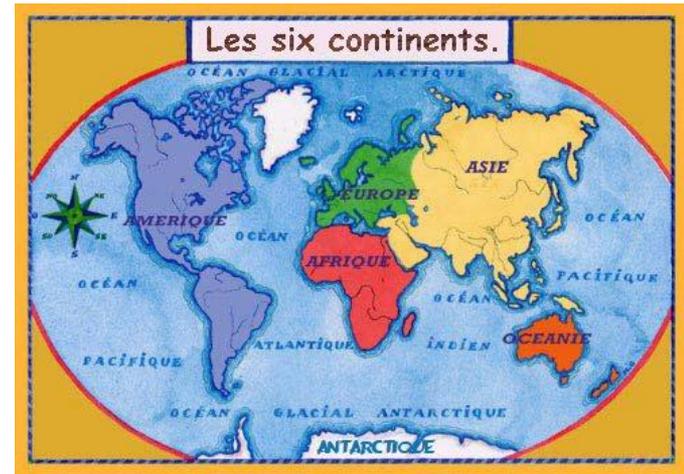
The background of the slide is a photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there are several thatched-roof huts and tables with chairs on a rocky, sandy area. A concrete staircase leads up from the lower right towards the buildings. The middle ground shows a rocky shoreline with waves crashing against the rocks. In the background, a sandy beach stretches along the coast, and further back, there are hills or mountains under a clear sky.

Perspectives on Geographic Location: The Muslim West in Two Classification Systems

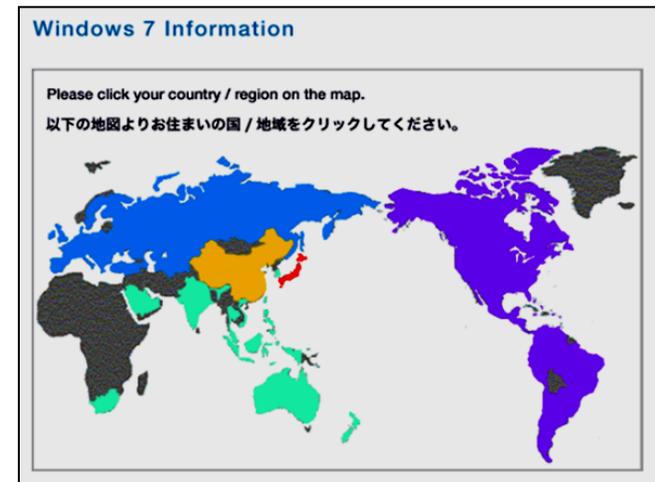
**Heather Lea Moulaison, PhD
ASIS&T Annual Meeting
October 26, 2010**

Classification and the ‘Local Weather’ phenomenon

- The act of grouping together like things is inherently biased
 - Babel Instinct “when we can organise things around us differently from other people, we will do so” (Lambe, 2007, p, xvi)
- Despite seeming absolute, geography may be approached differently by different cultures
 - Number of continents is open to interpretation
 - “I” am in the middle of the map for most societies
- Local Weather phenomenon and travel in North Africa
 - Fulbright Scholar teaching assignment (2008-2009) at the Ecole des Sciences de l’Informatino (ESI), Rabat, Morocco
- *Goal of this study:* compare different approaches to geography in a Western and non-Western classification systems



<http://www.ecoles.cfwb.be/empescfkain/unioneurope07/index.html#>



Dewey and the DDC: Criticism

- DDC has been criticized for having a Western bias (e.g. Olson, 2001)
 - Schedules result in the needless and arbitrary dispersal of national literatures in the collection
 - Canadian literature-English 810
 - Canadian literature-French 840
 - Canadian literature-Inuit 897.12 (Olson, 2001, p. 119)
- Shirky (2005) reminds us that classification schemes like DDC are created to provide a physical shelf location.
 - In the digital world, there is no shelf.
- Weinberger (2007) mocks DDC's pigeonholes and finds Dewey's "original schema [...] embarrassing in the modern era" (p. 48).

