

Proceedings from the Document Academy

Volume 8
Issue 2 *Proceedings from the 2021 Annual
Meeting of the Document Academy*


Article 5

2021

Bringing Political Upheaval and Cultural Trauma into Order: A Document-Theoretical Approach to the Social Significance of Bibliographic Classification Systems

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Recommended Citation

Hansson, Joacim (2021) "Bringing Political Upheaval and Cultural Trauma into Order: A Document-Theoretical Approach to the Social Significance of Bibliographic Classification Systems," *Proceedings from the Document Academy*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35492/docam/8/2/5>

Available at: <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/docam/vol8/iss2/5>

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Bringing Political Upheaval and Cultural Trauma into Order: A Document-Theoretical Approach to the Social Significance of Bibliographic Classification Systems

Cover Page Footnote

Translations from Swedish are by the author.

Introduction

In 1917, at the third annual meeting of the Swedish Library Association, Frithiof Berlin, librarian at Malmö Workers' Library, approached the assembly with a request that a national classification system for Swedish libraries should be designed and distributed to public libraries. The request was granted (Hjelmqvist & Tynell, 1917, p. 211), and as a result the country's rapidly developing library sector got a welcomed addition to its various institutionalizing processes. However, the decision also started a discussion that was to become intense during the years leading up to 1921 when *Klassifikationssystem för svenska bibliotek* [Classification system for Swedish Libraries] (the SAB-system) was published. The problem was one of cultural and social identity: in a period of social unrest, with Sweden on the brink of revolution and in a fragile phase of institutionalizing democratic structures and processes, should libraries and librarianship affiliate itself with the progressive library ideology of the USA or maintain its traditional German-oriented cultural roots and context? The discussion came to an apex with the question on how to organize the libraries – the new classification system was a document that mattered in forming a national self-image in a world characterized by unprecedented change.

Three decades and a second world war later, the center of Jewish culture had shifted its geographic location from the annihilated European Jewry to the USA and a newly formed USA-Israel axis, based on the key signature of Zionist ideology. The rapidly expanding Jewish system of yeshivas and other Jewish educational institutions needed new ways to organize its collections. Classification systems were developed either by adopting an existing universal system, by manipulating existing systems such as Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), or by creating completely new systems, answering to the needs of contemporary Jewish ideology. Examples of all these three ways exist, but the one most prominent, *A Classification system for libraries of Judaica* (the Elazar system), published its first edition in 1968 by brothers David and Daniel Elazar, was designed with the explicit aim to support a distinctive Jewish identity through its structure and subject divisions.

In this article, I will discuss bibliographic classification systems as socially significant documents. Using the Swedish and the Jewish examples, I will argue that bibliographic classification systems contribute to the promotion of identity and values of the institutions in which they are to function in a way that goes beyond their bibliographical function. In their respective context, both examples address the need for new classification systems as an answer to changing conditions in cultural and political development. In reverse, these developments prove envisioned and to some degree influenced by the ways these systems order knowledge.

Classification Systems as (Social) Documents

Treating bibliographic classification systems as documents with an inherent cultural value is not common in classification literature. Much more so is the view that classification systems are tools working in a communication process as retrieval systems designed to meet the information needs of users. As tools, classification systems reflect one or several warrants for the organization of subjects within their usual hierarchical structures. Claire Begthol (1986) identifies six different warrants that although not mutually exclusive provide, each in its own way, for different kinds of systems: literary, scientific, educational, philosophical, institutional and cultural. While the first five have a lot in common in that it places the organization of knowledge amid scholarly knowledge production and the institutions that surround it, libraries among them, the last warrant, cultural warrant, provides a somewhat different set of problems. French documentalist and classification theorist Eric de Grolier stated in a paper going through 29 historically significant bibliographic classification systems that such systems can be characterized as “cultural artefacts.” After having shown how they are structured change over time, he concludes: “there is a kind of hysteresis effect: most classifications reflect an anterior pattern of publications: some of them, on the contrary, appear to be in advance, anticipating on future trends” (de Grolier, 1982, p. 33). The future trends of what? de Grolier does not continue this argument, but instead concludes that future research on the topic would be “probably fruitful.” His statement points in two directions. There is a tradition, especially in classification systems from the sixteenth century and onwards, to relate to the content of specific collections, big or small. That is what Begthol categorizes as literary warrant, and classifications based on such can only relate to sets of documents that are being classified *a posteriori*, when literature on a specific subject exists.

