

## Chapter 9

# Technical Services

### ABSTRACT

*Technical Services includes a wide range of behind the scenes duties ranging from all aspects of cataloging, serials, acquisitions, title updates, repairs, maintaining the library's databases, and managing the organization of the collection. The easiest explanation of technical services is that if a task does not fall under public services or administration it is part of technical services. While Chapter 7 covers collection development, this chapter addresses classification options, cataloging, and collection maintenance (repairs and preservation). Security and theft control, though not technical services per se, are also considered to be a vital behind the scenes responsibility.*

### OVERVIEW

The public law library's technical services duties are not substantially different from technical services responsibilities in any other type of library. Materials are ordered, received, processed, cataloged, and put on the shelf. They may be circulated, repaired and finally weeded, replaced or discarded. To keep current, law libraries order more subscriptions as titles are replaced every year or every other year. They also have large sets of encyclopedias, reporters, digests and forms books.

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Electronic databases and e-books offer their own challenges for technical services.

### WHAT IS A CLASSIFICATION SCHEME?

While most people organize books at home and work by broad categories such as fiction, non-fiction, reference, mysteries, etc., such a general method in a law library tends to make locating specific volumes difficult. To many librarians organization means classification and classification means either the Dewey Decimal System or

the Library of Congress classification system. But other systems, including the system used by the federal government known as the SuDocs Classification Scheme, the Moyes Scheme and the Moody System, are also in use in today's law libraries. According to WordiQ.com (Library Classification, 2010),

*A library classification is a system of coding and organizing library materials (books, serials, audiovisual materials, computer files, maps, manuscripts, realia) according to their subject. A classification consists of tables of subject headings and classification schedules used to assign a class number to each item being classified, based on that item's subject.*

As long as libraries maintained closed stacks, collection classification methods were relatively unimportant. The library's staff served as the catalog, and as the human catalog the staff was expected to know where to find each book requested by the library's patrons. But as libraries converted to open stacks, it became necessary to establish an organizational method patrons could understand.

Should the books be arranged by author or did it make more sense to put books of the same subject together? From AALL's beginnings in 1906-1907, the arrangement options discussed were just that - Author or Subject. Classifying by author seemed simple enough; classifying by subject proved more complex, especially for books covering more than one topic. No consensus on how to arrange a law library collection existed then; nor does one exist today. Modern public law libraries are more likely to organize their materials in a way similar to an attorney's office – state/federal, practice areas such as civil, criminal, probate, general reference, and practice guides. A separate self-help area with how-to books makes it easy for the self-represented to locate the books and forms they require.

While the Library of Congress classification system (LC) puts subjects together, it may break up sets that are usually kept together although it is possible to keep treatise sets together if that is the library's policy and librarian's preference. In some cases, shelving decisions are based on the space available and the physical plant's design. According to a brief survey of law library electronic mailing lists (Eldridge-Selwyn, 2012)<sup>1</sup>, 80% of the responding libraries use a classification system such as the LC, Dewey Decimal System, Schiller, Wire, etc. When asked more specifically, 93.8% said they use the Library of Congress system. Table 1 shows responses to the question "How is your library organized?" Because respondents could choose more than one answer, it is clear most libraries use a combination and not one style exclusively. The complete survey is in Appendix H.

The Law Library of Congress began creating the K classification schedule in 1949, but it was not until 1983 that the majority of the K schedules were completed. Academic law libraries had to devise their own collection organization schemes and they did so in sundry ways, as evidenced by the multifarious organizational systems of the bigger libraries, including the University of Chicago, Harvard, Yale, and the Bodleian. Here are just a few of the options currently in use.

- **Library of Congress (LC):** Law is in the K schedule. (Uses letters and numbers – mixed notation.)
- **Subject:** Bookstore Model (Subject areas on big signs.)
- **Combination:** Some LC, some subject, ready reference, How-to books separate. (Signs and knowledgeable staff needed to find books.)
- **Dewey Decimal:** Covers law as a division in the social science discipline in the 340-349 range. (Not usually seen in law libraries.)
- **Moyes Scheme:** A combination of LC and Dewey created by Elizabeth Moyes. (More

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