, however, important to mention that in case of smaller, or public libraries, the need to use a more detailed

system is not necessarily as pressing—while the abridged edition of the DDC, on the other hand, can be regarded as not detailed enough).

The DDC allows only one code per work, in contrast to the SAB, where it is allowed to classify material with multiple codes. It is another advantage for the use of the DDC, as it makes the system more consistent. This, however, can also be seen as a disadvantage, as it poses a problem when cataloging interdisciplinary works (which later also affects the ease of retrieving such works) (Fens & Lindgren 2008).

The disadvantages

1. **The costs of reclassification:** the report states that the total cost of reclassification is difficult to calculate, but it mentions a number of arrangements necessary for such a change, among them a partial translation of the DDC to Swedish; updating and completing the already existing conversion table for the SAB to the DDC; changes in the Burk² and Libris databases; training library staff. There are also costs connected to changes in local databases and systems.
2. **The need to adapt the DDC to the Swedish context,** both initially and continuously (here the report mentions subjects that are dependent on locality, such as law, geography, and education).
3. **The difficulty of the transition period:** library staff will have to be trained in the DDC, which will require a lot of time and resources. During the transition period, the library will be required to work with two systems simultaneously, which could be problematic for both staff and patrons.
4. **Cultural bias:** the DDC is culturally biased towards the USA, as that is where the system was created. This bias is visible in some parts of the system, which are unfamiliar to the Swedish people. It is important not to lose the Swedish context that is in turn visible in the SAB. Here, however, the report mentions the Editorial Policy Committee, which consists of ten international experts who work continuously to minimize the cultural biases in the DDC.

² Burk is a search system for the database from BTJ, a Swedish company that delivers media products and information systems to libraries and other organizations (BTJ 2023).

The advantages and disadvantages outlined in the report are also the basis for the interview guide in this study. In the Results chapter, some of the findings are presented through the lens of the report, in order to see whether the advantages and disadvantages have proven to be true and have been observed by the librarians.

3. Literature overview

In this chapter, I present an overview of the previous and current literature on the subjects of the SAB, the DDC, and classification in general, that was relevant and useful to this study. The studies presented come from both Sweden and other countries.

3.1. Classification and its biases

A lot of the research on classification systems focuses on their biases and shortcomings, and how their structure tends to silence the voices of certain social groups. American professor Hope A. Olson discusses the documented flaws in classification systems regarding gender, age, ethnicity, and religion. The biases that form in different classifications have an impact on the end users, whose information searching might be negatively influenced by the way information is organized or the arrangement of books in libraries. This especially applies to those who search for information outside of the mainstream, which requires more effort and ingenuity. Olson writes that libraries “reflect the marginalizations and exclusions of the society they serve” (Olson 2001, p. 652).

Olson also writes about the DDC’s “presumption of universality” (ibid., p. 647). Melvil Dewey, the creator of the DDC, had a goal to design a universal system and language to be used in libraries in order to avoid confusion in communication, which he perceived as dangerous. He claimed that classification is necessary so that all material on any given subject can be retrieved. According to him, creating a place for each subject by constructing one-to-one relationships between the concepts represented by the number and the document, would “[supply] a standard of sameness” (ibid., p. 648) across all libraries, and provide order and consistency.

Olson argues, however, that Dewey’s way of organizing knowledge and grouping different subjects together ends up in a hierarchy that prioritizes certain relations between subjects over others. The DDC has often been described as Procrustean, and Olson argues that such uniformity produces violence and arbitrariness. It controls the users’ browsing behavior, influencing which materials they are most likely to encounter. Minor topics often end up in the *Other* category due to the shortage of numbers, meaning that it is the structure that determines how much

space a given subject takes up, instead of the size of its contents. Olson describes it as “fitting round pegs into square holes” (2001, p. 652). She also emphasizes that “it is not possible for a classification system to gather simultaneously all aspects or facets of a work” (ibid., p. 653). This can be linked to Bowker and Star’s (1999) theory that it is impossible to create an “ideal” classification system, an idea which is described later in the Theoretical framework chapter. There is, however, room for change, and the structure of the DDC makes it possible to create codes for more complex subjects and adapt the system to local needs (Olson 2001).

In Sweden, one of the most prominent names in library science is researcher and professor Joacim Hansson. In 1995, he authored a master’s thesis, in which he studies the societal and institutional circumstances surrounding the creation of the SAB system. Hansson mentions how the structure of different classification systems reflects the priorities of their creators, which points to the key theory that classification systems can never be neutral (as discussed later in the Theory section). Efforts can be made to make the systems objective, but they always end up mirroring their creators’ values and priorities in some way (Hansson 1995).

Hansson’s doctoral thesis from 1999 is a critical analysis of the SAB system. It focuses on the relationship between the classification system and the context it’s in (both social and institutional), in order to “search for the various mechanisms in the system that reveal certain affiliations to a given ideology” (Hansson 1999, p. 248, translation mine) and therefore investigate how dominating ideologies in a given society are reflected by the way knowledge is organized in libraries. The thesis focuses on public libraries, although Hansson does mention that a research library, by belonging to a higher organization such as a university, is naturally put into the organization’s context (Hansson 1999).

Hansson takes on the subject of classification and power again in 2013, this time mentioning also the DDC, as by that time the American classification system had come to Sweden. He goes back to the early twentieth century when the DDC was adopted by Denmark and Norway, and when Sweden decided to create its own classification system instead. He writes that at that point, the DDC was already a well-established system internationally, but its bias was “explicitly Anglo-Saxon” (2013, p. 387). He goes on to say that it “replicated in a rather straight manner the scientific, economic, educational, and industrial ideals of late 19th century USA” (ibid., p. 388), and those flaws became apparent when the system first started being introduced internationally. According to Hansson, the main

reason for why Sweden chose to create its own classification system was how heavily influenced by Prussian academic culture the Swedish library sector was at that time. That was reflected, for example, in how much space humanities took up in the SAB system compared to the DDC. Along with the deconstruction of the social democratic welfare state and the adoption of the American market economy model, the groundwork was laid for the adoption of the DDC by Swedish libraries (Hansson 2013).

3.2. Implementation of the DDC internationally

Literature in English on the implementation of the DDC internationally is limited, although some papers have been published on the use of the system in national libraries across Europe.

In 1998, Suzanne Jouguelet, a French library general inspector, published a case report on the choice and implementation of the DDC at the French National Library (*Bibliothèque Nationale de France*). Creation of a new classification was considered, although due to time constraints, it was decided that one of the already existing classification systems would be chosen. The DDC was deemed to be the most appropriate and was chosen over Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) and Library of Congress Classification (LCC), citing reasons similar to the advantages suggested by the Swedish National Library: consistent maintenance and development and availability of resources, as well as the planned projects of French translation. It was also deemed that the DDC's structure was well-suited to modern knowledge and the topics were distributed in a coherent manner. The library was, however, unable to follow the logic of the system exactly, and it had to be adapted to the organization of different disciplines in the library's reading rooms (the example of the field of science and technology is cited, containing both DDC classes 5 and 6, but also 0, 1, and 3) (Jouguelet 1998). This points to the necessity of adjusting the system to local needs.

In 2005, Magda Heiner-Freiling from the German National Library and Patrice Landry from the Swiss National Library published a conference paper from the 71st IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) General Conference and Council. The paper describes the use of the DDC in the national bibliographies of three German-speaking countries: Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. The three national libraries decided to cooperate in developing a common arrangement for the electronic formats of their national

bibliographies, in order to make the bibliographies more user-friendly and subject access to records more efficient. Before, each national bibliography used a different system, which made the exchange of data more difficult. The DDC was chosen as it was already in use in Switzerland, and because of its international reach, it was deemed as the most suitable to facilitate cooperation with national libraries in other countries. An interesting contrast to the Swedish situation is that in Germany, before switching to Dewey, the German National Bibliography sent out a questionnaire to its customers (libraries), informing them of the planned changes, asking if they accepted the disadvantages the change would bring and whether they had any need for special arrangements (Heiner-Freiling & Landry 2005).

An interesting counter perspective comes from the USA, where the DDC had long been established at academic libraries before it became widely used outside of America. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a widespread trend across academic libraries in the US to convert from the DDC to the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) (Shorten, Seikel & Ahrberg 2005). Reasons cited were, interestingly enough, similar to those used in Sweden for the use of Dewey: making cataloging work more efficient and reducing costs. The LCC was also considered more flexible, more suitable for academic libraries, and easier to expand in the case of adding new disciplines. In the early 2000s, the LCC was already so ingrained in the academic culture that librarians at Oklahoma State University Library were often met with the question “Why do you continue to use DDC?” from faculty and graduate students (Shorten, Seikel & Ahrberg 2005, p. 123), pointing to the fact that the patrons were aware of the classification system to a certain degree—at least at that particular library.

In an article from 1995, June Chressanthis, assistant professor and serials cataloger at Mississippi State University, discusses the different sides of the decision to reclassify from the DDC to the LLC. She writes, “Many of the basic reasons employed since the 1950s concerning reclassification are still valid today” (1995, p. 171), an interesting thought that points to the circularity of the reclassification discourse. She also discusses how major changes to classification systems often force libraries to adopt their own local practices, which can eventually result in problems if such individual solutions accumulate. She does, however, concede that regardless of the classification system used, some local modifications are unavoidable.

3.3. Implementation of the DDC in Sweden

The first master's thesis regarding the introduction of the DDC in Sweden was written by Michael Fens and Urban Lindgren at the University of Borås in 2007, before the National Library made the decision to adopt the DDC. They investigate cataloging and bibliographic practice by analyzing the aforementioned National Library cataloging research project (*Katalogutredning*), also called the Swedish Dewey Project (Hansson 2013). The project discusses the possible implementation of Dewey at the Bibsam libraries and how it could influence the entire library sector in Sweden. Fens and Lindgren analyze both the National Library study and various articles and reports surrounding it, as well as conduct a number of interviews with informants who either were involved in the project or have experience in cataloging and classification. They analyze the material through the sociohistorical lens that understands bibliographic practice as social practice, as well as by contrasting the discussion with its counterpart that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was decided that a separate Swedish classification system would be created. Fens and Lindgren conclude that technological and economic issues take up too much space in the discussions and not enough attention is dedicated to socio-historical issues and the societal implications of classification (Fens & Lindgren 2008).

