

# Moys @ McCanns: Reclassifying a Law Firm Library

**Abstract:** The McCann FitzGerald library provides a library and information service to one of Ireland's premier law firms. As Megan Guthrie explains, it was decided to reclassify the library collection using the *Moys Classification Scheme for Legal Materials*<sup>1</sup> to enhance and improve the flow of the collection. It also provided an opportunity to conduct a stocktake of library material. The project was broken down into three main steps: assigning a Moys number, relabelling the physical material and updating the library management system. There were a number of challenges including the need to modify or add to the Moys numbers and finding the optimal process for relabelling and accounting for the material. It was necessary to adapt the initial plan throughout the project to account for any obstacles or restrictions that were encountered.

**Keywords:** classification schemes; law firm libraries; Ireland

## INTRODUCTION

### McCann FitzGerald and its library

McCann FitzGerald is one of Ireland's premier law firms with offices in Dublin, London, New York, and Brussels. With approximately 600 people, including over 400 lawyers and professional staff, the firm provides legal services to commercial, industrial, and financial services companies as well as a number of state and semi-state clients across its four main practice areas: corporate, banking and financial services, dispute resolution and litigation, and real estate and construction.

The McCann FitzGerald library is located in the Dublin office with three full-time library staff that provide a library and information service to staff in Dublin and the international offices. The main library space is on the ground floor and there are two satellite libraries, one each in the litigation and construction departments. Library material is also issued to senior members of staff on permanent loan and so a wide array of library stock is housed in various offices throughout the building. All in all, library material is spread across seven floors, three library spaces, and more than 100 offices.

### WHY RECLASSIFY?

The previous classification system used was a modified form of the Dewey Decimal System. While it was not an entirely unsuitable system it did present some difficulties for a subject specific library. It needed plenty of modification to fit the collection and to add specific legal terms, as well as resulting in a disjointed flow in certain parts of the collection. For example, both company law and civil

procedure did not have the subject specific nuances that would be desirable in a specialist library, with numerous discrete aspects of the subjects being placed under one number.

Reclassifying using Moys removed these issues as the scheme is specifically designed for collections of legal material, with specialist numbers and a subject order that works in a legal setting.

A reclassification project also provided the opportunity to conduct a stock take. To reclassify an item it needed to be handled and checked off a master list of library material – the same process as a regular stock take with the addition of updating shelf marks and replacing the labels on each item.

### HOW TO RECLASSIFY

The reclassification of library material was initially imagined as a summer project, though it quickly grew beyond that due to time constraints and other external factors. The revised goal is to complete the project in under a year without ever closing or restricting access to the library or any library material. While closing the library would have vastly sped up the process it was not a valid option as the stock is in constant demand and circulation, and successfully recalling a significant amount of library material was deemed unlikely.

The spread of library material throughout the building provided its own unique advantages and disadvantages. Having the collection broken into smaller pieces meant each section could be tackled individually without affecting the flow of the collection as a whole, while gaining

access to a 100 offices without disrupting others required patience and careful planning.

An initial plan for the project was devised at a library meeting, though it soon became clear that the only way to test the feasibility of any plan for such a project was to put it into action and revise it as required. On paper, the reclassification process itself was deceptively straight forward: generate a list of the relevant stock, assign each item a Moys number, relabel the stock, and update the library management system.

A report was generated of all the library material that had information in the barcode and shelf mark fields. This list initially consisted of 6024 items. By removing items that were not typically classified in the library, such as judgments and journals, and weeding out of date material this list was eventually reduced to 5424 items.

At this stage it was not clear how much time would be needed to complete the project. It was decided to break the collection down into smaller, more manageable sections and then reclassify a selected test section in order to gauge, even roughly, how much time would need to be dedicated to this project.

Initially, the collection was broken down by subject – employment, intellectual property, construction, and corporate were the first isolated sections. Employment was selected as a suitable test collection. It contained enough material to be able to project a timeframe for the overall project with relative accuracy, but it was not so large as to result in an unwieldy amount of work while the process was still being fine-tuned.

## TRIAL AND ERROR

The relevant employment items were extracted from the master copy of the stock list. This subgroup was divided among the three library staff with each being responsible for assigning Moys numbers to a section. Once each item had a Moys number, the librarian gave a final once over to the assigned numbers to ensure the list was consistent and coherent. When the list was approved, the Moys numbers were printed on new labels. The new labels were chosen so as to be visually distinct from the old labels, meaning items that had yet to be relabelled could easily be picked out on future shelf checks (see [figure 1](#)). Shelf checks have been periodically performed on previously reclassified sections of the collection and this method has been proven to be very effective.