The ability to expand such classification beyond the original collections depends on the ability to formulate generic subject categories. In most cases this means that they relate to one or another established structure of knowledge or division of subjects, for instance such as those found in the division of scientific disciplines at universities. There is, however, another level of classification that corresponds to a wider set of requisites that, if applied, render a system distinguished by social significance. This significance may be described in social-ideological terms, or it may relate to institutional practices. This significance can therefore be described as cultural warrant of institutional value. However, classification research only rarely goes beyond this point, maintaining cultural warrant as a representational feature in a mimetic sense – society is represented, its values reproduced. A bibliographic classification system is part of maintaining social practice and has little or no value beyond its function in the information retrieval process. However, for it to be

possible to ascribe classification systems a social value, one must at least in part free the system from its institutional ties and its dependence on literary warrant.

In his famous study *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* social anthropologist Jack Goody (1977) describes lists and classification systems as something outside the relation between written language and speech – “langue” and “parole” in linguistic terminology. Instead, it represents a specific construct that has no immediate counterpart in speech but has institutional value and corresponds to defined practices of which the classifications are part. The lists and classification systems Goody writes about are not bibliographical in nature. He addresses the social need to organize, among other things, commercial, administrative, economic, and legal practices. What is interesting in Goody’s approach is his view on classification systems as social or cultural artefacts:

[C]lassification is an obvious condition of language and knowing. But it is clear that the oral situations, the conditions of utterance, in which individuals in most societies would formulate an exhaustive classification of terms for, say, trees or kin, are few, and certainly extra-ordinary. This is not to say that such wider systems of classing linguistic items do not exist at another level (‘deeper’, ‘unconscious’) and that these classes may not even take concrete linguistic forms in some cases (e.g. specific noun classes, modes of plural formation etc.). But they are rendered explicit by writing, and possibly only by writing. (Goody, 1977, p. 105)

There is no explicit reference in de Grolier to Goody’s work, instead he takes his departure in Durkheim and Mauss, but as de Grolier was also a linguist, it is highly probable that he was aware of Goody’s work—there are striking similarities in their modes of argumentation. However, Goody does something which Information Science classification scholars have only rarely attempted: He defines classification systems as a unique kind of document and documentary practice. By doing so he can also point to a specific agency, and he does so in a way that resembles the discussion on documentary agency that has taken place in recent years in Document Studies. Frohmann (2007, 2012) uses documentality as an extended term to define documentary agency, defined as the “power” or “force” of documents; that is, their ability to influence institutional and social values and processes. In his work, documentality comprises four aspects: functionality, historicity, complexity, and agency. Of these, he concludes that the last, agency, is the least intuitive, and in further need of examination. Ferraris does exactly that, in the treatise *Documentality: Why it is Necessary to Leave Traces* when he specifies the relationship between social agency and documents as one where a document is “any inscription of institutional value” (Ferraris, 2013, p. 249) complemented with an alternative definition as “reifications of social acts” (Ferraris, 2013, p. 250). Taken

together these two definitions of documents, well in line with Frohmann's aspects, lay a foundation for analyzing bibliographic classification systems.

Before I go on to this, however, I would like to just briefly address the fact that these definitional discussions display an interesting duality. On one hand, they assume a general perspective so that they cover all kinds of documents, while on the other, for most part, they exemplify types of documents that carry extremely specific forms of agency, such as passports (Buckland, 2014, p. 181–184) or marriage certificates (Ferraris, 2013, pp. 164–166). The documentality of such documents is intuitive enough, but what about classification systems? While a passport has a very tight connection between standardized *form*, biographical *content* and administrative *authority*, a classification system has a generic (hierarchical) form, but its content can be of almost any kind – this is so also if we limit classification systems to bibliographical ones. The content aspect (subjects in classified objects) that together with form (hierarchical structures) create the institutional value that render the meaning and agency therefore brings to mind the concept of “informative potential” described by Birger Hjørland as characteristic for documents: “[e]ach individual document has its own unique set of potentialities. When communicating these potentials, one makes reference to some broader field of human activity. The content of the specific document is new, but the field in relation to which its potentialities are evaluated are generally known” (Hjørland, 1997, p. 86). In this present context, Hjørland's formulation seems to bridge the tension between the assumed general character of documentality and the specificity of documents in a way that provides space for bibliographic classification systems to be regarded as socially significant forms of documents, institutionally valuable but freed from mimetic relations to particular warrants.

