Balancing Caritas and Veritas in Library of Congress Subject Headings
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Introduction

The Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) list is a controlled vocabulary created and maintained by the Library of Congress (LC) beginning in 1898 and first published in 1909. It is a list used not only by LC, but by libraries and other institutions around the world. A controlled vocabulary is “an organized arrangement of words and phrases” that includes preferred and variant terms and primarily used for subject access (Harpring, 2011). Controlled vocabularies provide unique and consistent terminology that can be used for subject access within a library catalog, collocating works related by subject under one word or phrase for easier searching and browsing. Consequently, this makes subject searching and browsing less time consuming for library users. For example, instead of requiring a library user search under World War 2, World War II, WWII, etc... and various other phrases to find all works on the second world war, one phrase is chosen as the “preferred form” and added to all records for works on that topic (in LCSH, this would be World War, 1939-1945). Assuming the catalog utilizes proper authority control, a user searching for any variant forms of a subject heading would be directed to the preferred form. Controlled vocabularies help solve problems of ambiguity and synonymy within a language. The former occurs when the same word or phrase refers to different concepts or things (like Mercury the planet and Mercury the Roman deity) and the latter occurs when more than one word or phrase refers to the same concept or thing (like in the previous World War 2 example).

LCSH was designed to describe the collections of the Library of Congress, for the use of members of Congress, scientists, and researchers. Because of this, LCSH includes numerous scientific and legal terms, such as Myocardial infarction instead of Heart attack, and Illegal aliens instead of Undocumented immigrants. In addition, LCSH has historically privileged the viewpoints of those who are American/Western European, Christian, white, heterosexual, and male. For example, for most of LCSH’s existence, the use of the subject heading God has assumed the Christian God and works on the subject of religious pilgrims in the New Plymouth Colony in the United States were assigned the heading Pilgrim fathers, regardless of the gender of the pilgrim described.

Beginning in the 1960s, a growing number of librarians began to protest what they believed to be biased language in LCSH - language created through intentional bias or simply because of ignorance of the community described. Sanford Berman, cataloger for most of his career at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota and one of the most vocal critics of LCSH, wrote a scathing review of LCSH in 1971 called Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on LC Subject Heads Concerning People. Not only did Berman methodically list what he considered to be offensive subject headings in LCSH, but also he suggested more neutral terminology that could be used instead. For example, Berman suggested the use of Mexican Americans as an
appropriate heading for American citizens of Mexican ancestry to replace the heading *Mexicans in the U.S.*, phrasing that suggests that Mexican Americans who are legally citizens of the United States are permanent aliens. Many of Berman’s suggestions, including *Mexican Americans* mentioned above, were subsequently incorporated into LCSH, though some changes took longer to implement than others.

The following discussion highlights five historically marginalized groups of people within LCSH: the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT*) community; women; racial minorities; non-Christian religions; and immigrants. Each section will present how the group has been represented in LCSH, the concerns of each group regarding their representation in LCSH, and how LCSH has changed, if at all, in light of those concerns.

**LGBT* Bias**

Although Sanford Berman literally wrote the book about bias in LCSH, he focused much of his work on issues of race, ethnocentrism, and gender. The task of addressing homophobia in LCSH and *Library of Congress Classification* (LCC) fell to other librarians, including Steve Wolf and Joan Marshall. Emily Drabinski, Ellen Greenblatt, and Matt Johnson, as well as other librarians, continue to agitate and fight for respectful treatment of LGBT* people and issues by LCSH and LCC.

In *Prejudices and Antipathies*, Berman included only two subject headings relevant to homosexuality: *Homosexuality and Lesbianism*, both of which were narrower terms for *Sexual perversion*. Berman (1971) recommended that *Homosexuality* and *Lesbianism* be removed from under the prime heading of *Sexual perversion*. He argued that the LCC hierarchy equated homosexuality with corruption and thus “smear[ed] and blemish[ed] a large and already much-harassed body of men and women,” (Berman, 1971, p. 182). By the time the essay collection *Revolting Librarians* was published in 1972, these changes had been made, and the class number for Homosexuality had been expanded from HQ 76 to HQ 76.5 in order to include Gay Liberation (Wolf, 1972, p. 39).

Steve Wolf, a member of the ALA Task Force on Gay Liberation (TFGL), believed that LCSH and LCC needed to go further than simply removing the association with perversion. In Wolf’s essay “Sex and the Single Cataloger,” he argued that using the term homosexual in LCSH was equivalent to using racial slurs as subject headings (1972, p. 39). According to Wolf, homosexual was a heterosexist term that should be dropped in favor of the preferred term, gay. Joan Marshall’s essay “LC Labeling: An Indictment,” which also appeared in *Revolting Librarians* examines the insensitivity of LCSH and comes to the conclusion that the problem lies not with the individual subject headings, but the underlying culture behind the list. She suggested that, when creating non-WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) subject headings, the list-makers consult with authorities of those communities (Marshall, 1972, p. 48).