The Swedish library sector's attitude towards the new classification system was also analyzed in 2010, two years after the National Library decided to switch from the SAB to the DDC. In her master's thesis, Cynthia Bauer casts a wider net and carries out a discourse analysis of empirical material from both when the SAB was first introduced, as well as after the National Library's decision from 2008. The empirical material consists of a wide range of documents: articles from magazines dedicated to librarians; posts on discussion forums for librarians; reports; bills; meeting protocols; various documents; lecture films. She identifies four groups in the library sphere: librarians, the Swedish Library Association, authors of articles in magazines dedicated to librarians and others interested in library issues, and members of various groups that were responsible for the implementation of Dewey in Sweden (Bauer 2010).

Bauer identifies different types of discourses on the SAB system and the DDC. She mentions that the discourse was mostly uncritical, and she theorizes that the creation of the SAB system might have been the result of (among other reasons) the lack of critical approaches to the creation of a new classification system and the lack of discussion of possible alternatives (Bauer 2010).

In Sweden, analyses of the implementation of the DDC in individual libraries consist almost exclusively of master's theses. A number of similar studies have been conducted that analyze different public and university libraries. The majority of them use interviews as a method, although Andersson and Sidenholm (2018) also incorporate observation studies. I will summarize those studies in order to present a context for this study.

The first analysis of a library that converted from the SAB system to the DDC was carried out by Sassa Persson (2011) and focuses on the Umeå University Library. It studies the planning of the reclassification, shelf arrangement, as well as the changes in the catalog and the physical space. The study is based on interviews with librarians as well as an analysis of maps of the library in order to track the physical changes. The reclassification at the Umeå University Library was motivated by the same reasoning that appeared in the reports from the National Library and the Swedish Library Association. The library reasoned that since the National Library itself decided to start using the DDC, and the majority of Swedish literature is classified by the National Library, there was no reason to keep using another system, especially one that would no longer be updated. The study identifies many difficulties that came up during the reclassification, but the informants agree that the advantages of using the DDC outweigh the disadvantages and the difficulties that the transition period entails. The Umeå University Library officially started its reclassification in 2011, and all new literature from then on was to be classified according to the DDC and placed separately, splitting the collection. As the study was conducted very early in the process and before the library started classifying new books according to the DDC, there was no possibility of studying the consequences of the reclassification.

A large study from 2012, written by Einar Ehn, analyzes a wide range of Swedish university and special libraries, using interviews as a method. One of the libraries included is the Libraries of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology, which is also the subject of this study. Ehn's thesis focuses on shelving solutions and browsable collections through the lens of the switch to the DDC, looking at the problems that appeared during the process and the different solutions used by the libraries. Ehn also discusses the differences between the two systems and various reports from the National Library on the DDC. One of the research questions in the study aims to explore the reasons for reclassifying among the various libraries,

and the findings report that the drawbacks of the SAB system were a stronger motivation for converting than the possible advantages of the DDC (Ehn 2012).

In a thesis from 2012, Lina Wersäll conducts a similar study to this one, analyzing the attitudes towards the change to the DDC of six librarians at the Uppsala University Library. One of the faculty libraries studied is the Karin Boye Library, which has a similar profile to the HT Libraries. A difference between the two situations is that in Uppsala, the decision to change systems was a central one, and the faculty libraries at the university were not able to make individual decisions about switching to the DDC (Wersäll 2012). In Lund, however, every library in the university library network was able to make that decision separately, which could have influenced the librarians' opinions on the change. One of the conclusions in Wersäll's study is that the DDC would continue spreading through libraries in Sweden and around the world, which has proven to be true eleven years later.

Britta Renman (2015) analyzes the conversion from the SAB to the DDC and its effect on two university libraries and one public library. The objects of the study are the Malmö University Library, the Malmö City Library, and the LUX Library at the University of Lund, which is also included in this study. Renman conducts interviews with librarians and analyzes them through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis. Through the interviews she studies the effects of reclassification not only on the librarians, but also the patrons, similar to this study. Renman, however, expands the analysis to also include the effects on the wider society. The study shines a light on topics previously discussed in other theses, such as the dissonance in the grouping of subjects between the SAB and Dewey, which has a negative effect on the practice of browsing. It also discusses the problems stemming from the DDC's cultural bias, where the organization or placement of certain subjects clashes with the Swedish worldview (Renman 2015).

Renman touches on elements of classification theory, looking at classification systems not only as tools for libraries to organize their collections, but also as a reflection of societal values and traditions. Through this, she asks questions about the issue of power that exists within classification systems and concludes that librarians have a lot of power when it comes to sharing knowledge and making it available, through the way they organize their library's collections (Renman 2015). This can be traced back to the research of Hope A. Olson on bias that was mentioned above, and which Renman also discusses.

There have been a number of other studies on public libraries in Sweden that chose to change from the SAB to the DDC. As they focus on public libraries instead of research libraries, they are not as relevant to this study as the aforementioned ones, but they still contribute to the small pool of similar analyses and are therefore relevant in a broader context. As Boukhchana points out, even though the internationality of Dewey is not as big an advantage at public libraries compared to research libraries, public libraries are still influenced by the spread of the DDC, as they are part of a “wider social globalization process” (Boukhchana 2014, p. 48).

In a thesis from 2014, Necim Boukhchana analyzes the Sigtuna public library, focusing, similarly to this study, on why the library decided to reclassify and how the process was carried out. He also studies the problems that arose during the organization of shelving. The study bases its theoretical framework on a pragmatic perspective on Knowledge Organization, which looks at the contexts within which classification systems are used. The results show that there are benefits to changing to the DDC even for public libraries, although the structure of the system creates significant problems in terms of shelf organization that are particularly visible at this type of libraries, due to the large amount of fiction in their collections (Boukhchana 2014). This problem was also observed by this study, as fiction is a significant portion of the material at the SOL Library, which is discussed later in the Analysis.

In his thesis, Mikael Törner (2016) conducts an analysis of the Malmö City Library, which at the time was the largest public library in Sweden to change classification systems, and the first library in the region of Skåne to do so. The study focuses on the way reclassification impacts the practice of the professional librarian, using the theory of social practice and classification theory. Törner finds that the change from one classification system to another mostly impacts the librarians, while there is little to no impact on patrons and other library users, an insight that appears in the majority of such analyses, including Renman and Boukhchana, and seems to be the general consensus. An interesting conclusion from Törner was that in Malmö, the internationality argument for the DDC was a strong one, due to Malmö’s multiculturalism (Törner 2016).

Another study with the Malmö Public Library in focus was written by Adam Andersson and Philip Sidenholm in 2018. They use a similar theoretical framework to this study, basing it on Bowker and Star’s notion of classification systems as infrastructures. Those infrastructures are essentially invisible to library

users, as long as they get their needs met. Andersson and Sidenholm's methodology differs slightly from this study, as apart from interviews, they also use observations, as mentioned before, and incorporate some quantitative methods into the study. They describe in depth the modifications to the DDC that the library has made in order to accommodate its collections, and they theorize that such modifications can be used as a method to compensate for the ethical flaws in the DDC. They share Boukhchana's and Törner's view that public libraries have a lot to gain by switching to Dewey (Andersson & Sidenholm 2018).

Most of the theses written so far were conducted not long after the chosen libraries started their reclassification. As the library analyzed in this study has been working with the DDC for over ten years and only a small part of the collections is yet to be reclassified, this study has an opportunity to look deeper into the more long-term consequences and impact of switching to Dewey. It can also study the librarians' opinions after some years have passed and some hindsight might have been gained.

4. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study, based on infrastructure theory and elements of classification theory, drawing from the works of Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star. This theory was chosen as it can provide a context for analyzing reclassification. It emphasizes not only the complexity of classification systems as such, but also their ethical aspects and the consequences they can have on different social groups, which can be connected to the democratic mission of libraries (Andersson & Sidenholm 2018). This chapter focuses on those aspects of infrastructure theory that are relevant for this study.

4.1. Infrastructure theory

According to Bowker and Star, infrastructures are the scaffolding for the structures in society that we interact with daily, such as roads or water supply systems, but also more abstract systems that are part of the information environment. Infrastructures are usually invisible and taken for granted. Their goal is to make things and systems work, and the better something works, the harder it is to see the underlying infrastructure (Bowker & Star 1996).

An infrastructure is always dependent on those who create and maintain it, and what an infrastructure is varies on the person and situation. Creating an infrastructure cannot therefore be a neutral process, as it is impacted by the ethical, political, and moral choices of its creators. Infrastructures are often created in a way to meet the needs of a certain group and might not function for another group, and create problems and barriers (Bowker & Star 2006).

4.1.1. Classification system as infrastructures

According to Miguel Benito, classification can be defined as “dividing in classes of things and phenomena according to a principle of division” (Benito 1993, p. 56). The most common principle, which is based on things with homogenous characteristics, is similarity. This kind of classification is the basis for all human thinking. As Bowker and Star (1999) write, organizing, sorting, and classifying things lies in human nature and is so intrinsic to the human experience that it becomes something we do not notice in our daily lives. In this way, Bowker and Star (1999) describe standards and classifications as analogous to infrastructures,

in that they are mostly invisible and become visible only when they break down. They claim that humans are ignorant of the “social and moral order created by these invisible, potent entities” (Bowker & Star 1999, p. 3). The most invisible categories are the ones that are created *ad hoc* in our everyday lives, and are seamlessly intertwined with other, more formal and technical categories. This means that it is difficult to change classification systems, and Bowker and Star (2000) claim that classification systems display therefore the same kind of *inertia* as infrastructures, a concept that explains how deeply infrastructures embed themselves in other structures, and are therefore difficult to change. This concept is explained in more detail in the next section.