In order to ensure we had an accurate count of the material reclassified, the relevant section of the spreadsheet was sorted by Dewey number and printed (see [table 1](#)). The information included was all necessary to ensure the correct label was put on the correct item and the correct record then updated. A space for notes was also included where an item could be marked off once it has been located and relabelled.

Relabelling itself involved replacing the old spine label with the new Moys number label and altering the shelf mark written inside the cover of each item. Updating the

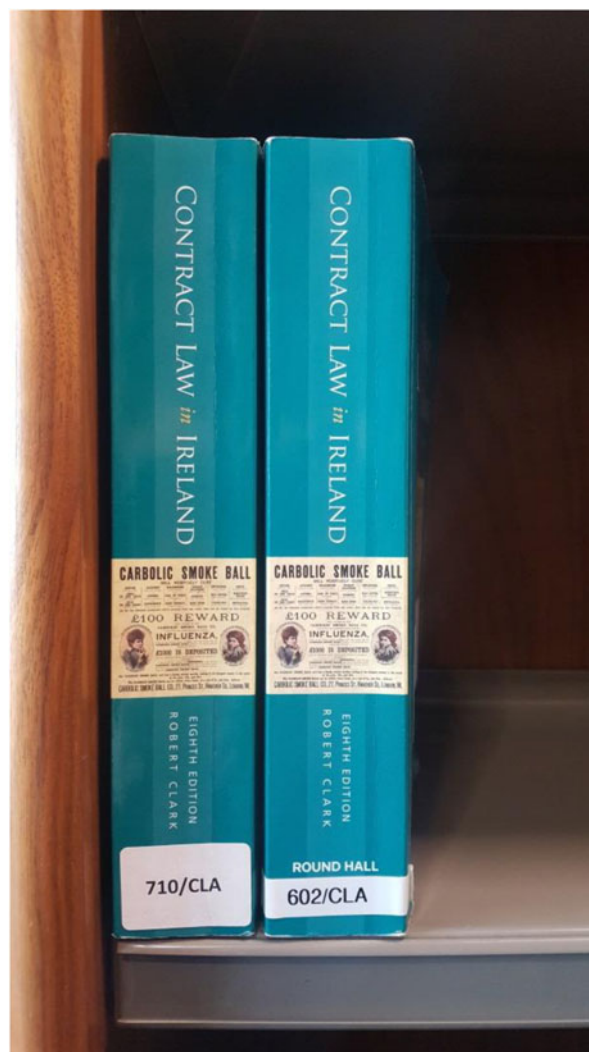


Figure 1. Contrast between the new labels (left) and the old (right).

internal number ensured consistency and will assist in reprinting a label if ever one is accidentally removed or lost. Once an item had been relabelled it was placed back on the shelf in its original location – that is at the location of the old shelf mark. This made it easier to read along the shelf and know where the next item on the list should be located.

Once all the items had been relabelled they were for the most part out of order and needed to be reorganised. Though it initially seemed counterintuitive, it was easier to reorder the material once everything had been relabelled rather than during the relabelling process. Attempting to relabel and reorder at the same time made it more difficult to determine where an item should go on a shelf, as it was difficult to accurately ascertain how many items would come before it until they had also been relabelled.

For the employment section, the library staff worked simultaneously to relabel the material. This resulted in some confusion regarding who had what labels, what

Table 1 – Sample section of the spreadsheet.

| Title   | ISBN          | Barcode   | Shelf Ref | Library | CID   | Moys      | Notes |
|---|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Biehler on international law : an Irish perspective   |               | 86414     | 100/BIE   | Library | 51951 | 119/BIE   |       |
| International law in the Irish legal system   | 9780414034815 | 86779     | 100/FEN   | Library | 55571 | 119/BIE   |       |
| International law and order   | 420434402     | 7786      | 100/SCH   | Library | 3     | 119/SCH   |       |
| Introduction to international law   | 406513007     | 7792      | 100/STA   | Library | 10305 | 119/STA   |       |
| Case law of the European Court of Human Rights; vol 1 1960–1987                             | 947686371     | 5185      | 148.1/BER | Library | 1524  | 113.5/BER |       |
| Case law of the European Court of Human Rights; volume 2 1988–1990                          | 947686665     | 8602      | 148.1/BER | Library | 1529  | 113.5/BER |       |
| Cases and materials on international law  | 421781505     | 62298     | 100/HAR   | Library | 7923  | 119/HAR   |       |
| Mobility of people in the European Community. Papers from the ICEL conference December 1989 |               | 2229–1001 | 176.3/IRI | Library | 1535  | 131.9/IRI |       |
| Extradition law in Ireland  | 1858004136    | 63864     | 505.2/FOR | Library | 8165  | 135.4/FOR |       |