Ibn Rushd Thesaurus (IRT)

- Created to support access to the *Ibn Rushd* collection
 - Housed in Casablanca, Morocco at the library of the Fondation du Roi Abdul-Aziz Al Saoud pour les Etudes Islamiques et les Sciences Humaines
 - Devoted to the “Muslim West”
 - Composed of monographs, theses, journals, articles, and other documents
- Is a bilingual thesaurus of descriptors and class numbers
 - Not uniformly bilingual in paper version
 - [Online access](#) for French and Arabic
- Created and published by educated Moroccans
- Built according to AFNOR standards, I believe
 - AFNOR (Association française de Normalisation) French version of NISO
- Used by trained paraprofessionals/technicians in providing access to the collection
 - Used in online database
 - Used in CD-Rom (for purchase at the Library)

IRT structure: Predominantly Arabic

- Tête-bêche format – designed primarily for readers of Arabic
- French (opening right to left)
 - Preliminary pages in French (pp. i-viii)
 - Controlled vocabulary list
 - Alphabetized Z-A by French headword
 - Arabic translation listed on the same line
 - List begins with “Zwawa” (p. 376) and ends with “alphabet” (p. 295)
 - Thesaurus (pp. 292-145)
 - Terms alphabetized by Arabic headword
 - Listed with French translation
 - Listed with classification notation
 - Classification schedules (pp. 143-11)
 - Listed by class
 - Term in Arabic and classification notation
- Preliminary pages with regular numbering
 - include TOC and introduction in Arabic

Geography in the IRT

Preliminary observations

- There are 26 main classes – *geographic lists* are represented in 8 of the main classes
- The Muslim West is the first main class designated in Geographic lists
 - Muslim West = mostly North Africa and lands of Moorish conquest on the Iberian Peninsula
 - Historically, parts of Spain were Muslim before the Arabs were driven out
- Some of the approaches to creating geographic classes seem Western or French
 - Groupings by continents
 - The Americas as one continent
- Other groupings are by alliances, proximity, etc. (OPEC countries, Scandinavia, etc.)
 - Seems more consistent with a worldview of a collectivist culture

« Geographic lists » (*Listes géographiques*)

MAIN CLASS	FRENCH TERM	TRANSLATION
N	<u>OCCIDENT MUSULMAN</u>	Muslim West
O	<u>AFRIQUE</u>	Africa
P	<u>AMERIQUE</u>	Americas
Q	<u>ASIE</u>	Asia
R	<u>OCEANIE</u>	Oceania
S	<u>EUROPE</u>	Europe
T	<u>GROUPE DE PAYS</u>	Groups of countries
U	<u>ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES ET REGIONALES</u>	International and regional organizations

Research questions

1. What differences exist in the way that IRT and the DDC provide intellectual access to geographic locations in the Muslim West?
2. Can a universal classification scheme like DDC offer adequate* geographic access to a specialized collection focusing on a non-Western culture?

*Adequate: close classification of 80% of locations identified in IRT

Methodology

- Geographic terms from the IRT “N” class -- Muslim West -- were listed in a spreadsheet
 - Corresponding classification notation was indicated
 - one letter and a series of meaningful numbers based on the level of hierarchy represented
 - Classification notation explicitly showed the hierarchies underlying the order in the list
 - In practice, these thesaurus terms can be used as descriptors in the database and can accompany other descriptors bringing out additional facets
- The Iberian Peninsula and Morocco/Western Sahara were then selected for further comparison
 - Iberian Peninsula = Europe (covered well in DDC?)
 - Morocco/Western Sahara = Africa (not covered well in DDC?)