According to infrastructure theory, classification systems are viewed as organizational tools which reflect societal values and our way of looking at the world. Classification is a “spatial, temporal, or spatiotemporal segmentation of the world” (Bowker & Star 1999, p. 10). An “ideal” classification system is characterized by three properties: it has consistent and unique principles, its categories are mutually exclusive, and the whole system is complete. Bowker and Star point out, however, that it is virtually impossible for a real-world classification system to fulfill all three requirements. This is visible, for example, in libraries, where there often is a need to adapt the system to the library’s local needs.

In libraries, the objective with classification systems is to categorize and classify knowledge in order to make it searchable and accessible for library patrons. A classification also influences the way books are organized on shelves and the placement of shelves themselves, to make it easier for patrons to find books related to each other, and those within the same topic or discipline. Classification systems organize knowledge so that the relations between different subjects are visible and presented in a logical way (Rubin 2004).

This study looks at classification systems as interconnected and dependent on the social circumstances and the context they were created in. A classification system cannot exist independently, and it can never be neutral. All classifications amplify some point of view and silence another. To be able to fully understand and analyze them, it is necessary to also look at all the social, political, and institutional factors around their creation, as change is only possible if users are conscious of the political and social aspects of the classifications systems they use (Bowker & Star 1999).

4.1.2. Characteristics of infrastructure

Star and Ruhleder (1996, p. 113) developed a list of traits that characterize infrastructure, and therefore can also be applied to describe classification systems:

1. Infrastructures are **embedded** into other structures, meaning that they do not exist alone, and are always built into and onto already existing arrangements.
2. They are **transparent** to use, in the sense that they can support tasks without having to be reassembled or reinvented with each new task.
3. Infrastructures also have a **wide scope**, both spatial and temporal, meaning that they reach “beyond a single event or one-site practice” (ibid., p. 113).
4. They are also **learned as part of membership**, which means that outsiders first have to learn how they function and familiarize themselves with their workings before they can use them.
5. Infrastructures are **linked to conventions of practice**, as in they have a reciprocal relationship with communities of practice—they both shape them and are shaped by them.
6. They are an **embodiment of standards**, they “[take] on transparency by plugging into other infrastructures and tools in a standardized fashion” (ibid.).
7. Infrastructures are **built on an installed base**, meaning that they are not created in a vacuum and inherit the strengths and weaknesses of the base they are built onto.
8. They become **visible upon breakdown**, which, as already mentioned before, means that they are virtually invisible to the end user, who only notices them when they stop functioning.
9. Finally, as they are large and complex, they are **fixed in modular increments**, adapted locally on different levels. Modifications come slowly and take time to implement.

Along with the characteristics of infrastructures, Star and Ruhleder (1996) introduce the concept of *inertia*, which is connected to the notions of embeddedness and the installed base. It means that a new infrastructure is rooted

in already existing structures, which makes it difficult to establish. This concept will be central in this study, as the aim is to observe how the inertia influences the change from one classification system to another.

Another important phenomenon in infrastructure theory is the *tension* that appears when infrastructures expand and spread to different groups and locations. They evolve and adapt themselves to the needs of the new groups, which then creates tension between the standard and the local practices (Bowker and Star 2006).

Through analyzing these characteristics and phenomena, it can be stated that for a library, switching from one classification system to another is essentially rebuilding one of the interconnected infrastructures on which the library is built. This means that reclassification is a difficult task to carry out and has the potential to impact other areas of the library as well. This study aims to analyze such a conversion through the lens of infrastructure theory and its concepts, identifying the difficulties that might have appeared during reclassification. The characteristics of infrastructures are applied to the context of this study in the analysis.

4.1.3. Boundary objects

The aforementioned tension that builds up between the standard and the local practices is virtually unavoidable, and there are different ways of dealing with it. One of those strategies is based on the concept of *boundary objects*. Bowker and Star define boundary objects as “objects that both inhabit several communities of practice *and* satisfy the informational requirements of each of them” (1999, p. 16), which can be seen as such ways of organizing that develop when the practical reality of a group, the way it actually does things, does not exactly match the standards. Communities of practice are defined here as collections of relations between members of both formal and informal groups.

Boundary objects are organic, they develop over time on the category boundaries between groups of actors with differing points of view, making it possible for those groups to cooperate without having to agree about everything. As Bowker and Star write, boundary objects are therefore:

... both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use and become strongly structured in individual-site use. These objects may be abstract or concrete.... Such objects have different meanings in different

social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation.

Bowker & Star 1999, p. 297

For an information structure to function, it has to be beneficial to a number of groups simultaneously, and it has to make it possible for the various groups to interact with the information system and get the information they need. In short, boundary objects help an information structure achieve those goals by easing the tension between diverging points of view.

4.1.4. Infrastructural inversion

Bowker and Star describe the concept of *infrastructural inversion* as “a struggle against the tendency of infrastructure to disappear (except when breaking down)” (1999, p. 34). It implies looking closely at structures that are designed to make themselves inconspicuous and amplifying their social and political consequences. Infrastructural inversion is a tool for analyzing infrastructures and seeing what is not visible at first sight, and Bowker and Star (1999, pp. 37–46) present four methodological themes to apply it. These themes are applied to the results of this study alongside the characteristics of infrastructures.

1. The **ubiquity** of classifying and standardizing. No standard or classification exists alone, they are everywhere and they are all intertwined, working together and influencing each other, interdependent on each other. Here, what remains unclassified, the so-called *residual categories*, are also important to study.
2. **Materiality and texture**. Classifications and standards are both material and symbolic, “they are built into and embedded in every feature of the built environment” (ibid., p. 39).
3. The **indeterminacy of the past**, which means that the past is not static, we are always looking at it through the lens of the present and what we know now, using our current classifications and standards to interpret it. The goal is to recover the multiple voices of the past and understand the construction of narratives.
4. The **practical politics**, which imply focusing on the design of categories and standards, and the way that design impacts different social groups and reflects the values of those who created the categories.

5. Methodology and material

In this chapter, I present the methodology and material used in this study. I explain my choice of methods and how the material was gathered, as well as discuss the ethical aspects of the study.

5.1. Methodology

I chose a qualitative method to conduct this study. It was judged the most appropriate considering the research questions, as the goal was to analyze librarians' personal opinions and experiences, and there was no need to gather quantitative data.

5.1.1. Semi-structured interviews

The interview method was chosen because it was deemed to be the most suitable for the purpose of the study. All of the previous studies with a similar aim, to analyze a particular library who changed from the SAB to the DDC, use interviews as their method, although some even incorporate other methods, such as observations or document analysis. Interviews were also judged as the most suitable method due to the research questions because they focus on the actual consequences of reclassification from the librarians' perspective, and whether the advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the National Library have been observed.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the possibility of asking follow-up questions, as I wanted the interviews to be of less formal nature. In terms of the number of interview subjects, Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist and Göran Ahrne (2011) mention the concept of "saturation" (*mättnad*) which means the specific number of subjects that is enough to obtain the data to answer the research questions in a satisfactory manner. The size of the study and the available resources were analyzed, and it was decided that the study would interview 6 subjects working at the library in order to achieve saturation. I wanted to get a wider perspective on the subject matter, therefore I decided to interview a range of positions: librarians working the information desk, catalogers, and management responsible for overseeing the reclassification.

5.1.1. Case study

I decided to conduct a case study and focus only on one library to analyze. This approach was chosen because I found the particular circumstances and structure of the HT Libraries interesting to study. It is not a typical humanities library, as it is composed of three separate libraries that constitute one institution. Neither the process of switching from the SAB to the DDC was typical, due to the fact that the initial stages of the reclassification were simultaneous with a separate project of merging five faculty libraries into one (LUX) and moving the collections to a new building.

While it could be argued that a case study might not be well suited for a research study due to the difficulty to generalize and summarize knowledge from an individual case, here I would like to cite the arguments of Flyvbjerg, who writes:

When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied.

Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 229

The character of the HT Libraries makes this study different from the analyses described earlier in the literature review, and using Flyvbjerg's reasoning, can therefore show the process from a different perspective and widen the context of the existing research. As a case with some atypical characteristics, this study can showcase a different side of the reclassification process.

5.2. Material

The data for this study consists of semi-structured interviews with librarians at the Libraries of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology. The research questions and the aim of the study were analyzed, and an interview guide was created (see Appendix 1, translated from Swedish), basing the questions on different themes of interest and the National Library report. The goal of the interview guide was to serve as a starting point for discussion and interviewees were able to elaborate on topics and issues not included in the questions, and there was also a possibility for me to ask additional questions.

The library manager was first contacted and asked for permission to conduct interviews with librarians. I was given contact details to the person named “the

Dewey expert” at the library. With them, I discussed what kind of people I was interested in interviewing for the study and was then referred to a number of people that I could contact for an interview, and all of them ended up being included in the study.

There are 6 interview subjects. Five of them are librarians who divide their work in varying degrees between the SOL Library and the LUX Library, most of them are also subject librarians and work with cataloging and teaching in varying degrees. Not all of them are involved in cataloging and classifying books, but all of them have been involved in the reclassification project in one way or another. Three of the six informants work primarily with cataloging and work with the DDC daily as part of their responsibilities. One does not work with cataloging at all but has a basic knowledge of Dewey and was chosen as an interview subject in order to find out how the reclassification and its effects look from the perspective of a member of staff that is not directly involved in cataloging. One of the interviewees is the library manager and was chosen to be interviewed in order to get a more general, administrative perspective on the reclassification and to be able to reach insights not available through talking to other staff.

The interviews were conducted between the 6 and the 31 of March 2023. They lasted on average around 30 minutes, with the exception of one that was significantly shorter and took 20 minutes (Informant 3), and one that lasted over 50 minutes (Informant 5). The variation in length was the result of the number of follow-up questions I asked, how concrete the subjects were in their answers, as well as how fast they spoke. In total, there was circa 200 minutes of recorded material to be analyzed. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and the relevant quotes were translated into English.

