

MELVIL DEWEY AND THE DEWEY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Melvil Dewey was a man who changed the way libraries work forever. Born Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey on December 10, 1851, in Adams Center, New York, Dewey grew up loving books and knowledge. As he got older, he realized that finding books in a library was difficult and chaotic. There was no standard way to organize them, making it hard for people to find the information they needed. Dewey decided to change that.

In 1876, at just 25 years old and as a student assistant in the library of Amherst College, Dewey created the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) System. It was a revolutionary way to categorize and organize books in libraries. The system is based on dividing all knowledge into ten main classes, each represented by a three-digit number. For example, books about general knowledge are placed in the 000s, philosophy and psychology in the 100s, and religion in the 200s. Each main class is divided into increasingly specific topics using the following decimal place, allowing for a detailed classification of every book. Some Dewey call numbers, as they are referred to in a library setting, can get very specific: the call number for autism is 616.85882, and for D-Day, it's 940.542142.

Dewey's system was simple, yet effective. It made it easy for librarians to organize their collections and for library users to find books quickly. The Dewey Decimal System was soon adopted by libraries worldwide, and it remains one of the most widely used classification systems today.

Melvil Dewey was not just a librarian; he was also a reformer. He believed in making language as well as libraries accessible. He was an advocate for the simplification of the English language and English spelling. At one point, he even changed the spelling of his own name to Melvil Dui.

Eventually, Dewey went on to help make librarianship into a profession. He helped found the American Library Association (ALA) in 1876, an organization that continues to support libraries and librarians today. In addition, he created and edited the influential *Library Journal* in 1876 and established the first library school at Columbia University in New York City in 1887.

However, Dewey was also a controversial figure. He had strong opinions and could be difficult to work with. He was known for his rigid personality and sometimes inappropriate behavior. Despite these flaws, his contributions to the field of library science are undeniable.

The Dewey Decimal System has stood the test of time because of its flexibility and ease of use. Public and school libraries continue to use it to organize their collections, ensuring that anyone can find the information they need quickly and efficiently. Melvil Dewey's work has had a lasting impact on the world, making knowledge more accessible to people everywhere.

Resources

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