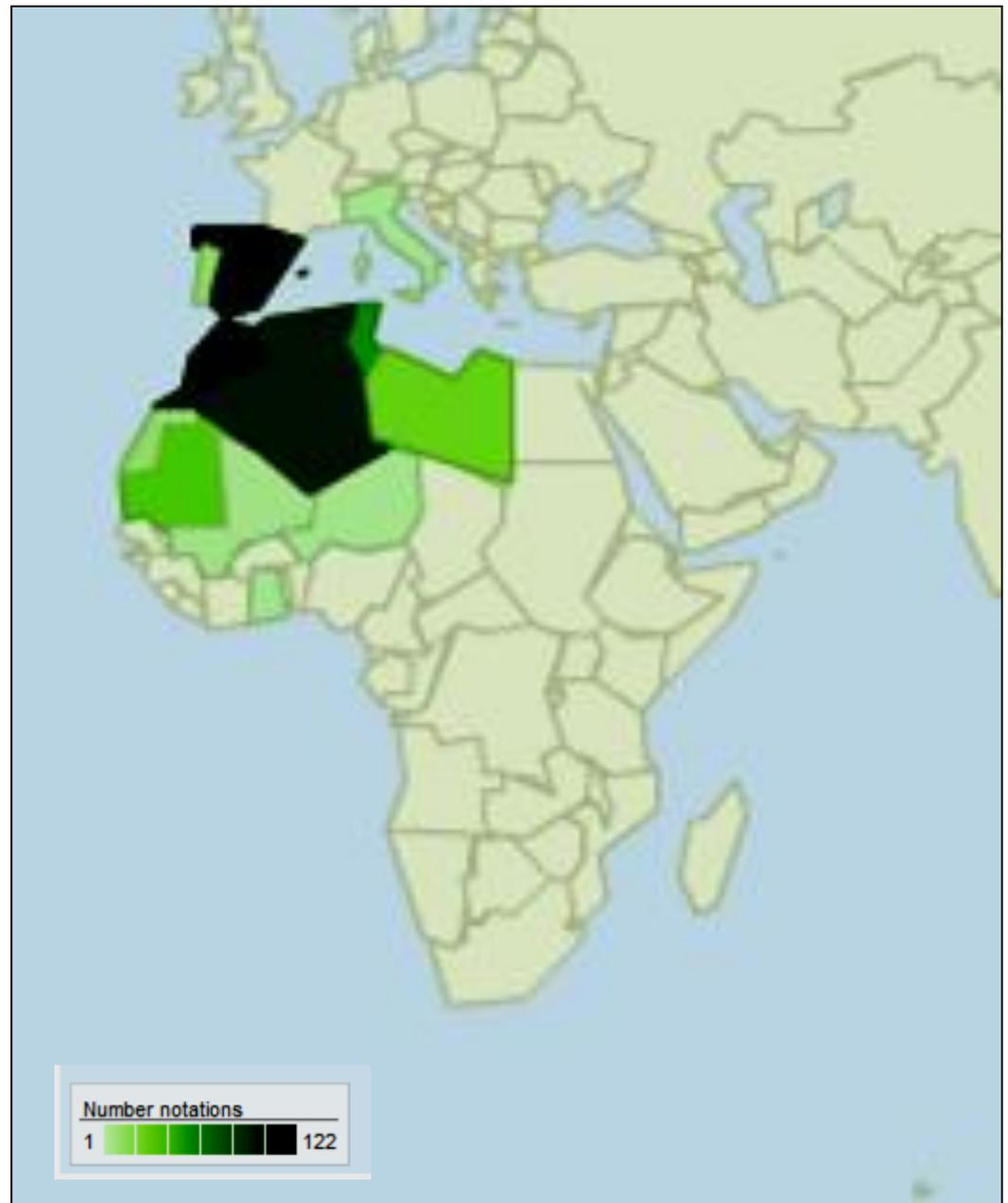
Methodology, cont.

- Classification notations from IRT for the selected areas were compared directly with the notation in the DDC Auxiliary Table 2
 - DDC auxiliary tables allow for number building in the DDC system
 - Numbers from the tables are added to a base number taken from the schedules
 - When in doubt, locations from the IRT were searched in the Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN) maintained by the Getty

Results:

Identifying the Muslim West

- 'N' class (Muslim West)
 - 438 notations representing Muslim West locations
 - Composed of 12 present-day countries and political areas:
 - Morocco, n=114
 - Spain, n=100
 - Algeria, n=93
 - Tunisia, n=57
 - Mauritania, n=32
 - Libya, n=22
 - Western Sahara, n=8
 - Portugal, n=6
 - Mali, n=2
 - Niger, n=1
 - Ghana, n=1
 - Italy (Sicily), n=1