The coding process started already during the transcription, as I was able to identify the basic themes that appeared in the interviews due to the questions that were asked. After re-reading the transcriptions, I was also able to identify some subjects that were not included in the interview questions. The coding was not final, however, as during the process of writing, some quotes were moved to different, more suitable sections.

5.3. Ethics

As interviews can be a delicate subject, I tried to ensure that the informants were comfortable with being interviewed and had no objection for the conversation to be recorded and later transcribed, as well as translated to English. A short document was prepared where interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interview, what would be done with the recording, and that the recording files would be destroyed after three months or once the study has been completed. They were provided with contact details to the student as well as the thesis supervisor. The interviewees were asked to sign the document before the interview was conducted. The document was signed in two copies, one for the interviewee and one for the interviewer, although not all of the subjects wanted to keep their copy of the document.

The conversations were anonymized, and the subjects' name or personal data do not appear in the thesis, as they are not relevant to the results of the study. In the previous section of this chapter, I have chosen not to mention which subjects occupy which positions at the library, in order to minimize the risk of them being identified.

The last ethical aspect I would like to mention is the translation from Swedish to English. As much as I have tried to translate the interviews as faithfully as possible, there is a possibility that some parts of the informants' answers have gotten lost in translation.

6. Results

In this chapter, I present the results of the study. First, I briefly introduce the practical information about the process of the HT Libraries switching from the SAB to the DDC, in order to provide context for the results. Afterwards, I present the key themes identified during the coding of the interviews, that later are the basis for the structure of the rest of the chapter.

6.1. Reclassification at the HT Libraries

The actual process of reclassification from the SAB to the DDC began in 2012, when librarians at all the individual libraries that were to become LUX were going through their respective collections. The deadline was 2014, which was when the libraries were to merge and move into the new building. There were five faculty libraries at the departments of: Archeology, Cultural Studies, History, Philosophy, and Theology and Religion. Each of these libraries used their own classification and shelving systems, for example the Philosophy Library used a variant of Plain Text (*Klartext*). Some of the libraries used the SAB system; other systems were used as well.

After the move and reclassification was finished at the LUX Library in 2018, the conversion began at the SOL Library. There, the project was temporarily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The conversion is only now coming to an end, with the only undone part of the collections being the reference collection at the SOL Library. The project is predicted to be finished in the spring of 2023.

6.2. Key themes

During the analysis of the interviews, I identified four key themes that came up in the conversations. As mentioned before, some of those stemmed from the interview questions, while others were the result of follow-up questions and additional information from the interviewees. The presentation of the results will be divided into the following themes:

1. The differences between the SAB system and the DDC
2. Documentation

3. Effects on librarians' work, the physical space, and patrons
4. The National Library report:
 - a. The DDC's advantages: internationality, saving time and resources, knowledge sharing
 - b. The DDC's disadvantages: high costs, modifications, problematic transition period, cultural bias

6.3. The differences between the SAB system and the DDC

Informant 1 noted that the DDC can get complicated, and even though they proclaimed themselves to be “indoctrinated in Dewey,” they did also comment on the lengthy codes, saying, “You would think it is a little bit excessive to build a code with 27 digits.”

A big difference between the two systems is that the SAB uses predominantly letters in its codes (although numbers also appear, as well as different punctuation marks, such as parentheses or colons), while the DDC is solely number based. There are different opinions on which is better (both for librarians and patrons). All the way back in 1915 when the first discussions on classification systems in Sweden took place, Alvida Sandberg wrote, “Arabic numbers are incomparably easier to work with than letter combinations and do not lead to confusion and mistakes” (Sandberg 1915, p. 49).

Informant 2 was adamant that there was “no logic” in the SAB system and in their opinion, the number-based approach is clearer, though they did concede that the numbers are easy to mix up, which often ends up in books being misplaced.

Informant 1 said that it is “a little difficult” to classify with Dewey, and sometimes you have to “think a little harder,” but there is a lot of support and resources available.

Informant 5 said that now that there are so many resources available, librarians do not have as much knowledge of the DDC as they had with the SAB. They also mentioned that when they are classifying international books, a lot more information is “served” to them, although not everything. It becomes complicated when they have to classify Swedish material, as they have to do everything themselves.

Both Informant 1 and 5 think that translating from the SAB to the DDC is not easy, especially with some subject areas.

6.4. Documentation

One of the interview questions dealt with the documentation that regulated the reclassification: what kind of documents they were and how closely they have been followed. According to the informants, there have not been many official documents, although there have been many Excel lists, and a lot of memorandums from meetings. Informant 6 stated that in hindsight, it would have been better with more official documents to ensure that everyone interpreted the rules the same way, although they mentioned that has to do more with the process of weeding the collections before the move than with the *Deweyfying*³ itself.

The most important document was the Dewey List developed by the catalogers, a shared document where such exceptions are listed. According to Informant 1, some libraries while converting choose to use the complete classification as the base for shelf arrangement, whereas the HT Libraries chose to use a fixed shelf arrangement list, which was a shortened version of DDC classes. It was a long process to create a list that was relevant and could be applied at all of the libraries. Informant 3 stated that the Dewey List is revised and changed on a regular basis as the DDC develops and new ways to organize subjects are found.

There were also manuals on how to find DDC codes for those librarians who do not work with cataloging on a daily basis, as a lot of the material did not have DDC codes in the catalog.

6.5. Effects on librarians' work, the physical space, and the library's patrons

6.5.1. Librarians' work

Before the move to the LUX building, there were about 20 employees at the library, and almost everyone worked with the conversions. There was a lot of time pressure, and the librarians, including the student assistants, tried to help with reclassifying whenever they were not working with other duties.

³ *Deweyfying*, (in Swedish *deweyfiera*), is the name the librarians at the HT Libraries came up with to refer to the process of reclassifying the collections from the SAB system to the DDC.

According to Informant 5, at first the library considered the SAB as the end goal, but in the end, it was decided that the DDC would be more suitable, as it was already then known that the National Library was planning to reclassify. As soon as they found out about it, they tried to learn as much as they could about the system.

At the time, the HT Libraries were not the only faculty library at Lund University that was beginning their switch to the DDC. There were some training opportunities for the whole Lund University Library network, although according to the informants, they were very basic. Apart from that there was no cooperation with other faculty libraries, as each one adapted the shelving system to their own individual needs.

During the transition period, the library has been forced to operate with two classification systems simultaneously, which has been problematic both for librarians and patrons. When asked about the experience of working with two different systems at the same time, Informant 5 said:

There is a lot of shifting.⁴ A lot of what used to be in different subjects ended up in 300 [Social sciences]. 300 and 900 [History and geography] are the two big sections in the humanities, where it [all] ends up. So you have to make adjustments all the time, in how you place everything—if you start with the Dewey section, you take an x number of shelf meters and go through it—there is a lot of shifting all the time, and that is quite physical, it is a physical challenge.

Informant 5

Informant 6 also mentioned the physical and emotional toll of the process:

It gets a little messy. When you have big collections, it takes time to do this, and that means that you have [a split collection] and you have to do [a lot of] shifting and it is not something you can do in one go, but you have to do it in a number of stages. It is messy both for users and the staff to keep track of things. And it can get quite bleak when you are *Deweyfying* year after year and you still have a whole floor left. We got to eat cake on some occasions, when we had done H or so [laughter].

Informant 6

The entire process of reclassifying books from the SAB to the DDC has been carried out manually. There is a function in the Libris database that translates SAB codes to the DDC, but it was deemed not sufficiently good, therefore it was decided that no mechanical solutions would be used. According to Informant 5, doing it manually is more time-consuming but results in better quality codes. The

⁴ Shifting means “to redistribute space to areas of shelving that are in need of it” (University of Florida 2023), as in measuring the space needed on shelves and physically moving the items.

catalogers have had other resources to use when classifying books, for example the OCLC's database called Classify, where they can check if a book has already been classified by another library. As Informant 5 said, they can use the code, but they do not have to, as they do not always agree, especially when it comes to Swedish material.

Informant 5 stated that from the beginning the plan was to keep the structure as close to the original DDC as possible, with as few exceptions as possible, as it is difficult to keep a system functioning if it is not as close to the basic structure as possible. There were some exceptions with some special collections, but those cases were clearly documented in the Dewey List.

There was also an issue in terms of the amount of material to be moved. According to Informant 5, there had been a lot of researchers who had had books in their offices for ten, fifteen years, therefore all of a sudden there was a lot more extra material than expected. All of the material that was not ready before the move had to be put into boxes and put away. According to Informant 5, it was only recently [2023] that the reclassification of all that material was finished.

The informants' answers show that they absorbed a lot of knowledge about the workings of the DDC during the process (knowledge that was not part of the official education provided by the libraries for their employees). This is visible especially in the answers of the informant who is not a cataloger but still shows a more than basic knowledge of the system. Discussing the start of the reclassification at the SOL Library, they said, "We had already learned a lot from the LUX journey, and we had basic knowledge in the DDC." Although, in the words of Informant 5, they are "still in a transition phase. Because it is complicated to create codes."

6.5.2. The physical space

According to Informant 1 and Informant 3, due to the specialized profile of the SOL Library (language and literature), the physical location of books has not changed much. Some books have been moved around, but the original shelf arrangement was satisfying enough for the needs of the library that it has been decided for it to mostly stay as it was. Informant 1 remarked that they think that the marking of the shelves they have done is clear for the users. Comparing the circumstances at the two libraries, Informant 3 said:

Here, at SOL, the books are standing where they were.... It is still more logical, and we have quite a lot more space compared to LUX for example, so it has gone relatively well and the placement is logical, even if the notation is now broken up between shelves. But at LUX we have had to consider placing the classes based on how much space they take up. So we have 100, followed by 200 and 300, followed by 900. So SOL has slightly better circumstances to actually put them in order.

Informant 3

Informant 5 agreed that the arrangement of books at LUX is not ideal and can be confusing, but they explained why they were forced to arrange the books this way:

At LUX it is a little unclear, it does not follow the number order ... which is very complicated. But it would not have been possible [to put the shelves in order], because then we would have to break apart entire sub-collections between different floors, and that is not optimal either.