Over the last decade or so, several attempts have been made that, seen together, have contributed to a deepened understanding of the documentary characteristics of classification systems. What they all have in common is that they distance themselves from the intended functionality of the systems, and instead focus on more structural, linguistic, and sometimes even literary models of interpretation. Arguing for an analytical model based in genre theory, Andersen (2015), discusses knowledge organization systems as “social action.” In doing so he, seemingly unconsciously, finds himself close to Ferraris' discussion on documents as reifications of social acts with institutional value. Writing of knowledge organization systems as documents or “objects,” Andersen formulates the following:

When viewed as objects we see how user collectives or society as a whole through its use of written genres serve as a precondition for the construction of any form of knowledge organization system. A designer of any form of knowledge organization cannot escape traveling through the tool-use

activity of other activity systems and user collectives and the designer has got to be sensitive to what genres the user collectives have names for their discursive activities in order to respond properly with the design of the form of knowledge organization. In other words, a designer's activity is not unmediated. It is mediated by both the artifacts/knowledge to be organized and by other activity systems. (Andersen, 2015, p. 34).

Here, Andersen points to three separate influencing elements that need to be in harmony for the classification system to be legible and make practical sense; 1) the immediate social context, 2) the established forms and traditions of bibliography in the construction of the syntactic/semantic relation of the system, and 3) the designer of the systems and thereby its intentionality. Defining the way in which these elements join during the golden period of universal classification systems between approximately 1870 and 1940, Mai describes such systems as parts of the modernist scientific paradigm that is characteristic of this period. This has not only influenced the systems themselves, such as the Dewey-system, the Universal Decimal Classification, the Library of Congress Classification, the Bliss Classification or S. R. Ranganathan's Colon Classification, all used to various extent for bibliographic organization in libraries during the modern period of the twentieth century. It has also characterized the theoretical development of classification research, both as a tool for system development and critique. For both construction and theory, Mai identifies three main themes that keeps classificatory thinking well within the realm of modernity: 1) Focus on technicality, 2) Focus on objectivity, and 3) Focus on standardization and internationalization (Mai, 2011, p. 726). This periodical and contextual belonging is crucial as it provides not only an explicatory framework for the character of the systems and the intentionality of their designers, but also a platform to formulate critique concerning both the actual use of the systems as tools and their inherent documentality and role progenitors to "social action." And indeed, both Mai's and Andersen's research are part of a series of initiatives that during the 2010s have contributed to the advancement of our knowledge of the social mechanisms of bibliographic classification. Of these, I would particularly like to mention two as important. Melissa Adler's critical classification project introduces a whole new set of contemporary post-structural theoretical positions in the revealing of biases in LCC concerning gender, sexuality and race, most prominently expressed in her book *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge* (2017). In the second project, Melanie Feinberg presents a series of studies on classification systems using classic methods and concepts such as Rhetoric (Feinberg, 2010; Feinberg, 2011), and Ethos (Feinberg, 2012).

A Brief Note on Methodology

Feinberg's studies form a methodological bridge between Document Studies and classification theory in that they manage to create the necessary distance between the tool-centered view of bibliographical systems and the aggregate document definitions discussed above. I have adopted a similar approach in a previous series of studies, analyzing classification systems as social documents, professing a hermeneutic methodology based on the work of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1971, 1988). He suggests a way to create a scientifically legitimate hermeneutical methodology to reveal an "historical consciousness" through literary texts, an approach which has much in common with later discussions on documents and documentality discussed above. Applying this in an Information Science context is challenging, and my earlier attempts are documented in two studies (Hansson, 1996, 2005), both of which have been subjected to constructive critique in Kelly (2016, pp. 101–106). Ricoeur's methodology is simple enough. It builds on a traditional hermeneutic dialectic between context (phase 1: "prefiguration"), text/document (phase 2: "configuration"), and the synthesis of these (phase 3: "refiguration"). The refiguration phase is not a return to the original social and/or institutional context in which the text was created, but instead a phase of transition where the initially mimetic relation between prefiguration and configuration moves from the representational to the presentational. An enriched, new understanding is presented, providing agency to the text/document that is not necessarily presumed by either social prerequisite or authorial intention. This transition from the mimetic to the presentational is what lies at the very heart of the concept of documentality.

