

Committee on LC Law Classification Declares “Mission Complete”

by Barbara Tillett

With the help of the AALL Advisory Committee on Library of Congress Foreign Law Classification, the Library of Congress has finally completed the “K” classification for legal materials in March after 50 years of development.

Under Chair Beacher Wiggins, director for cataloging, and Vice Chair Rubens Medina, law librarian of Congress, the Library of Congress implemented three subclasses of KB–KBX for religious legal systems within Library of Congress “Class K: Law”: KBR, history of canon law, 2001; KBU, law of the Roman Catholic Church, The Holy See, 2001; KBM, Jewish law; and the final draft of KBP, Islamic law. Those new subclasses signaled the end of the law classification development.

The current advisory committee was reconstituted in 1984 during the AALL presidency of Kathie Price. It was the last in a long line of committees serving the LC as advisers and consultants. In 1949 Librarian of Congress Luther Evans established the first LC Committee on the Classification Schedule for Law to explore theoretical and administrative implications of a Class K. At the same time, AALL inaugurated its own Committee to Cooperate with LC on Law Classification.

Library of Congress Classification for Law (K), originally known as the “Class K Project,” was in the works for about 50 years. Implementation of the vast Class K began in 1967–1969 with subclass KF (law of the United States), designed by Werner Ellinger, the first law classification specialist, serving as the model for all common law jurisdictions. Subclass KF was the basis for subsequently written schedules KD (law of the United Kingdom and Ireland, 1973), written by John Fisher, Ellinger’s successor; and KE (law of Canada, 1976), developed by Ann Rae, chief librarian at the University of Toronto. Subclass K (law.general), also written by Fisher, was published in 1977. Development of the civil law classification began in 1972 with KK–KKC (law of Germany), written by Jolande Goldberg, who succeeded Fisher as law classification specialist. This schedule was designed as the model for all civil law jurisdictions, published in 1980 and seconded by the schedule for another major civil law system, the law of France, KJV–KJW, 1985.

The regional draft schedule KDZ, KG–KH (law of the Americas), Fisher’s last work, was published in 1984 — some time after his retirement. The regional schedules KJ–KKZ for Europe, 1989, were followed by the “Rest of the World” schedule — for Asia, Africa, Pacifica and Antarctica — in 1993. KZ–KZD (law of nations) and JZ (international relations) were implemented in 1997 after the dramatic abolishment of the old Class JX.

Some tasks remain, such as secondary tables now only in draft stage; they are expected to be implemented by the end of this year. Some policy issues still need to be decided as well. Those issues concern alternative numbers for religious law periodicals, pinning down preferences for placing religious legal comparative works, and Romanization issues concerning Hebrew and Arabic languages in the religious law schedules KBM and KBP.

AALL has provided an appropriate venue for the development stages of Class K. The LC law classification specialist was able to discuss questions and implications of how Class K would affect the law library community, particularly the Technical Services Special Interest Section Standing Committee on Cataloging and Classification and the Foreign, Comparative and International Law Special Interest Section.

Vital consultations for the project were provided by individuals at various academic law libraries and general libraries, especially:

(1) for comparative and general canon and Roman law

- University of California at Berkeley School of Law: Thomas Reynolds, associate director of the law library, and Laurent Mayali, Lloyd M. Robbins professor and director of the Robbins Religious and Civil Law Collection;
- Vatican Library in Rome: William J. Sheehan, C.S.B., director, department of Printed Books;
- Pontifical Lateran University in Rome: Philip Milligan of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute and Laura Ciolli of Biblioteca Generale/Pio IX;

(2) for Islamic law

- Harvard University Law School: Henry S. Martin III, director of the law library;

Frank E. Vogel, custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, adjunct professor and director, Islamic Legal Studies Program; Peri Bearman, associate director; Aron Zysow, research associate for the Islamic Legal Studies Program; and Lesley Wilkins, bibliographer for law of the Islamic world

(3) for Jewish law

- New York University Law School: Justice and Professor Menachem Elon; Professor Noah Feldman; M. Kathleen Price, professor and director, law library; Miriam Birnbaum, Gruss Collection; and Elisheva Schwartz, subject specialist.
- The Hebrew University in Jerusalem: Jonathan Joel, deputy director, Jewish National and University Library

(4) for international law and relations (reclassification)

- Yale Law School: Mary Jane Kelsey, associate director for technical services, law library; Marie Whited, manager of cataloging services.

Law librarians and professors of law who served on this committee over its duration:

- *representing AALL*: Phyllis Marion of Case Western School of Law and Kathie Price of New York University;
- *representing the American Bar Association*: Jane Hammonds of Cornell University, Margaret Leary of the University of Michigan, and Gale Daly of Southern Methodist University;
- *representing the American Association of Law School Libraries*: Heinz Peter Mueller of Brigham Young University, Robert Oakley of Georgetown Law Center, Laurent Mayali of the Robbins Collection, and Frank Vogel of Harvard University;
- *representing Research Libraries Group, Inc*: Thomas Reynolds of the University of California at Berkeley.

Two of the original members of the committee have remained on the committee since its conception in 1984 until completion of the project: Jane Hammond and Thomas Reynolds.

Barbara Tillett (btill@loc.gov) is chief of the Cataloging Policy and Support Office of the Library of Congress.