Informant 5

The situation was also commented by Informant 2, who expressed their disappointment with the straying away from the order of Dewey:

It is very much possible that it is something that we will have to change in the end—I think it is such a shame, when you have a logical, number-based system, it should be logical when you walk into the library as well.

Informant 2

While discussing the physical space and the shelf arrangement, Informant 6 summed up the situation by saying, “No matter how you do it, there are problems, and there are advantages.”

6.5.3. Patrons

According to the informants, the reclassification has not had a strong impact on the patrons. Some of them did mention that at the beginning of the process, there had been some questions about the location of certain books, but the patrons seem to have gotten used to the new shelving system rather quickly. Informant 1 said that the switch “has not impacted the patrons too much,” although they did have to rethink the way they use the library.

The groups that have been impacted the most have been researchers and teachers, because they tend to have their “usual” shelves, and the change of the classification system might have caused that their subjects ended up somewhere else or were divided up into smaller sections. Informant 2 also mentioned teachers

and researchers and said that there had been some irritation among them, and it was impossible to find a solution to that problem.

Almost all of the informants could recall stories from the beginning of the transition period, when the new system appeared on the shelves, and patrons started noticing it. Some of them got confused and upset, and the librarians received a lot of feedback from them at that time. Informant 3 pointed out, however, that the feedback can sometimes be of use:

I remember a researcher at [one of the old faculty libraries] that got very upset when they ended up at a spot that did not feel right for that person at all, “Why am I standing here, this is not the kind of research I do.” ... There have also been a few situations where [a patron] was like, “Wait, this book is placed incorrectly.” Sometimes they are right, and then we have to change it. And that is due to the fact that there are many of us here who have been doing this, and not everybody is a cataloger, and maybe not as knowledgeable about the subject they were *Deweyfying*. So there have surely been some mistakes.

Informant 3

Similarly, Informant 3 remembered some complaints from patrons about the difficulty of finding biographies with the new system, which led to modifications to the way biographies are organized, which are described later.

It is difficult to determine exactly the patrons’ attitude towards the shelving system and whether they find it easy to use and find what they need. Both Informant 2 and Informant 4 pointed out that it is impossible to know exactly how many patrons who cannot find a book choose not to ask a librarian for help and leave the library. Informant 2 remarked that it is usually those who look for textbooks that tend to be in more of a hurry, and therefore ask for assistance. Informant 4 also commented on the confusion that the switch to the DDC caused in patrons:

Researchers, for example, who have been writing books and all those years, [the books] had been standing on a certain shelf together with many other books on a certain topic, and suddenly they discover that, now my book is not Theology anymore, now it is Social Sciences, it has been moved from 200 to 300. It was very tricky for many at the beginning, it is a challenge, of course. But I think that now, after a few years, the majority are rather—we do not really notice that type of upset anymore, I think.... Absolutely, sometimes researchers come and wonder, why is this book here? But I do not experience that so often now.

Informant 4

Discussing how having two systems at the library impacts the patrons, Informant 4 said:

It is impossible to say how many have gone out of here empty-handed and did not dare to ask, but we have really tried to get people to understand that they should come and ask questions

and ask for help, but in the end, you cannot control that. You can put up signs and you can try to inform as well as possible. Those that plan their visit in advance look up the book in the catalog, and then you can trust what the catalog says, the next challenge is to find that shelf. But theoretically, it has worked well, and I think that the majority of the patrons [that are used to using the library] have succeeded in finding what they wanted.

Informant 4

Informant 4 was critical of the situation with a split collections and using two classification systems at the same time, bringing up *browsing*, a concept which implies that the way books are arranged on shelves encourages library users to look at other books about their subject, and makes it possible to find something new that they were not looking for:

It is clear that it is not good for users. The whole point with both the SAB and Dewey, it is to go to a shelf and browse a little, and during [the transition period] you maybe take that away, that those that were used to going to a certain SAB shelf and getting an overview of the subject were suddenly unable to do it the same way.

Informant 4

Informant 6 commented on the long-term patrons of the library, saying that they “naturally have to learn that they have to go to a different floor or a different corner, and that can be quite deep-seated.” They did agree that those situations happened only at first, saying, “Later it just disappeared, they got used to it.” They also mentioned that they had gotten some positive comments from patrons who said that thanks to the new shelf arrangement they had found new books.

Informant 1 noticed that even though they themselves grew up with the alphabet being predominant (not just in libraries), the younger generation seems to be more proficient in numbers and the alphabet is not as obvious to them, and the numerical hierarchy seems to be easier to understand. Informant 3 shared an anecdote about students looking for the K shelf, and having to show them its location, as the students did not realize it was under the “J–L” sign. Comparing how the SAB and Dewey differ in how the patrons understand and use them, they remarked:

It is more or less the same thing with both the SAB and Dewey, you do not understand what these letters and numbers stand for, and you do not really get where they are placed. But now when it comes only to numbers, it feels easier to explain pedagogically ... because people seem to understand numbers better than the alphabet.

Informant 3

Similarly, Informant 2 said that patrons may “understand how [Dewey] works more quickly, but it is easy for mistakes to happen and difficult to find [books].” They said:

There is a lot of looking for requested books or people who say, “I can’t find the book on the shelf.” There is a risk, it is easy to mix up the numbers, that makes it more difficult. It does not happen so often that it is a catastrophe, but we don’t really know.... In the mornings when I open the library, I get a number of requests and I go look for them, often there is a book I can’t find immediately, and the first thing I do is I look if it had been put on a shelf with a similar number.

Informant 2

Not all patrons, however, were impacted negatively by the reclassification. Many of the informants talked about the large number of international students and researchers at the university for whom Dewey is familiar and therefore can browse the shelves more freely. Informant 4 said:

I think that a lot of researchers, for example, are used [to the DDC], they move in an international sphere and have international colleagues and travel abroad, so I think that maybe they have no problems understanding Dewey, or they can understand why a book can end up on one shelf and not another one.

Informant 4

There are also those who do not really notice the change at all. Informant 4 admitted that they “do not know how many people examine classification in depth” and instead just look up a book in the library catalog, and as Informant 1 said, the patrons “just read that they have to go to a certain shelf” and do not contemplate the accompanying codes.

6.6. The National Library report

6.6.1. The DDC’s advantages

Advantage 1: The international status of the system

All of the informants agreed that the international aspect of the DDC is its biggest advantage and was the primary reason for why it was chosen over other classification systems. The international status of Dewey means that there are external actors who maintain the system, and there are clear rules on how to classify using the DDC, as well as resources to help with classifying.

Informant 2 said that it is clear that there is continuous work on the system, and it is always developing and receiving updates. Informant 3 agreed, adding that there are resources to create good catalog entries. Informant 4 also said that it is clear that “things are happening,” but it does not really influence the librarians’ daily work. They added that while ordering new books, the DDC codes are usually already provided, and though the existing codes are not always used, they help in finding the right code.

Another argument mentioned by both Informants 4 and 6 was that there are a lot of international students at the university, and, as mentioned before, many of them are used to Dewey as it is used in their home countries. That makes it easier for them to use the library, as the system is familiar to them.

One of the informants is part of a reference group for the DDC in Sweden and therefore acts as a link between the library and the external actors, and makes it possible for the library to send suggestions about modifications to the system. Informant 5, however, is of the opinion that they actually do not have that much influence on the development of the DDC, as Sweden is a very small actor, and it is difficult to influence change.

Advantage 2: Saving time and resources on classification work

One of the most important advantages of converting to the DDC stressed by both the National Library and the Swedish Library Association was that using an international system would make it possible to rationalize classification work, saving resources, as less time would be spent classifying books.

Informant 1 agrees that they do less classification work overall, but mentions that it might actually take more time to classify with the new system:

We get a lot of classifications from outside, so we mostly have to classify Swedish material, and we are usually not the first ones to receive a book. So it actually is not that often that we classify books. That is absolutely an advantage.... Before, all the material we received, we had to classify it with the SAB, so we absolutely do a little less now, but it may take a little more time when we have to do it, because it is such a big system, and sometimes it is hard to find the right place.

Informant 1

Informant 2 said that sometimes the process is obvious, but it can be a lot of work to classify with Dewey, as they do not always agree with the codes assigned by other libraries, and there is a lot of discussion between the catalogers about which

codes to use. They do still think that it is “fantastic” that less time is spent cataloging.

Informant 5 had a contradicting opinion, stating that:

In a lot of ways, Dewey requires more, it takes more time to learn and is incredibly more complicated if you want to do it right. There are so many steps where you can make a mistake. You have to study it in a completely different way to do it right. So actually, it is a lot more time-consuming if nobody has done the work before.

Informant 5

Informant 6 also said that there is no more rationalizing compared to the SAB. They mentioned that there is a larger problem on the national level, that there is no agreement in terms of how deep the classifying should go, how long the DDC codes should be, as there are differences in how different libraries work and the codes that they import from the Libris database. They said:

The whole idea with cataloging that we have with the Libris database is that we should be able to work rationally and resource-efficiently, which is hopefully also a positive thing for patrons, different target groups of patrons. But we still have some work to do there.

Informant 6

Informant 5 also mentioned the lack of clear lines in terms of the depth of the codes:

When I make codes myself, I don't think I make them as deep as I could, which is actually wrong. Because you should make them as deep as you can. But well, where do you draw the line?

Informant 5

From outside of the cataloging group, Informant 4 says that from their perspective there is some rationalizing, and they do save time thanks to the entries imported from the Library of Congress. This might mean that those librarians who do not work with cataloging do not have a complete view of what working with the DDC entails.

Advantage 3: Knowledge sharing

The third advantage of the DDC mentioned by the National Library was the possibility of sharing knowledge and spreading Swedish research internationally. Here, the informants did not have a lot to say, and only one of them could see that it would be an advantage “in theory” (Informant 1). The other two who answered this particular question were doubtful as to the importance of the DDC in that

regard, with one of them saying that correct and searchable catalog posts overall were more important (Informant 6), and the other one believing in Open Access⁵ playing a much bigger role than the classification system (Informant 5).

