



Merit and Limitations of Colon Classification by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan

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Introduction:

Ranganathan was appointed Librarian of the Madras University Library in the year 1924. He was soon deputed to Britain for an observational tour of British libraries. While in Britain he also attended classes in the School of Librarianship, University of London. Berwick Sayers, known as 'the grammarian of library classification', was one of the teachers at the School. During his tour of Britain; Ranganathan visited several libraries and was quick to notice the lacunae in the classification schemes in use then.

A chance visit to a departmental store in London gave Ranganathan a clue for evolving a scheme of classification. He saw the demonstration of a toy called meccano set. The meccano set consists of several slotted strips, rods, wheels, screws, nuts and bolts with which several different models could be made. This gave him the idea that in a classification scheme there should be standard units that could be joined by connecting symbols. Ranganathan's standard units resembled the strips and his connecting symbols resembled the nuts and bolts of the meccano set. The standard units became the schedules.

Thus, a class number could be constructed with the different elements enumerated in the schedules with a connecting symbol and he chose the colon as the connecting symbol. This was, dip, Ranganathan's conception of Colon Classification. The foundation of Colon Classification was laid in Britain in the year 1924. In 1925, his journey back to India gave Ranganathan ample time to work on the schedules. The library on the ship he was travelling in and the Madras University Library's book catalogue, which he was carrying with him served as the working equipment for him.



Colon Classification (CC):

Colon classification (CC) is a system of library classification developed by Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan. It was an early faceted (or analytico-synthetic) classification system. The first edition of colon classification was published in 1933, after which six more editions were published. It is especially used in libraries in India.

Its name originates from its use of colons to separate facets into classes. However, many other classification schemes, some of which are completely unrelated, also use colons and other punctuation to perform various functions. Originally, CC used only the colon as a separator, but since the publishing of the second edition, CC uses four other punctuation symbols to identify each facet type.

In CC, facets describe "personality" (the most specific subject), matter, energy, space, and time (PMEST). These facets are generally associated with every item in a library, and so form a reasonably universal sorting system. The colon classification system uses 42 main classes that are combined with other letters, numbers, and marks in a manner resembling the Library of Congress Classification.

Facets:

CC uses five primary categories, or facets, to specify the sorting of a publication. Collectively, they are called *PMEST*:

Indicator	Facet
,	Personality, the most specific or focal subject
;	Matter or property, the substance, properties or materials of the subject.
:	Energy, including the processes, operations and activities.
.	Space, which relates to the geographic location of the subject.
'	Time, which refers to the dates or seasons of the subject.

Advantages / benefits of Colon Classification:

Due to a sound theory and the provision of a hospitable notation, Colon classification is capable of giving a unique number for almost every subject. The systematic order and the degree of detail due to analysis and synthesis are two great



virtues of CC. Provision of a helpful order in each class, and Facility in locating a given topic whether it is simple, compound or complex.

3. It is claimed that CC can be effectively used in a computer-aide document finding system

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