This article does not allow room for a full three-phase analysis, so instead I will focus on the role of the initial context and authorial intent in the perceived need for a new classification system in the two examples, and its significance for the construction of the classificatory structure. I will focus on the organization of main categories. Although situational conditions come across very differently, the basic movement is the same: renewed prerequisites on both societal and institutional levels incite discussions on how to best organize the collections in libraries so that they on the one hand make sense in the current development, and on the other maintain the ideological and institutional integrity as formulated by the systems designers. In the first example, designers are a committee of five librarians appointed by the Swedish Library Association, and in the second designers are two brothers advocating a need for reformulation of contemporary Jewish identity in the wake of the establishment of the State of Israel.

Example 1: A Classification System for Swedish Public Libraries

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, Sweden is in a period of intense change. The transition from a pre-modern nation severely damaged by desperate poverty, mass-

emigration and famine in the early to mid-1800s to an industrial society built on (fragile) democratic governance formulated through popular education movements, trade unions and a large temperance movement, had been dramatic. In this development, the establishment of public libraries came to play a significant role. Formally, the public library system was institutionalized as a development of State Church parish libraries, but in many counties and villages, these were so ill-equipped that they needed to be complemented by collections from either private donations and reading circles or by local popular movement libraries. Public libraries had been granted state funding in 1912, following a government report in 1911 by linguist, educationalist, and public library pioneer Valfrid Palmgren (Palmgren, 1911). In her report she describes the state of Swedish libraries at the time and suggests improvements in the form of state subsidiaries to school libraries, public libraries, and bibliographical networks binding libraries in different towns and regions together. The report was inspired by a journey to the USA that Palmgren undertook in 1907 which resulted in the influential manifest *Bibliotek och folkuppföstran* [Libraries and popular education] (Palmgren, 1909), advocating local implementation of the so-called *Public Library Spirit* that she experienced among her American librarian colleagues. Indirect results of these efforts furthered the establishment of the Swedish Library Association and the founding of Swedish Library Journal, both in 1916. The organization of the Swedish library sector – exclusively the public library sector should be noted – followed the American example, and one of the issues that almost immediately was brought to the attention of the leadership of the new association was the need for rational bibliographic organization, control, and exchange.

Thus, as the request came for a new, national classification system at the Library Association's third annual meeting in 1917, the issue was well prepared as part of the ongoing wider re-organization of the Swedish public library sector. Discussions that precede the publication of the system in 1921 are dominated by the general European tension between internationalist and nationalist perspectives. The area of conflict is concentrated much to one issue: whether to adopt the DDC or not, a discussion I have specifically analyzed in Hansson (1997). Establishing a new general organization of the Swedish library sector was about, on the one hand, to introduce American ideals on the running and organizing of libraries, while on the other adhere to a perceived national identity, based on a cultural affiliation to the German cultural sphere. This tension was part of a general conflict between the international and the local during the first decades of the twentieth century and as such not unique to Sweden, as has been shown by Carroll and Reynold (2014), and Uyttenhove and Van Peteghem (2008).

Few in Swedish librarianship argued directly for the adoption of DDC. Influential Gothenburg school librarian Alvida Sandberg was one of them. In a book on school

library administration, *Bibliotek och biblioteksskötsel: en hjälpreda för bibliotekarier i skolbibliotek och andra mindre boksamlingar* [Libraries and library curation: a guide for librarians in school libraries and other small book collections], Sandberg (1915) argued forcefully for the adoption of the DDC for primarily two reasons: the rational decimal organization of the system as such, and that it would be logical from an organizational point of view, as school libraries in all other aspects followed American standards and ideals, influenced by Palmgren's writings. Reviews of Sandberg's book prove that her ideas were not uncontested. Critique was formulated on two levels, 1) a theoretical level, concerning the problems of adopting the DDC to local libraries as had been experienced in Norway and Denmark that had solved these problems in widely different ways, and 2) a nationalistic level arguing that the American system could not prove suitable for Swedish libraries on the account of simply being American. An example of how this latter argumentation could look like is found in the review of Sandberg's book by Gustav Adde, librarian at the Swedish National Library, at the time the most conservative institution of the Swedish library sector:

Even if Swedish public libraries have a lot to learn from the American free public libraries there is reason to question the value of imitating everything that is in use there. By this is meant particularly the in American libraries used Dewey decimal classification system. There is of course nothing to say against the basic idea of this system, but the rational fundament for division of the various areas of human knowledge is far too influenced by Anglo-American views, by Anglo-American conditions in general, for it to be adopted by our Swedish publish libraries. (Adde, 1915, p. 393)

