



Transcending Networks - Transcending Classifications (1905-1935)

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The paper discusses the impact of networks around Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine on classification, in particular on the Universal Decimal Classification System from 1905, the year of its first official publication and 1935, when *Monde. Essai d'Universalisme* saw the light.

Three cases of impact are analysed: 1) the impact of networks of physicists on (potential) modifications of the UDC, 2) the impact of networks around the International Committee of Decimal Classification of the International Institute of Bibliography on the integration of existing classifications, in particular the UDC and Mevil Dewey's Decimal Classification and 3) the network of the Association for World Rights for Workers (Manual and Intellectual) for the creation of a new classification system inspired by Otlet's UDC (labeled by them as Decimal Classification of the Sciences- CDS): the Decimal Classification of Conscience "Classification Décimale de Conscience; d'après des dix sens" (CDC).

The first case discusses the impact of the meetings of the Conseil de Physique Solvay in the 1920s and 30s in Brussels on the creation of Otlet's publication *Monde* of 1935 and indirectly on the Universal Decimal Classification. Although Otlet, was not directly participating in these Solvay meetings he had contacts with some of their participants such as Robert Goldtschmidt and Théophile De Donder. Documents in the Archives of the Mundaneum demonstrate that Otlet followed the debates on atom and quantum theory closely. He saw in the laws based on contemporary theories in physics the possibility to create laws to unite the sciences and society at large. On the other hand Otlet became aware that the new insights in physics also challenged his views on the creation universal civilization expressed in *Monde* and on the architecture of his classification system. Otlet relied on mathematics to bypass tensions in the classes of *Monde* and correlations with the UDC, instead of changing them. At the same time his views on classification as an active instrumentation to change society became stronger

The second case discusses the role of an international network, that was used by Paul Otlet and Henri la Fontaine to facilitate the integration of parts of Dewey's Decimal Classification with the UDC. Boyd Rayward in his *The Universe of Information* (1976) analyzed the tiresome discussions on the integration of these classifications from 1895 until 1927 in detail. Here the aftermath of this debate is followed by focusing on discussions around the "integration" of classifications of botany, in the DC and UDC in the correspondence of Frits Donker Duyvis (1894-1961) with Godfrey Dewey (son of Mevil Dewey). Despite claims of cooperation, the correspondence reveals a strong competition often resulting in concordances and the creation of places that express various points of views in the Universal Bibliographic Repertory rather than in changes of the UDC classes themselves.

The third case discusses two typescripts of 1935 in the Archives of the Mundaneum both written by Walthère Théophile Glineur and Reinold Welvaert directed to Paul Otlet which describe and visualize the creation of the Decimal Classification of Conscience (based on ten senses). Glineur as secretary of the Amis du Palais Mondial stood in close contact with Paul Otlet as the president of this society. Furthermore, Glineur was president of the Association for World Rights for Manual and



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Intellectual Workers and a follower of Anarchism and Esperanto. Inspired by Otlet's UDC, Glineur (together with Reinold Welvaert), in his role of member of The Permanent Council of the Study and Diffusion of the World Plan (Plan Mondial), created a classification that was intended to overcome both shortcomings of alphabetical classifications in Esperanto propagated within their association and of Otlet's decimal classification of the sciences. The aim of this new classification was to capture recent thoughts on metaphysics and in physics (time-space and multidimensionality) and to unite the sciences with the senses and conscience. Finally we see an attempt to influence Otlet's agenda for his World Plan.

Biography

Charles van den Heuvel studied Art History at Groningen University with a specialization in history of architecture, town planning and planning sciences (PhD 1991). He worked as a senior-researcher for the universities of Groningen, Utrecht and Maastricht in the Netherlands. Furthermore, he was an Inspector of Cultural Heritage for the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences and a curator of the cartographical collections of Leiden University Library. At the moment he is senior researcher for the Virtual Knowledge Studio of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Research interests are history of art, architecture and town planning, history of cartography, history of science and more recently history of information science.