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1 A glossary of terms used is included in Appendix A.
Thanks to the activism of Berman, Marshall, and Wolf, as well as other members of the TFGL, the offending subject headings and hierarchies had been removed by 1979 (Johnson, 2007, p. 8). As the gay rights movement continued to grow and become more visible, LCSH added more subject headings to reflect the LGBT* community. The process was slow and constrained by the Library of Congress’s bureaucracy, leading many special collections to create their own thesauri, subject headings, and classification schemes. Although TFGL combined approximately thirty of these thesauri into one “superthesaurus,” it was rarely used, with most libraries choosing to continue to use their original thesauri or, with the rise of networked information retrieval systems, LCSH (p. 15).

LCSH has continued to improve, slowly but surely, when it comes to anti-LGBT* biases. In 2007, the subject headings regarding transgender people were almost completely overhauled. Prior to June 2007, transgenderism and transgender orientation were listed as see references to Transsexualism, and transgender people were see references to Transsexuals (Johnson, 2010, p. 666). This was a particularly egregious problem, because transgenderism and transsexualism are not equivalent and it is important to maintain the distinction between the two (Johnson, 2010, p. 667). Rather than showing a bias against transgender people, however, it may show a lack of knowledge on behalf of LC’s Policy and Standards Department and lends credence to Marshall’s suggestion that the list-makers consult with authorities. Transgender people and transgenderism, as well as related topics, are now subject headings in LCSH (Library of Congress, 2007).

The solution to the problem of biased subject headings is not a simple one. It is most likely that there will never be a solution to bias in LCSH. This becomes particularly clear when looking at LGBT*-related subject headings. LCSH is a controlled vocabulary that requires Library of Congress approval before subject headings are changed or added. Therefore, it cannot change quickly, and because it serves a wide variety of users, it cannot include highly personal language. In the LGBT* community, this is an especially large hurdle to overcome. The term LGBT* includes people from every ethnicity, creed, age group, gender identity, sexual identity, and more, so there are few if any agreed-upon terms. Just as Alfred Kinsey’s studies determined that human sexuality is fluid, (Young-Bruehl, 2001, p. 187), so are the preferred terms for sexual and gender identities. While society’s preferred term for a homosexual woman is lesbian, an individual woman may prefer to identify herself as a dyke (Drabinski, 2013, p. 103). Similarly, a transgender person may identify as gender non-conforming, genderqueer, or some other, more personal term (Rankin and Beemyn, 2012, p. 6). Within the LGBT* community, some people have advocated using “queer” as a catch-all term that can describe all members of the community. According to Kielty (2009), “the term ‘queer’ itself is an ever-shifting category” that can be used to describe anyone’s gender or sexual identity when it does not conform to binary-based societal structures (p. 240). Drabinski (2013) argues that creating an umbrella term in an attempt to “correct” subject headings would only create another “incorrect” subject heading: “no matter which name is fixed – whether Homosexuality or Gay men or Lesbians – other identities will emerge at the boundaries of what can be contained by this language” (p. 102).
Besides the issue of inaccurate, insensitive, or simply incorrect subject headings, the hierarchies created by LCC have been equally problematic for the LGBT* community since the 1970s. Wolf (1972) noted that *Homosexuality* HQ 76, in addition to being related to sexual perversion, was classified under *Sex crimes* HQ 71-471. This made homosexuality a related subject of *Prostitution* HQ 101-440 and *Rape* HV 6558-6589 through a note to compare to HQ 71-440. Similar notes refer to it as a “Sexual deviation” and psychiatric disorder (p. 40).

Although LCSH and LCC have both improved greatly since Wolf and Berman condemned the systems for their treatment of homosexuality, there is still room for improvement. This is particularly true of the LCC treatment of trans* people. Just as Wolf denounced the comparison of homosexuality to neurological and psychiatric disorders, transsexualism is associated with *Gender identity disorder* RC560.G45, which is classed under “Psychiatric aspects of personality and behavior conditions—Sexual and psychosexual conditions.” According to Johnson (2007), “for the many transsexual people who do not view their condition as pathological, this cross-reference is analogous to the one for *Sexual perversion* which appeared under *Homosexuality* until 1972” (p. 23).