In the preface of the SAB-system, the committee supports this skepticism. It emphasizes that even if there is no consistency in current classification systems in Swedish libraries, it is still possible, and even reasonable, to speak of "a Swedish tradition in this area" (*Klassifikationssystem...*, 1921, p. 6). The content of this tradition was concrete: It was the classification system found at the National Library Accession Catalog, first published in 1886 with subsequent annual revisions. This system consists of 31 main categories with a numerical notation. From 1913, this system was redesigned for the General Accession Catalog for Public and School Libraries, *Grundkatalogen* [Basic catalog] (Katalog, 1916), listing all books that public libraries and school libraries could order with state subsidiaries. The most striking difference from the Accession Catalog was the use of alphabetic notation. One of the main points of critique of the DDC had been the too-limited decimal division with numerical notation. To avoid any kind of opposition based on the use of numerical notations, which indeed was the main theoretical critique of the DDC, a system was constructed on the more flexible and hospitable principle of alphabetical notation. The logic in having numeric notation

in a decimal system was obvious but lost when no decimal limit to the system was there to give structure. Instead, the introduction of an alphabetic order seemed reasonable. Based on this, main categories of the SAB-system were distributed as follows:

A. Bibliography and librarianship	L. Biography and genealogy
B. Miscellaneous	M. Anthropology and Folklore
C. Religion	N. Geography
D. Philosophy	O. Social Sciences and Law (incl. national economy and statistics)
E. Education	P. Technology
F. Philology	Q. Economy (incl. industry, trade and communications)
G. Literary history	R. Gymnastics, sports, games and play
H. Fiction	S. Military sciences
I. Art (incl. music and theater)	T. Mathematics
J. Archeology	U. Natural Sciences
K. History	V. Medicine

Klasson (1995) characterizes this division as deeply ideological, and a clear indication that the academic side of the Swedish library sector, with the National Library as its highest institutional representation, had “won” the battle of classification over the more progressive public library representatives. The sequence of the system’s main categories can roughly be divided into three “super-categories,” revealing an underlying epistemological kinship to a *Bildung* ideal based on idealism, humanism, and romanticism – a sharp contrast to Dewey’s industrious rationalism. This philosophical, and educational, position becomes even further accentuated when grouping the main categories into the three super-categories (excluding the two introductory categories A and B that are of more generic character):

- Man, as spiritual and intellectual being (C, D, E, F, G, H, I)
- Society, as structure and practice (J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S)
- Nature (T, U, V)

It is of course not an exact division of the main categories, but the structure is discernible. It is a descending movement from the Christian god, passing humanity and society to the sick animal – last class in the system is Vq Veterinary Medicine –that in many ways contrasts to the kinds of classifications seen in the libraries that in all other aspects provide the bedrock for public libraries in Sweden at this time. The workers’ union libraries focused on social sciences and economics, and the temperance movements libraries relied on pedagogical literature and fiction as means for popular education and moral growth. The structured idealism of the SAB-system is interesting in several ways. The system is explicitly designed to support work in public libraries inspired by American ideals and parts of a progressive social vision based on popular education to reach the full potential of the recently (and still at this point developing) institutionalized democracy. The documentality of the system does, however, reach out in two seemingly opposite directions in terms of what institutional identity it promotes. Implementing a new social system, reform-based deliberative democracy, in a country takes time and in the case of Sweden at the time when the SAB-system was developed, progress was fragile – women were, for instance, not allowed to vote until 1921. One might argue that institutions set to reproduce the new order, such as schools and courts, need to find a balance between established tradition and renewal. Such a balance is upheld in a very direct way by the SAB-system. The sequence of its main categories and the underlying syntax of the system lean towards the conservative in at least two ways:

- 1) The order of subjects represents a continuation of an older order maintained by the National Library in its accession catalog. This order relates to a general cultural identification with a German cultural heritage leading back to the idealism of the early 1800s. World War I had effectively put a stop to the cultural and scholarly environment of the Belle Époque, and even though this period played out differently in different countries and parts of Europe, it maintained the idea of an ideal society in which scholarly institutions represented continuity and stability and wished to do so in the future as well.
- 2) The classification committee’s referring to a “Swedish tradition” is in fact one that voices the priorities of the university libraries. It is a political and ideological marker against an adoption of American ideals and documentary techniques, perceived as being done perhaps too uncritically within the more progressive parts of the public library movement. Set in a wider social frame, this is the time when the fundamental shift that introduces American entrepreneurial and educational ideals on a broader scale not just in Sweden, but in most of Western Europe as well, occurs. Libraries and educational institutions sometimes used subtle means to

counteract this development – the SAB-system can be seen as one such means.