It is, however, important to note that his study was limited in terms of the answers to this particular question due to the background of the informants. In order to be able to analyze the knowledge sharing aspect, interviews would need to be conducted with those who work specifically with Science Communication, as the librarians interviewed in this study were not able to provide enough information to answer this question.

6.6.2. The DDC's disadvantages

Disadvantage 1: High costs of reclassification

The first disadvantage outlined in the National Library report, namely the high costs of switching from one classification system to another, in the case of this particular library is dependent on the broader context. As the library in question is actually three separate libraries, the reclassification was done in three parts. As mentioned before, at the LUX Library, the conversion was combined with moving the library to a new building, as well as merging a number of smaller libraries and their collections into one joint collection. That meant that the cost of reclassification was included in the overall cost of sorting the collections and moving them to the new building, therefore it is not possible to establish how costly the reclassification itself has been.

All informants agreed, however, that the conversion is a costly project, but a necessary one. Some of them mentioned the less obvious costs, such as all of the materials, for example paper and tape.

Disadvantage 2: Modifications

The DDC, as all classification systems, is not perfect and virtually cannot be applied to any collection as it is. Therefore, a lot of modifications have to be done to suit the needs of a particular library, as well as the Swedish context. The way subjects are organized in Dewey varies greatly from the SAB; therefore the

⁵ Open Access is “is a broad international movement that seeks to grant free and open online access to academic information, such as publications and data. A publication is defined 'open access' when there are no financial, legal or technical barriers to accessing it” (Open Access.nl 2023).

librarians have had to come up with ways to adapt the system to suit the HT Libraries and make it as patron-friendly as possible.

The biggest problem is fiction, as in the SAB there is a separate class for it, while the DDC does not separate fiction from Literature Studies. This usually poses a larger problem for public libraries, but as the SOL Library belongs to the Center for Languages and Literature, a big part of their collections is fiction. The librarians have had to come up with their own solutions, though as Informant 2 pointed out, it had to be done with caution, as too many modifications complicate the situation, and it is hard to stay on top of the changes. They said, “You have to be very, very sure that you think this [solution] is right. We were sure that we had to have the fiction separate.” They also pointed out the problem with the hierarchy of languages:

If you have an author from South Africa, it ends up in English-language literature. I think that is quite good, as otherwise it gets so weird. But then there is this completely irrational thing, that American literature has its own class. And I could not understand that—if everything else is sorted into languages, why should English-language literature that is written in the USA have its own [class]? It is really weird that an Indian author who writes in English ends up in English literature but if another person writes in New York they end up in their own [class].

Informant 2

The library decided to solve this problem by completely removing the 810 class, which stands for American literature. Informant 5 joked, “Americans do not get to be so centered.”

Informant 4 also shared their thoughts about how complicated the Literature part of the collections was. As mentioned before, the 800 class in the DDC covers both G (Literature studies) and H (Fiction) in the SAB. As Informant 4 said,

The big thing was Language and Fiction. Language matches the SAB quite well, F [Linguistics] and 400 [Language] match quite well. But the big challenge is what is very different, and that’s the Fiction part.... Fiction is an enormous part of our collection here [at the SOL Library], and there was a lot of, what do we do with fiction, how do we separate it, we can’t have a section called 800 and cram both Fiction and Literature Studies on the same code. As I remember it was a big challenge, to come up with what we were going to do with it. The plus is that [Dewey] is a shelving system as well, so you’re quite free to come up with your own solutions that work locally.

Informant 4

The solution was that fiction was marked both on shelves and in the catalog with “Skönlitt.” (Fiction) and then the code, followed by the author or subject heading. This way, the library created its own “little Dewey model” (Informant 4) to differentiate between Fiction and Literature Studies.

A similar solution was used with biographies. The SAB system has a separate class for biographies (L), and biographies of individual persons are classed under Lz. This kind of solution does not exist in Dewey, as biographies are spread between all of the classes. The library had to find a way to solve this problem and, in a way, create their own codes. Informant 4 described how detailed the process was, deciding how the spine label would look like, how many lines of text there would be, and how long and wide the label would be. According to Informant 5, at the LUX Library it ended up very similar to the way it was structured in the SAB.

An analogous principle has been used in the Arts class. Books on works of one artist are grouped together, regardless of whether they are about architecture, painting, or sculpture. The same solution has been applied to the Music class.

Informant 2 also described a problem with books about music production—there is a Music Production program at Lund University, and the library wanted to place relevant books together with the Music section, but it turned out that in the DDC, music production is classed under Production, which means that books about music production are on the same shelf as, for example, iron production. The informant finds such division hard to understand and acknowledges that there is not much that can be done about it.

Apart from the aforementioned changes, the library has also decided to remove the section *People by gender or sex: Women* (305.4), create a shelf called *Gender* and have all of the relevant material in one place. Informant 3 added that they had also chosen to separate textbooks and methodology books, as well as books for Teaching students, in order to facilitate access to them.

Informant 2 said, however, that such modifications are problematic, as then both librarians and patrons have to know about it, and such modifications have to be documented. Small modifications and exceptions are possible, but too many of them complicates classification work for all catalogers. Informant 2 mentioned the Dewey List where modifications are documented, but there are many catalogers at the library and communication can sometimes fail. This also makes it more difficult in the case where new catalogers are employed, and all such modifications have to be communicated and explained to them.

Another thing that had to be considered was the length of the codes. In some places the material has to be divided in a detailed way, with four or five numbers

after the period (for example 439.7321, which is the code for Swedish-English dictionaries), while in other places the main class alone is enough, or one number after the period. Informant 4 said, “It takes time to come up with a sensible solution, a local solution, but it works with this system, because you can do what needs to be done in this specific spot.”

When asked if the local modifications worked from the beginning or if they had to be adjusted, Informant 5 said that the modifications made things simpler, and easier to understand for patrons. Informant 4 said that it is an ongoing discussion. They still find codes that do not fully work, so they try to find a better solution, whether it is to merge some sections or divide them into smaller ones. As the DDC changes and develops, new sections are added, so adjusting the classification is a continuous process.

In terms of communicating new ideas to the catalogers, there are no regular meetings scheduled, but the suggestions are communicated as they develop, or at the bi-weekly staff meetings. Informant 4 said that even though the regular staff does sometimes come up with solutions, it is usually the catalogers who do it, although it is an ongoing cooperation between all staff.

Informant 5 talked about the shelf arrangement in terms of browsing:

The shelf arrangement should encourage browsing, otherwise we could have taken *numerus currens*⁶ and every new book would get the next number in the series, and we could just put them [on the shelves]. We try to divide it into somewhat simple classes regardless of the system so that it is easy to browse, and it helps patrons find material.... Hopefully, you can find something nearby if you are interested in a particular topic.

Informant 5

Informant 6 said that they tried to avoid making too many modifications, because “at some point you have to pay the price for homemade solutions.” They worked with lists and references but tried to keep that to a minimum. They did, however, change a lot of shelf names, in order to achieve more clarity.

Disadvantage 3: Problematic transition period

Another disadvantage of switching to the DDC is that it involves a troublesome and laborious transition period, as the process has a negative influence both for the staff and the patrons.

⁶ *Numerus currens* means that “books are arranged in order with their inventory accession numbers” (College of Europe Natolin Library 2023).

Informant 1 described that there was a lot of reorganizing of the collections, but it was not chaotic, and they do not think that the process was that problematic. It was, however, troublesome for the staff sometimes to think and work in a new way, and there were a lot of discussions about which shelves were needed to represent the material in the best way.

Informant 2 agreed that the process has meant an enormous amount of work. They had to go through all of the collections and weed⁷ a lot of material. They do think that it was a positive, though, that they had the opportunity to “freshen up” their shelves.

Informant 4 described the process as very physically laborious:

You really have to be aware that it becomes a huge [project]. We are quite a big library, our collections are quite big, so we had a lot of purely physical labor. Picking up each individual book, *Deweyfying* it, putting fresh tape on it, up and down from shelves and trolleys, and all of the logistics, the whole procedure takes an incredible amount of time.

Informant 4

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had consequences for the entire process, as the library was limited in how much they were able to work with the reclassification. As Informant 1 said, there were “some low-intensive periods” during the process. The library tested many ways to work, sometimes there were two people at the information desk and one of them would work on *Deweyfying* the books. They have also had student assistants who worked a lot with labeling books, as well as an assistant who helped with the physical work.

Disadvantage 4: Cultural bias

Many of the informants mentioned that some subjects are difficult to place due to the cultural differences between Sweden and the USA, and the differences in how certain subjects are perceived. Informant 1 mentioned the example of abortion, which in Sweden is not as controversial of a subject as in the USA. They agreed, though, that this problem is present in all classification systems, and it is impossible to create a system that would be completely neutral. The DDC is still very Western-oriented, but it is something that is being worked on and there are frequent changes and modifications to the system.

⁷ Weeding is “the process of regularly removing outdated or irrelevant library resources” (National Library of New Zealand 2023).

7. Analysis

In this chapter I analyze the results of the study through the lens of infrastructure theory, discussing some of the characteristics of infrastructures as described by Star and Ruhleder (1996) and how they relate to the results and the context of classification systems in libraries in general. Some of the characteristics were grouped together as they are related to similar themes. The chapter is divided into the following sections:

1. Inertia and the installed base
2. Embeddedness, ubiquity, and invisibility
3. Learned as part of membership
4. Practical politics and the indeterminacy of the past
5. Boundary objects

7.1. Inertia and the installed base

According to infrastructure theory, infrastructures are built on an installed base, meaning that classification systems often build on each other and are created in order to organize the already existing knowledge. In the context of this study, the installed base is the already existing classification, the SAB system. It carries with it inertia that makes it harder to implement the DDC.