order items should be returned to the shelves in, whether one person was responsible for a particular sheet of labels or a particular shelf of material. This wasn't helped by three people trying to work in the same, fairly confined, space and it became clear this element of the plan needed to be reassessed.

## CHALLENGES

A common library adage, space was the biggest problem in the main library. It became apparent it would be necessary to give more space over to the book stock, both in general to allow for current and future growth of the collection, and for the project, to allow space for the material to be reordered once it had been relabelled. This extended the estimated time for the project as it was now necessary to select material for weeding or to send to storage to create the required space.

This process of isolating a section of the whole collection by topic, assigning Moys numbers, relabelling material, and updating the relevant records on the library management system was repeated for four topics successfully. The fifth area selected – corporate – revealed a previously unseen issue. While the litigation teams often visit court

and so were out of the office for reasonable portions of time, the corporate team were rarely absent. As one of the aims of the project was to not impede the work of others, it was not possible to gain access to the relevant corporate offices in the same way as it was for the other departments. It meant that the relabelling aspect of the project had to be temporarily be put on hold for this area.

Another issue with dividing by subject area was that for certain practice areas it would result in having to revisit offices multiple times. For example, as there is a construction satellite library it was one of the first subject areas to be assigned Moys numbers. One office had a mixture of construction and real estate material – when this office was visited to relabel material, labels had only been printed for some of the material. Since gaining access to offices was already one of the larger obstacles encountered during the project, this process of needing to visit an office multiple times had the potential to drastically delay the project. It was decided that re-labelling aspect of the entire project should be put on hold and the main focus should be on assigning Moys numbers to the remaining material.

This presented a daunting task in a new manner. There were several thousand items that still needed to be

assigned a Moys number which now needed to be tackled in one go, whereas previously each section did not exceed more than 800 items. All the team would continue to work on assigning Moys numbers on the spreadsheet, while it was decided that more than one person trying to relabel material at one time was not efficient. If one person found an item on another person's list, what should they do with it? And what if they found multiple items? They would have been located and the stock check aspect would be fulfilled, but the item still would not be relabelled. Swapping label sheets back and forth could lead to one person waiting for the other to be finished with a sheet before they could check it against their stock. It was far more efficient for one person at a time, who would know from experience what sections had and hadn't been checked, to visit the relevant offices and satellite libraries.

## MOYS MODIFICATIONS

While Moys is designed for use for legal materials it was still necessary to implement some minor changes to the schedules. The decimal notation is used throughout. This was chosen as the previous system was an adapted form of the Dewey Decimal System and by continuing to use the decimal notation the classification would be kept in line with the most common system used in Ireland and also be familiar to our users.

Using the decimal notation can lead to long numbers and it was desirable to keep the length of the numbers down as much as possible. Therefore, the 34 at the beginning of every Moys number was removed. This was justified as since it is a legal library there was not any non-law material – or at least not a significant amount – and so the Moys number for every item would begin 34, making it two digits longer unnecessarily.

Moys often uses letter to build more detailed numbers, however it was undesirable to introduce letters to the scheme used in the library. To this end, when a Moys number suggested only a letter [Table 2](#) was used to convert this letter to a number. An example of such an alteration is for product liability.

347.2 (Tort) + 9 (Others) + P7 (alphabetical, P for initial letter, 7 for 2nd letter) → 347.29.P7 → 347.2947 → 729.47

Another significant change was the relocation of European Union law material in the schedules. It was decided not to place this material in the KW section and instead to move it to KE. This kept the material in a prominent place within the collection which better suited its significance and use within the firm. To create a decimal Moys number for an item that best fit under European Union law, 3 was added to the beginning of the number in the C column of the relevant entry in the KW schedule. For example, if an item dealt with competition law the C column number would be 075 and so the

*Table 2 – Letter to number conversion for decimal notation.*

| Letters | Number |
|---------|--------|
| A to D  | 1      |
| E to H  | 2      |
| I to L  | 3      |
| M to P  | 4      |
| Q to T  | 5      |
| U to Z  | 6      |

decimal Moys number would be 307.5. In the overall schedule, this placed European Union law after religious systems and at the beginning of ancient and medieval law. In reality, it is located before common law as sections KE through KH are unlikely to be used. Using this notation, general texts on European Union law were classified under 305, legal system as a whole.