The picture is, however, complex. For most, the system displays in its hierarchies and subject syntheses the Euro-centric colonial values and priorities of its period, not unlike those seen in other classification systems constructed in the preceding decades such as the Library of Congress Classification or the Universal Decimal Classification. There are, however, elements in the SAB-system that also points forward, towards values and structures that belong to the emerging democratic system of Sweden at this specific point in time. Examples are found primarily in classes relating to specific Swedish conditions, for instance E. Education, that correspond to an institutional structure that was still to be fully implemented. Category E. also makes a distinction between the educational system from kindergarten to universities, and pedagogical practices with a notable presence of contemporary pedagogical and educational ideals (Ed-Er. The history of pedagogy and teaching), schools and individual movements (Es. Works concerning individual educationalists). In category O. Social Sciences and Law, classes Oc. Constitutional law [Statsrätt], and Od. Governance and administration [Förvaltning] are both structured according to institutional structures that had recently been implemented or are in the process of being implemented at the time. Perhaps we here see examples of that ability to “anticipating on future trends” that de Grolier claimed as a potential in certain classification systems? In any case, the far-sightedness in certain classes of the system made it useful in the Swedish library context for decades to come without any deeper revisions necessary in these particular classes. In fact, the SAB-system is still today used in most Swedish public libraries even though the National Library left it in 2011 for, ironically or as a sign of the times, the Dewey system.

Example 2: Jewish Library Classification Making Sense of the Holocaust

The cultural shift that characterizes Jewish identity in the decade following the annihilation of the European Jewry during World War II is complex and contains numerous perspectives that are not possible to follow through in this article. In the late 1940 and during the 1950s, the cultural epicenter of Judaism moved from (Eastern) Europe to the USA, and with that a move to universalize events of the war that most Americans, and American Jews, were not personally afflicted by. Most important of these being the Holocaust. Much of the trauma process that developed out of the Holocaust took shape as a kind of externalization into what Jeffrey Alexander writes about as moral universals, re-writing the Holocaust into being a “catastrophe” among others that happened to the European Jewry. This externalization eventually made the processing of the original experience possible through, for instance, aesthetic expression and popular culture. Novels such as William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice*, Gerald Green’s mini television series

Holocaust, and Steven Spielberg's movie *Schindler's List* are examples of works that have contributed to the universalization of the Jewish experience during the second world war. The Jewish response to such efforts has been diverse, as has that of the American public: "This quality of compulsory returning to the trauma drama gave the story of the Holocaust a mythical status that transformed it into the archetypical sacred-evil of our time. Insofar as it achieved this status as a dominant myth, the tragedy of the Holocaust challenged the ethical self-identification, the self-esteem, of modernity – indeed, the very self-confidence that such a thing as progress could continue to exist" (Alexander, 2004, p. 228). Another way in which American society processed the trauma was to insert it into what was perceived as similar events in the American society, such as systemic racism and the Black civil rights movement – a sort of cultural internalization that Alvin Rosenfeld finds expands the Holocaust into a general pattern of man's inhumanity to man: "[t]his tendency to relativize and universalize the Holocaust has been a prominent part of the American reception of Holocaust representations from the start" (Rosenfeld, 1997, p. 131). From the late 1940s, there has also been, partly in parallel to and partly in stark opposition against the attempts to make sense of the cultural trauma within a universalistic framework, a movement within the American Jewry to reformulate the Jewish cultural identity as one constantly moving forward with eyes set on the State of Israel as a fulfilment of a Zionist vision. Still, the American Jewry in the middle of the twentieth century is not a coherent group. Instead, as Yehuda Bauer states in the introduction to his book *Out of the Ashes: the impact of American Jews on the post-Holocaust European Jewry*, all forms of interpretations of the Jewish faith and cultural identity exist in parallel, with certain class differences attached to where people originated. Germans and their descendants were mostly reform-oriented middle class, while Jews from or descending from Eastern parts of Europe cultivated a more orthodox position (Yehuda, 1989, p. xiv). Common to them all, however, is the significance given to erudition, reading, and books.