The entire process of converting from the SAB to Dewey at the HT Libraries has taken over a decade, and it is only now that it is in its absolute final stages (the Reference collection at the SOL Library). The time it has taken to carry out the reclassification points to the presence of inertia, how difficult it has been to let go of the old infrastructure, and how deeply rooted it is in the entire organization. The fact that under the entire transition period the library has had to work with two systems simultaneously also points to the inertia of the old infrastructure. Both those things are also an example of another characteristic of infrastructures, namely that they are fixed in modular increments, and cannot be applied in their entirety all at once. The reclassification was introduced in phases, with the SAB section growing steadily smaller as more shelves were converted into Dewey. The high costs of introducing the new system could also point to the inertia of the SAB.

Another fact that exemplifies the inertia of the old system is that the modifications of the DDC in terms of shelf organization were modeled after the SAB, as that was what both the librarians and patrons were used to and knew best, and the old structure (for example the organization of biographies or separating fiction from works about literature) felt more logical to them. This shows that despite building the new infrastructure, the old one will still be present, and cannot be removed entirely.

Something that was also noticed by Andersson and Sidenholm (2018) is the fact that the knowledge of the staff about the old system becomes obsolete once the new system takes over. The librarians at the HT Libraries had no choice but to learn the new system and familiarize themselves with it. That, in turn, had an impact on patrons, as in the beginning not all of the staff was familiar enough with the new placement of books to be able to smoothly help with patron queries.

The new system already presents some inertia as well, despite still fighting the inertia of the old one. This is visible in how difficult it is for a small actor like Sweden to influence change, pointing to the inertia of the structures and rules established by other actors before Sweden became part of the DDC network.

7.2. Embeddedness, ubiquity, and invisibility

In the context of libraries, embeddedness means that a classification system is fully integrated into the functioning of the library, with its collections being an integral part of the entire institution. The classification system also dictates the way books are arranged on shelves. The way the classification system, in turn, is organized stems from societal values, pointing to a deep interconnectedness between all kinds of different structures.

One of the informants in the study thought that even though there was no actual requirement for libraries to change to the DDC after the National Library's decision, in reality there was no choice but to switch, since there are no benefits of keeping the old classification system while every other library will be using the new one. They said, "As soon as someone follows [the National Library's decision to convert] it is too late, you might as well think about switching at some point in the future, does not matter when, it might as well be gradual, but just do it" (Informant 5). This kind of thinking was also reflected in how the library began discussing the possible reclassification as soon as they heard that the

National Library was planning to switch. As the library is not a separate actor and is part of the entire national network of libraries, keeping up the old system would not only impact the functioning of the library itself, but it would also affect the entire network negatively by making inter-library communication more difficult.

According to the theory, infrastructures are virtually invisible to the end users and only become visible upon breakdown. At the HT Libraries, in the early stages of reclassification, the librarians did receive some comments from patrons. The patrons had been used to the previous classification system; it had blended into the background, and they were not consciously noticing it. They only noticed it once the new system started pushing out the old one, which is when the infrastructure broke down and stopped functioning properly.

As the patrons only receive the finished product, it means that most of the work done with reclassification is invisible for them. It took time for patrons to familiarize themselves with the new system, but it quickly became invisible again and is not something they think about when they are using the library. As the results show, after some time, the patrons got used to the new system and the comments stopped altogether, meaning that the infrastructure embedded itself into the organization even further and started being taken for granted by its users.

As discussed by the informants, the system is not new for some international students, therefore it is already embedded in their surroundings for them the moment they enter the library. They are already familiar with the DDC and thus, the infrastructure stays invisible for them. This shows that infrastructure can be invisible for some groups and visible for others, depending on how well they work for them.

Looking at the results of this study, it can be noticed that the invisibility of the infrastructure also can be challenged on a daily basis, on a much smaller scale. This is illustrated by a situation described by Informant 2, when a library book is misplaced and cannot therefore be located. This is the critical point when the classification system becomes visible for the patrons, although it is important to point out that despite a book being misplaced, the infrastructure does not break down until someone actually starts to look for that particular book. The end products of classification, the shelf arrangement and the marking and placement of books, are in and of themselves visible for the end users. However, when the system functions well, the library patrons take it for granted, and as one of the informants mentioned, probably do not reflect on the structure or functioning of

the classification system. They only use it to meet their needs, as in finding relevant books.

7.3. Learned as part of membership

Since according to the theory, an infrastructure is learned as part of membership, in this study's case this means that librarians have to learn the system in order to understand it and to be able to work with it. As mentioned before, the workings of the DDC are essentially unimportant and inaccessible for the end users, the library patrons. They get to see the finished product, and by using the system they do earn a degree of membership. Otherwise, if the system was completely invisible to them, they would not have noticed the switch. International students, as mentioned before, already know the system when they come into the library, which means that they already have the membership. However, even after familiarizing themselves with the shelf arrangement, the patrons are not aware of the work that goes into organizing and maintaining the system. In theory, outsiders are able to learn the classes and the rules of classifying due to the availability of various resources online, but in order to learn the ins and outs of the DDC and how it works in practice, one has to be a librarian.

Just because one is a librarian, however, does not mean that they automatically know how everything works on the local level. The various modifications that were discussed during the interviews play a role here. Many of the informants pointed out that caution is necessary when modifying a classification system. Even though the Dewey List exists, and the various local changes to the system have been documented, too many modifications can make it difficult for new members to learn the system and become familiarized with it enough so that they start taking it for granted (according to infrastructure theory, once an infrastructure starts being taken for granted, that means it has fully integrated itself and is working correctly). As the informants mentioned, the system is complicated in itself, learning how it works is time-consuming, and it is easy to make mistakes. Introducing modifications only increases the complexity.

An interesting finding is that the informant who is not part of the cataloging group had a more positive view of the transition period and the entire reclassification than the other informants. This points to a third layer of membership which is accessible only to catalogers.

7.4. Practical politics and the indeterminacy of the past

Practical politics discuss the structural design of classification systems. According to the theory, classification systems embody other standards. This means that they are organized and constructed in a similar manner, with classes, categories, and subcategories, which are arranged alphabetically or have numbers ascribed to them. Despite that, some informants have said that the structure is strange or confusing, especially for patrons, which might point to how the system is constructed from a culturally different point of view.

The system reflects the values of the external actors who own and maintain it, in this case the OCLC and the Library of Congress, but also the original creator of the system, Melvil Dewey. As the informants mentioned, when new books are ordered, codes are usually already provided, which is a subtle way for the external actors to communicate their worldview, showing how they regard the topics the books are on, the way they classify them. A plus here is that it is not obligatory to agree with the codes provided with the books and the library can choose to classify a book in a different way. This, however, only impacts the values represented by the system on the local level. There is technically a possibility to communicate suggestions to the system's creators, although as mentioned before, Sweden is a very small actor on the international scale and the informants feel that it does not have much influence in a wider context.

The American bias discussed in the Literature overview is also part of the practical politics. In the original version of the DDC, the USA is clearly prioritized, visible for example in the Language and Literature classes, where the English language and American literature have their own separate classes, while other languages and literatures are grouped together. Smaller languages and cultures end up at the end of the hierarchy, in categories named *Other*. This issue is being worked on according to the informants but is still very much present and visible in the structure of the system.

The theoretical perspective also claims that we look at classification systems through the lens of the present, as in our current worldview and knowledge. This phenomenon is called the indeterminacy of the past. This is visible in the regular updates of the systems, which come along as society evolves, and old perceptions of the world become obsolete.

7.5. Boundary objects

According to infrastructure theory, there is no one solution to counteract the tension between the local and the standard practices, although it is not necessary to try to completely remove that tension. Boundary objects work, however, to ease that tension, and create a bridge between the universal standards and the local modifications, in order for infrastructures to work smoothly.

In the library context, classification systems themselves act as boundary objects, as they are shared between multiple communities (both more locally, and, as with the DDC, even internationally) and enable communication and cooperation between them. A step below, all kinds of modifications to those systems are also boundary objects. On the national level, the system has to be adapted to the Swedish context in order to be able to function in this particular country, while still being communicable to libraries in other countries in order to make the exchange of information possible (a crucial reason for adopting the DDC in Sweden).

Then, on a local level, libraries create their own solutions and modifications to the system to make it work with their particular circumstances, so that they suit their collections and can answer the needs of their patrons. At the HT Libraries, all of the modifications discussed (the biography system, separating fiction from works about literature, separating methodology books and textbooks for easier access, etc.) are boundary objects, easing the tension between the standard and the local practices and making the system work on the local level while still keeping it general enough so that it can be analogous to other libraries. Here, the focus comes back again to the thin line between just enough and too many local modifications, and how too many changes push the system too far away from the standard practices, endangering the communication and cooperation between different libraries.

The infrastructure is supposed to be invisible for the end users, and all such modifications make the infrastructure work more smoothly for the patrons. Again, there is a limit to how many modifications an infrastructure can accommodate—too many, and they become difficult to handle, which ends up in the infrastructure malfunctioning and becoming visible to patrons.

Apart from the modifications, the Dewey List at the HT Libraries could also be seen as a boundary object. By documenting all the local modifications, it enables

external actors (for example, a new cataloger joining the team) to understand the system at this particular library, making it easier for them to familiarize themselves with it, and therefore gain the membership of this community.

Another boundary object identified at the HT Libraries is the shelf arrangement itself, especially at the LUX Library. As the DDC is not just a classification system but also a shelf arrangement system, it can be taken as it is and used as a basis for organizing shelves. However, in the case of the HT Libraries, due to the available space, such a solution was not possible. The system had to be adapted to the building in order for it to function properly and be as logical as possible for patrons.

8. Discussion

This chapter discusses the results and analysis through the lens of the study's research questions, as well as the research presented in the literature overview. Later, the conclusions are discussed, and the ideas for future research in the subject.

8.1. How did the reclassification and the new infrastructure impact the functioning of the library (the librarians' work, the public spaces, and the patrons) from the perspective of the librarians?

