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Moys Classification and Norton Rose

Abstract: Catherine O'Sullivan of Norton Rose outlines the benefits of using the Moys scheme in a large law firm library. She also briefly discusses how the firm has tailored it to their specific requirements and she finishes by pointing out the potential disadvantages of the scheme.
Keywords: classification schemes; law firm libraries

Introduction

The London library at Norton Rose has used the Moys legal classification system for over 30 years. It was selected for the detailed subject classification which enables us to clearly group our resources by topic making browsing the shelves an easier and hopefully more fruitful exercise!

Moys treats common law countries as a unit with all other jurisdictions as separate legal systems. Material is then divided into primary and secondary sources which are arranged by subject. There are two notations available, one similar to the Library of Congress (the scheme was originally written by Betty Moys as a thesis to substitute the missing Class K for law materials in the Library of Congress) and the other similar to the Dewey Decimal Classification. There is a separate section for European Union Law and an extensive Index-Thesaurus with related terms references which are very useful.

What are the benefits of using Moys?

The breadth of subjects and the user friendly Index-Thesaurus are both extremely helpful, especially if we are cataloguing a title in a new area of law. As Betty Moys noted in her introduction to the 4th edition of her scheme published in 2001:

"Experience shows that a librarian classifying books in a field with which he is relatively unfamiliar usually finds a detailed classification scheme easier to apply than a broad one."[1]

All of the professionally qualified team at Norton Rose have some involvement in cataloguing; this generalist approach hopefully enables the team to gain a good understanding of the collection and its position on the shelves.

The Moys system has been cleverly designed to allow for the cataloguing of non-legal subjects and this has allowed us to assimilate easily training and management materials into the collection.

Another benefit is the fact that certain numbers throughout the scheme have been left blank, thus allowing for the growth of new practice areas. This foresight is much appreciated as commercial law is extremely fast moving. We must ensure that our collection reflects the needs and direction of the business and that relevant resources are placed in the most appropriate place on the shelf.

The ethos of Moys, and the philosophy that we follow, is that the classification has to be useful and relevant. We as a library within a commercial practice have to be pragmatic and flexible in our approach. Although the library itself is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it is staffed only during office hours, meaning that the catalogue and shelving system has got to be transparent and easily understandable to our readers. We will listen to their feedback and have on occasion moved certain topics to a different class mark, so that the key works in a particular practice area are together. An example of this is where we moved the texts on Commercial Arbitration from KN 256 to the section on Arbitration KN 398. We were able to take advantage of the fact that a gap had been left in the scheme and inserted the Commercial Arbitration books at KN 398.7

We considered moving the Islamic Finance texts from KT 93 to the section on Investment and Capital Markets but, on reflection and on advice from the Moys group on Lis-law, we decided that the common law versus non-common law distinction was too intrinsic to the Moys system to be ignored and instead, in order to assist shelf browsers, we placed a block of wood on the shelf at KN 300 with this text on the "spine":

For works on

EC finance
see KW 100

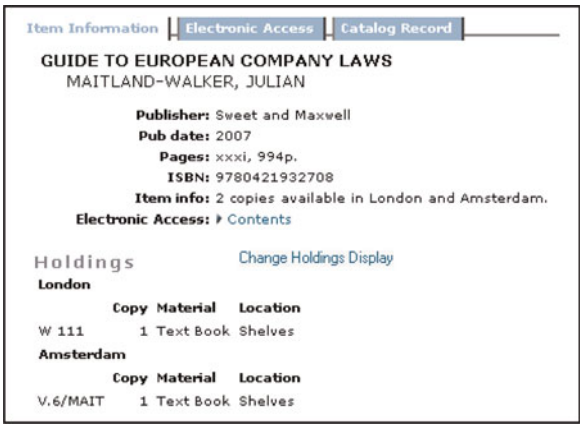
International
finance see:
KC 222

Islamic finance
see: KT 93

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Disadvantages of Moys

Norton Rose is an international legal practice with offices in a number of jurisdictions whose legal systems are completely different and for whom the Moys scheme is not workable. In these instances the office has tended to employ the classification used by the Supreme Court library or the Department of Justice. The materials held by our international libraries rarely overlap with the London library collection, meaning that there are few instances where there would be confusion caused by the use of two different classification systems. Where there are copies in both offices we have overcome this by having Moys as the lead shelf mark with the individual offices having their own immediately below. Please see example below.



Footnote

[1]Moys, Elizabeth. (2001) Moys classification and thesaurus for legal materials. 4th ed. Munich, K.G. Saur. xxix.

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The Use and Construction of Thesauri for Legal Documentation

Abstract: Vanda Broughton describes the methodology of constructing a thesaurus from a faceted classification for law (Bliss Bibliographic Classification 2nd ed. Class S). The structure of the classification is described, and the way in which the thesaural relationships are derived from this is demonstrated. Recent work to automate the process, using the encoded classification data used for the schedule display and alphabetical index, is explained. Examples of the way in which this functions are included, and an analysis of the output shows where editorial work will help to improve the resulting thesaurus.
Keywords: thesauri; classification schemes; legal information

Introduction

Approaches to the subject organisation and retrieval of legal information have conventionally differed somewhat from other disciplines. Although classification schemes exist for law libraries (of which Moys is undoubtedly the best known (Moys, 2001)) and all of the general classification schemes make provision for law, in legal collections subject has usually been a secondary factor in the physical arrangement of resources. Although monographic works may be arranged by subject, since the major part of legal

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