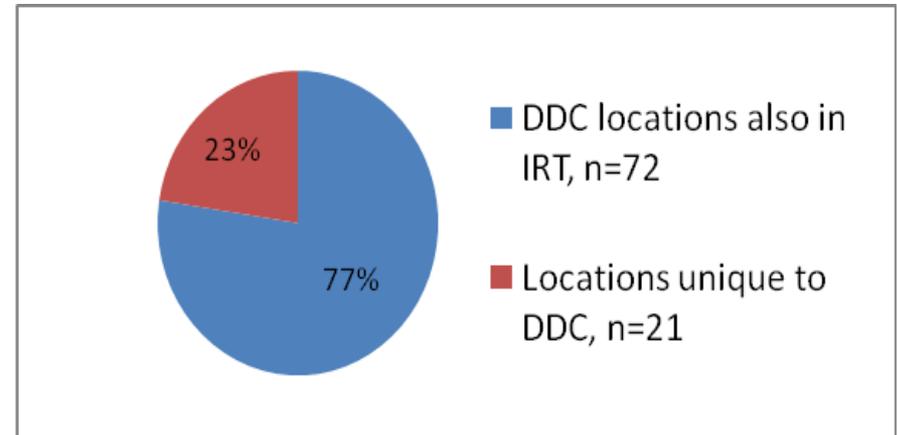


Locations in IRT compared to the DDC

Locations	Spain and Portugal	Morocco and Western Sahara
In the IRT	N=106	N=122
IRT terms that could be classed more closely than at the country-level in DDC • mentioned outright or in notes	n=54	n=72
IRT locations that logically could be classed more closely than the country-level in DDC but not mentioned outright	n=43	n=25
IRT terms/locations not in TGN or DDC	7.55% (n=8)	20.50% (n=25)
% IRT locations with potential for close treatment in DDC	92.45% (n=97)	79.50% (n=97)

Moroccan and Western Saharan locations in the DDC

- Of the 93 primary locations (i.e. excluding suburbs of cities) mentioned in the DDC in “class here” notes, 23% (n=21) were not in the IRT.
 - Primarily new (young) cities



Question 1

1. What differences exist in the way that IRT and the DDC provide intellectual access to geographic locations in the Muslim West?

RESPONSE:

- DDC is strong in providing specific access to modern locations
- The IRT groups by historic areas of conquer and discovery for the Muslim West.
 - Facets of history and time may be implied in the facet of location

Example of a location:

- Guadix and Niebla, (towns) indicated in the IRT and in the TGN because of their historical importance in Muslim history
 - These towns no longer exist
 - Were important towns at a high point in Muslim history

Intersection of the old and the new?

- Mixing the past and present, former dynasties and modern locations is evident in the IRT's taxonomy of geographic location.
- The Arab Knowledge Report (2009) issues a call for Arabs to move beyond tradition and the past to “fuller reconciliation with the values of the world we belong to” (p. 17) as a way of tempering religious extremism.



CD peddler with mobile sound system in the market at Akkari (Rabat, Morocco)

Question 2

2. Can a universal classification scheme like DDC offer adequate geographic access to a specialized collection focusing on a non-Western culture?

RESPONSE: Tentative yes.

- DDC is able to represent closely 80% of the locations of interest in Morocco and over 90% of locations important to Western Islamic studies on the Iberian Peninsula for information professionals using the schema without requiring the use of a thesaurus other than the TGN
 - Assuming collection development is roughly equal in terms of geography across the collection, then 80% of materials could be classed more closely than at the country-level
- The need for such close classification, even in very specialized libraries can be discussed
 - In light of publishing patterns on specialized topics.
 - Even in a specialized collection, somewhat broad classification can be argued as a means of shortening otherwise overly-precise and long call numbers and facilitating user access.

Limitations to the study

- Two systems not designed to be used in the same way
 - IRT terms used as descriptors
 - Associated class number not necessarily used to provide access
 - DDC notation primarily meant to be added to base numbers to provide closer notation
- The bilingual nature of the Moroccan work
 - Thesaurus is bilingual, created by and accessible to educated Moroccans (i.e. bilingual)
 - The collection is multilingual

Discussion and Conclusions

Extent of adequacy of DDC to class places of importance in the Muslim West

- As expected, the two systems are not identical
- Surprisingly extensive
 - Satisfies the 80/20 rule for providing close treatment of Muslim West locations in the Iberian Peninsula and Morocco/Western Sahara
- Continued question of how adequate this schema is for users
- Reality of access in the developing world
 - Problems of collection development, unmechanized libraries (3 ILs in 2009), and limited access to technology require that shelf locations work
 - Literate scholars largely trained in the French tradition

Future study based on this pilot

Related study:

- What can be learned from a study of topical approaches to access based on the IRT's taxonomy?
- Can and should information policies in Arab countries promote more Western notions, as suggested in the *Arab Knowledge Report* (2009)?
- Content analysis of DDC adaptations made by non-Western peoples (e.g. Egyptian efforts)
- Whether discovery for Muslim Arab researchers in Western libraries is hindered by Western biases in class schemes
- If we accept that classification is less important in online environments, and that DDC is able to provide access across different worldviews, is it possible to build an internationally viable verbal subject access tool based on a decimal approach?

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