The impact of the reclassification was clearly the biggest on the librarians. All of the stages of the project required a lot of time and resources. First was the initial planning which required a lot of logistical thinking. Then came the modifying the DDC to suit the collections and the profile of the library, designing the shelving arrangement and marking all the shelves. Next followed all the physical work, including moving and shifting books, as well as changing the spine labels on every single book. There was the additional challenge of moving the collections from five separate libraries to a new building and merging them into one. Afterwards, the librarians had to deal with the confusion of the patrons and explain how the new system works. During the entire transition period, the librarians have had to work with two classification systems simultaneously, which was challenging and troublesome. They had to change their way of thinking and learn how the new classification system works. The entire process was also emotionally challenging, which is also discussed by Chressanthis, who says:

Even the best plan cannot always successfully manage staff morale. As the project wears on, staff will begin to feel uncomfortable about giving less attention to their normal duties.... Staff can be rewarded for beating deadlines or celebrating earmarks of the project.

Chressanthis 1995, p. 179

The staff at the HT Libraries did get rewarded for completing milestones. As mentioned before by Informant 6, they “got to eat cake on some occasions”, when they finished reclassifying a more difficult section.

According to the results, the public spaces have not been impacted that much, especially at the SOL Library, although the shelving arrangement had to be modified to suit the library buildings.

Interestingly, the findings show that there has not been much reaction from the patrons, apart from the initial stages of the reclassification, although the informants agreed that the confusion disappeared quickly, as the patrons got used to the new system. This stands in contrast to Shorten, Seikel, and Ahrberg's (2005) article, where they mention that librarians at Oklahoma State University Library were questioned on the choice of classification system. No general conclusions can be drawn here, but it could potentially be interesting to study the patrons' awareness of the classification system more in depth.

8.2. Have the advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the National Library been observed by the librarians?

The high costs of the reclassification were obvious, and the informants agreed that converting from one classification system to another is very costly, and includes a lot of hidden costs that are not so obvious. The reclassification was, however, carried out at the same time as the move to the new building, therefore it cannot be clearly stated how much the reclassification itself cost the library.

All of the informants agreed that the internationality of the DDC is its main advantage and they had noticed how the availability of resources and external help makes it easier for them to classify material. In terms of rationalization and saving time and resources, opinions vary. Some informants did think that they spend less time on classification work, while others disagreed and claimed they now actually spend more time classifying than they did with the SAB system. The knowledge sharing aspects could not be discussed with the informants due to their limited experience in the area.

In terms of the disadvantages, the librarians clearly agree that the entire transition phase has been laborious and challenging and has taken a very long time. The modifications to the system were discussed at length, and the librarians agreed

that modifying the DDC requires a lot of work and thinking, but it is necessary for the library to function and meet the needs of its patrons. The modifications are also connected to the cultural bias of the DDC, as the system has had to be adapted to the Swedish context and some classes have proven tricky to translate due to cultural differences in the way some issues are perceived in Sweden and in the USA.

8.3. Conclusions

8.3.1. The future of the DDC

As many of the interview subjects in this study pointed out, the biggest advantage of the DDC is how widespread it is. Now that fifteen years have passed since the National Library's decision to convert to the DDC, the system is now also widespread in Sweden, and even public libraries have begun to reclassify. As long as the SAB system remains widely used in libraries, the cooperation between libraries and the exchange of information will be more difficult. It is possible that only once the majority of libraries in Sweden uses the DDC will it become possible to truly reap the benefits of the system. As Informant 2 said, "The more [libraries] switch, the more difficult it will be to keep using the SAB system, and there will not be any direct reason to find another classification system."

Informant 5 believes that "it is going to take an incredibly long time before solid knowledge about the DDC comes" and "we are still at least 10 years away ... until people are good enough at it," because the system is too complicated, and catalogers have trouble with building correct codes. When asked what needs to be done to achieve this, Informant 5 mentioned three things: education, practice, and feedback. They expressed gratitude for their situation, as the cataloging department at the library is relatively large, and there is a Dewey expert present who they can turn to if they have doubts. There are, however, many catalogers across the country who work alone and do not have that support system. The Informant also commented on the lack of clear guidelines on cataloging work, regarding how many books one is supposed to get through each working day, or how long it should take to catalog one book.

8.3.2. Public libraries

Public libraries are not included in this study, but they are mentioned in the National Library report, therefore it is appropriate to discuss them as well. The informants tend to agree that public libraries will also switch to the new system in the future. Informant 1 thinks that at some point they will have no other choice than to convert if no other shelving system is developed, as the SAB is now obsolete and not maintained anymore. They said that they know “that [the SAB] sits quite deep in some people,” therefore reclassification can be difficult for the older generation of librarians who have worked with the SAB their entire career.

This point was brought up by Informant 1, who expressed some critique towards the National Library:

You have to be a little critical towards the National Library sometimes, because of the savings—they are responsible for classifying Swedish material, and they have cut down on which categories they classify. You can have an opinion about that, because in the end it was them who chose to switch and forced the other Swedish libraries to follow. But it is the money of course, it costs to classify, and now it costs even more to classify, at least with the cohort of librarians who work now, those who have grown up with the SAB system.

Informant 1

Informant 4 thought that the National Library’s goal from the beginning was that all types of libraries would eventually reclassify. In 2010, Bauer wrote that “a small library in the countryside probably does not have the same need of a well-developed classification system as a large research or special library” (p. 49), and this view seems to be popular. Informant 4 counteracted that point, saying that they had once been to a very small public library that had changed to the DDC and had managed to adapt the system to its own needs, by mostly using the main classes, with not many deeper divisions. They thought that pointed to the flexibility of the DDC, that it is possible to use it with all kinds of collections, although it is of course only an anecdotal argument.

8.4. Further research

It would be interesting to study how the change from the SAB system to the DDC looked from the perspective of the National Library. This central perspective would put all the individual analyses in a wider context. As this study only focuses on one library, broader research in Sweden is needed to study the effects of the reclassification on the entire library sector, now that many libraries have worked with the DDC for at least a decade now.

In terms of infrastructure theory, the ubiquity and invisibility of infrastructure could be studied. For which groups is the classification invisible? For which groups is it visible, and why? How does this relate to the research of Olson (2001) and Hansson (2013)—how does the visibility and invisibility of classification systems reflect the power structures in them?

An idea that came up during one of the interviews in this study relates to classification systems in a wider perspective. The question here is, do we need classification at all in this day and age? Informant 6 seemed to think so, saying that they are “an advocate for a higher level of cataloging and using classification systems and subject headings. But not everyone agrees with me, and us working on it does not work if not everyone does it,” so it seems that the Swedish library sector is not unanimous on this matter. As Melvil Dewey (1876) wrote in the first edition of the DDC, “Classification is a necessity if all material on any given subject is to be readily found.” Does this statement still apply in the age of the internet?

No perfect classification system exists, and all of them have their own faults and shortcomings, as proven by this study, all the previous analyses carried out in libraries in Sweden, as well as the literature available from international libraries. It is interesting how virtually the same advantages of switching to Dewey in Sweden were cited as advantages of abandoning Dewey in the US and switching to the LLC.

9. Summary

This study was a case study of the Libraries of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology at Lund University. Two libraries were included in the study, the LUX Library and the SOL Library, although they were treated as one organization in the study. The focus of the study was the reclassification from the Swedish SAB classification system to the internationally established (although with American roots) Dewey Decimal Classification.

The background for the study was the National Library report on the advantages and disadvantages of switching from the SAB to the DDC, and the following reclassification at the National Library, who recommended the switch to all libraries in Sweden as well.

Previous research in the area of classification systems was presented, discussing the problems with bias and the impossibility of neutrality when creating classification systems. The theoretical framework was based on infrastructure theory, looking at classification systems as infrastructures, outlining their characteristics and how they shape other structures they are embedded in.

The study was based on interviews with six librarians in different roles, with two main focal points: the advantages and disadvantages of switching to the DDC as discussed by the National Library, and the effects of reclassification that impacted the functioning of the library, the work of the librarians, the public spaces in the library, and the patrons. The results were presented from the point of view of the librarians. The analysis discussed the effects of reclassification through the lens of different characteristics of infrastructures, as outlined by Star and Ruhleder (1996) as part of infrastructure theory.

Through the results of this study and the previous research discussed, it can be seen that reclassification seems to carry with it the same kind of problems, no matter which classification is chosen, and no matter in which country the library is located. Reclassification is a complicated project and a heavy undertaking, which has an impact on all parts of the organization—librarians, patrons, collections, public spaces. Classification systems are embedded in all the other structures at the library, which again points to the ubiquity of this infrastructure, and how their breakdown impacts the functioning of the library as a whole.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

The interview guide is translated from Swedish.

1. What is your position at the library? What are your duties? How long have you been working at the library?
2. Were you present during the reclassification from the SAB system to the DDC?
3. (If they were present) What was your involvement in the process?
4. What were the reasons for the change? How much influence on it did the National Library's recommendation have? Did you consider switching before the National Library's recommendation?
5. What effects were expected from the reclassification?
6. When did the reclassification begin and how long did it take?
7. How controlled was the process? Were there any documents that regulated the reclassification?
 - a. How closely did you follow them?
8. Did you discover any unexpected difficulties?
9. Did you apply the new system to all of the material or just parts of it?
10. How strictly did you follow the DDC's rules—did you need to modify the system to suit your needs?
11. Advantages from the National Library report:
 - a. International system: clear rules, good resources, maintenance, and development
 - b. Potential for rationalization: less time dedicated to classification work
 - c. Knowledge sharing: marketing Swedish research and making it more available
12. Disadvantages from the National Library report:
 - a. High costs

- b. Modifications
- c. Problematic transition period
- d. Cultural bias

13. Has the library's physical room/the public space been affected by the change?

14. Have the library's patrons been affected by the change?

- a. Have the patrons noticed the changes?
- b. Have there been any questions about the new system?

Personal opinions:

15. What do you personally think about the switch? Do you think it has been a positive or negative change overall?

16. Has the reclassification affected your work in any way?

17. How much do you usually work with the DDC on a daily basis?

18. Have you needed to develop any new competencies?

19. What do you personally think about the DDC?

20. Do you think it is an efficient system?

21. Are there any problematic aspects of the DDC?

22. Have you noticed any cultural differences/biases with the way the system is structured?