KB General and Comparative Law 340 (000)  
 KC International Law 341 (100)  
 KD Religious Systems 342 (200)  
 ← European Union Law 300  
 KE Ancient and Medieval Law 343 (310)

For items classified as Legal History the subdivision by jurisdiction was ignored as it was deemed unhelpful, and only the subdivision by special subjects was used, taking these subject divisions from Table IIB in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Moys. The number created for history of juries using this method is shown below.

345.8 (legal history) + 27.4 (juries) → 345.8274 → 582.74

For general legal history or a topic with no matching subject in Table IIB 345.8 → 580 was used.

Since the publication of the 5<sup>th</sup> and current edition of Moys, Britain voted to leave the EU. As such, no number for Brexit existed and a number needed to be created.

347.61 (foreign trade) + 7 (by jurisdiction) + 41 (Dewey [table 2](#) number for the British Isles, the closest match) → 347.61741 → 761.741.

Existing material on international trade was placed at 347.61 → 761.

Aircraft financing and leasing is a large practice area within the firm but there was not an appropriate Moys number. It was decided to assign it to 347.821086 → 782.1086, within the section on air transport as the material housed in the firm was better suited to being grouped under the aircraft, rather than the financing, aspects of the material.

Terminology differs somewhat between Ireland and the UK and plenty of use was made of the index of terms

to ensure a number was not being created for something that simply went by a different name. A number did need to be created for examinership, an element that exists in Irish law but not in UK law and so would not have been included in the schedules. This fell under bankruptcy and insolvency and was inserted into the schedules as a subset of corporate rescue, 347.79273 → 779.279.

In the schedules, litigation does not have its own number, but is rather listed as a subdivision in Table VI. This did not suit our needs as there are a number of general litigation texts in the collection that cover litigation as a whole and not a specific area. It was decided to classify these texts under Common Law Treatises – Private Law, Procedure, general works; 347.9 → 790.

Though the vast majority of the classification process does not hold any ambiguity, there are some numbers that can be placed by personal preference or what best suits the collection. For example, data protection can either be classed with computer law, information technology at 347.896 → 789.6 or with privacy at 346.368.P7 → 346.36847 → 636.847. A later step in the process of assigning Moys numbers was to check for consistent use of these numbers throughout the collection.

There were some other necessary modifications and additions to the schedules to encompass all the material in the collection. There was no specific number for

motor insurance in the schedules. It was decided to insert this at 347.69 → 769, before specific types of risk insurance. Religious texts were classified under general works of the appropriate religion. For example, the Bible would then fall under 342.3 → 230. Copies of the constitution itself were included in general works on constitutional law, 346.1 → 610. Investigations did not have a specific number. It was decided that it fit best with white-collar crime and so was assigned the decimal notation 346.853 → 685.3.

## FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

The relabelling of the main library space is due to be carried out in the coming weeks. The timing needs to be precise to reduce the disruption to access for our users and any confusion that may occur while the stock needs to be re-ordered. Library signage will also be updated with the new Moys numbers.

The current goal is that all library material will be reclassified by the end of the summer this year. Spot checks of offices and the satellite libraries will be carried out in an attempt to locate items that were unavailable or missing during the initial rounds of relabelling and any item still not accounted for at the end of this process will officially be declared as lost.

## Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth M Moys, *Moys Classification and Thesaurus for Legal Materials* (5th edn, De Gruyter 2013).

## Biography

Megan Guthrie obtained her MLIS from UCD in 2016 and a BA in Mathematics from Trinity College Dublin in 2015. She is currently a library assistant at McCann FitzGerald. In the past she has been a member of the desk services teams in Maynooth University and UCD libraries, as well as holding a position as a research assistant at the School of Information and Communication Studies in UCD, designing e-tutorials for undergraduate courses. She has a particular interest in open access, information literacy, and all forms of spreadsheets.