The position of the book as one of the centerpieces of Jewish culture is well-documented, and it has through the years proven itself also in a rich bibliographic tradition, which has developed into specific ways of describing and analyzing documents in bibliographies and libraries, with special classification systems uniquely fit to deal with Jewish literature, Judaica (Brisman, 1977). There has also been an ongoing influence from non-Jewish bibliography, a relation that has often been complex. One example of this complexity is seen with the first modern Jewish bibliography written by a Jew, *Siftei Yeshenim*, compiled by Schabtai Meshorer Bass, and printed by David Tartas in Amsterdam in 1680 (Ben-Levav, 2012). Bass constructed his bibliography on an exclusive Jewish understanding of the world, visible in the division of subjects according to two "Gates" whereof the right organizes the books of the Torah, and the left books and commentaries such as the

Talmud and the six orders of the Mishna. Still, we know that influence from non-Jewish bibliography at the time were transmitted by individuals such as Johann Heinrich Hottinger, who in 1658 published the *Promptuarium: sive Bibliotheca Orientalis...*, with its first part devoted to Judaica and works in Hebrew, divided by subject in eleven classes combining a literary warrant approach with professional standards established within Swiss bibliography, at this point in time the most influential school in Europe (Jerchow & Learner, 2007). Three hundred years later, the complex relation between non-Jewish and Jewish classification of Judaica remains. Only at this time, the use or treatment of the Dewey system is the center of attention. In many ways, it is the complexity of cultural assimilation that is played out in these library classification systems.

Bella Hass Weinberg divides twentieth century classification systems used in Judaica collections in three fundamental categories (Weinberg, 1983):

- 1) General systems such as DDC or LCC, based on a predominately Christian perspectives,
- 2) Systems adapted for Judaica libraries through re-working and expansion of parts of general systems, such as the 296 Judaism class in Dewey. Examples of such systems are the so-called Scholem system, designed for the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, and the Weine system with a strong US status, promoted by the Association of Jewish Libraries, and
- 3) Systems designed originally for Jewish collections, such as the Freidus system developed in New York Public Library in 1901 and the Elazar system.

Most of these systems are based on pragmatic considerations and adapted for use in often small school and synagogue libraries. Some, however, are the result of political, epistemological and even ontological considerations. The Scholem system, developed and gradually implemented by European intellectual Gershom Scholem after his move to Jerusalem in 1929 is a good example of how authorial intent can override considerations on usability and intuitive structure (Friedman, 2019). The one that stands out, however, is another original Judaica system, the Elazar system, developed during the 1950s, but not published in full until 1968 (Elazar, 2008). The system itself is decimal, with the ten main categories sequenced as follows:

001-099 – Bible and Biblical Studies.

100-199 – Classical Judaica: Halakah and Midrash.

200-299 – Jewish Observance and Practice.

300-399 – Jewish Education.

400-499 – Hebrew, Jewish Languages and Sciences.

500-599 – Jewish Literature.

600-699 – The Jewish Community: Society and the Arts.

700-799 – Jewish History, Geography, Biography.

800-899 – Israel and Zionism.

900-999 – General Works.

The system has been the object of substantial discussion within the Jewish library community, both regarding its applicability to different kinds of Jewish libraries and the value of distinguishing a certain “Jewish knowledge” from that which is assumed in more general, non-Jewish, classification systems (Schoppert, 2014). This latter aspect of the system is more prominently formulated in the Elazar system than perhaps in any of the other Judaica systems in use today. In the explanatory introduction to the system, Elazar and Elazar write that “any attempt to organize knowledge must be rooted in the fundamental principles of the field it seems to organize [...] Although based on the familiar decimal organization, and to that extent tied to the canons of Western logic, the categories, their sequence, and the terminology employed to label them are drawn from the Jewish tradition insofar as possible” (Elazar & Elazar, 1997, p. 3). This Jewish tradition is then formulated as a non-hierarchical order originating in the Bible, “the heart of hearts, the core of cores” (Elazar & Elazar, 1997, p. 4) of Jewish knowledge and ending with Israel and Zionism, as the “unifying force in Jewish life” (Elazar & Elazar, 1997, p. 12).

The Elazar system not only represents mimetically, but instead actively *presents* a culturally significant structure in the division and order of its main categories. This presentational feature runs through the system. For example, the problem of dealing with the Holocaust proves the system’s affiliation to the American re-writing of the historical experience. The systems that emerge in the wake of the cultural shift marked by the “Americanization” of the Jewish experience after the second world war provide different solutions of how to treat the Holocaust. In the Elazar system, The Holocaust is found in class 736 The Nazi Holocaust, a subdivision of 730 Normative Judaism. 736 is part of a general history of Judaism, and thus distanced from the specifically European experience. Whilst explicit aesthetic expressions are limited to 561.736 Holocaust Poetry, the division of 736 emphasizes a moral and personal perspective, in classes such as 736.4 Refugees and Rescue, with subdivision .41 Righteous Gentiles, 736.5 Personal Narratives, 736.92 Survivors and 736.93 Second Generation. The first subdivision, 736.01 Nazism and Related Anti-Semitic Movements, also contains “biographies of Nazis.” These are some of

the ways in which the Elazar system contributes to the formation of the American internalization, and simultaneous universalization, of the Jewish experience, structurally emphasized through the choice to prioritize personal accounts, witness and tradition across generations much in line with how the Holocaust is portrayed in Aesthetic expressions such as the novels and films mentioned above use personal stories to formulate the Holocaust as a universal experience. To put this class division in context, we may look at the system of the Stockholm Jewish Library, founded in the 1890's and one of the few Jewish libraries in Europe that escaped the Nazi destruction. Its classification system was constructed, as the Elazar system, in the early 1950's by Rabbi Kurt Wilhelm and librarian Raphael Edelman, consisting of 30 main categories with numerical notation. Its developments in the years since has been largely undocumented (Norrby, 2020) The two systems share the movement from the Hebrew Bible to Israel – the last class in the system is 29:9 Jerusalem – but differ in its treatment of the Holocaust. Instead of weaving the Holocaust into various parts of the system, with the emphasis on placement within History, the Stockholm system places everything that has to do with Nazi atrocities outside of the main structure, in the final category of the system: 30 Nazism (Hyllsignu, n.d.). It comes across as an appendix more than a part of the system as such. The Holocaust is exclusively placed as a Nazi concern and not a Jewish. In no way is it included in the general Jewish experience of oppression, otherwise gathered in category 20 Anti-Semitism, and in no way is it universalized. It is unique and has nothing to do with the Jewry in any general sense. The perspective on the Holocaust in the system is directed exclusively at the perpetrators. It is a subject division based on resentment, and on cultural integrity. The differences between the Elazar and the Stockholm systems are indicative of the historically and geographically situated perspectives taken in the USA and Europe. Contemporary Jewish culture and librarianship is portrayed in the structures and subject formulation of these systems.

Conclusion

Analyzing bibliographic classification systems as not only mimetic reflections or representations of certain cultural and political environments, but through their documentality active contributors in the range of efforts to formulate such environments and movements institutionally is difficult. Here, results can be merely indicative. The gap between theoretical and definitional discussions and the partial character of the examples inevitably point to questions and areas in need of further examination. I would like to draw attention to two such areas. Most definitions of documents and their agency, or documentality, presupposes a connection between form and content that places them in a specific position in the situation or process in which they function. Examples of such documents are legal, medical, or administrative documents and documentation processes. This connection is not

self-evident in bibliographical classification systems. Instead, the main thing that ties them as documents to a function is structure, or form, and function whilst the relation to content is complex. Which process, or subject area, they relate to in terms needs always be determined *a posteriori*. In this sense they meet the criteria of documents with informative potential in Birger Hjørland's sense. This does not mean that the relation between content and form is not of significance. Both examples above show exactly how important this relation is, as meaning-creating documentality. Both examples display a complex relation to the generic decimal hierarchization, favoring alternatives that both meet the intentions of the designers, but also formulates their specific contextual conditions and social directions in which institutional prerequisites are defined. This informative potential, manifested also on a formal level, makes it possible to analyze the relevant social and cultural movements, here a country's implementation of democratic institutions, and the promotion of a specific Jewish knowledge structure and tradition, through the lens of these classification systems. The ability of a classification system to make sense in a certain context or socio-cultural process depend on the complex relation between form and content. It calls for a developed discussion on how to view what could be defined as an open-ended documentality. With developed methodology and a deepened understanding for the document as a reification of social acts, the social and cultural value of bibliographic classification systems both in their information retrieval function and as documents in themselves may prove important in future research on not only librarianship and documentation processes, but also socio-cultural analysis in a wider sense.

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