The LCC hierarchy for drag performers is also problematic. Drag queens are classified as *Female impersonators* and drag kings as *Male impersonators*. According to Roberto (2011), this “creates a hierarchical structure where drag performance is less important than the gender being ‘imitated,’” emphasizing “artifice over intent” (p. 59). The hierarchy of LCSH and LCC identify drag performers as transgender people, despite the fact that not all drag performers identify as trans* (Horowitz, 2013, p. 306). This shows a fundamental lack of understanding of trans* people, as seen in its “benign neglect” in LCSH and LCC. Both trans* and intersex people are treated as an “offshoot of sexual orientation, which does a disservice to all parties involved” (Roberto, 2011, p. 60).

Although both LCSH and LCC have improved dramatically since the 1970s, there remains a noted bias against non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities. Where LCSH and LCC were once ruled by prejudice, now problematic subject headings and classification hierarchies stem primarily from ignorance of the people and communities they are meant to organize. Drabinski (2013) recommends using queer theory to approach LCSH. She argues that corrections to LCSH are “always contingent and never final” (p. 100), and perhaps a better solution would be to teach users to “engage the catalog as a complex and biased text” (p. 97).

By incorporating users into discussions and critiques of LCSH and LCC, we will also be able to follow Marshall’s proposal to work with authorities (in this case, the actual population) to correct both the truly problematic subject headings and hierarchies, and the assumption that subject headings and hierarchies can ever be “correct.” After all, it was only through engaging the general public in the issue of biased subject headings that Berman was ever able to affect any change in LCSH and LCC (West and Katz, 1972, p. 50).
Women

Since the initial publication of the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* in 1909, there has been criticism and scrutiny over how LCSH represents and describes subjects (Knowlton, 2005). However, scrutiny of the representation of women in the subject headings did not come into particular focus until the 1970s. Sanford Berman’s publication of *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People* in 1971 in particular catalyzed intense discussion. *Prejudices and Antipathies* focuses on the biases displayed by LCSH against several different groups of people, among them women. He originally listed 225 headings that he thought need to be altered or changed. Most of those headings have been updated since to reflect less biased language (Knowlton, 2005). The issues Berman pointed out were later built upon by other authors and led to changes by the Library of Congress.

One of those authors who built upon the discussion of bias regarding women in the LC subject headings was Joan Marshall. In 1977, Marshall published *On Equal Terms: A Thesaurus for Nonsexist Indexing and Cataloging*. Marshall’s work with the American Library Association committee on Committee on Sexism in Subject Headings helped form a solid understanding of the issue. She later wrote *One Equal Terms*, in an attempt to provide unbiased access to material relating to women and their works (Marshall, 1977). In her book, Marshall lists five categories of biased language found in the Library of Congress Subject Headings: male norming (Wood, 2010), subsuming terminology, women as... headings, separate and unequal treatment, and omissions (Marshall, 1977).

**Male norming**

Male norming means that a subject heading assumes the male perspective. In other words, there should be equal specificity described by the headings but there is not. An example used by Berman are the headings for the subject of monasticism: *Monastic and religious life* and *Monastic and religious life for women* (Berman, 1971). The first heading is generic and under it would be classed works about monastic and religious life in general and works on the monastic and religious life of men, while women would be classed under the second heading. In this example we see that the monastic and religious life of men is treated differently from that of women. Men’s experiences are inferred to be the norm, thus the experiences of women then must be abnormal. Hence, the special need for examination of women’s lives. The cataloger must either accept less specify or risk isolating the experiences of women (Wood, 2010). Other examples in our society today include: policemen, mailmen, and congressmen, when used to describe these groups of people generally (Marshall, 1977).

**Subsuming Terminology**

Subsuming terminology is where all works on a subject are classed under the masculine heading. For example, all works on firefighters, male, female, and in general were all classed
under *Firemen*. All works relating to pilgrims were given the heading *Pilgrim fathers* (Berman, 1993). This is puzzling as it suggest that there were no pilgrim mothers. People looking specifically for ‘pilgrim mothers’ would not logically look under *Pilgrim fathers*. Further, any materials pertaining to ‘pilgrim mothers’ would be buried in the mountain of other materials relating to pilgrims, generally and fathers specifically. Thus such headings significantly hindering access to those materials and hides the true diversity of a subject. Such headings suggest that woman’s contribution were not significant.

It should be noted that the Library of Congress has since changed the headings *Firemen* and *Pilgrim fathers* to *Fire fighters* and *Pilgrims (New Plymouth Colony)*, respectively.

*Women as... headings*

In the 1970s, when the representations of women in LCSH were most scrutinized, one of the biggest offenders were the *Women as...* headings. Some examples of *Women as...* formulated headings are *Women as judges*, *Women as librarians*, *Women as automobile drivers*, and *Women as accountants*. These headings all suggest that these are areas were women are not normally found, which might have been true at one time, but not today. *Women as...* headings are unparalleled in all the Library of Congress Subject Headings; there are no *Men as...* headings anywhere (Berman, 1993).

The heading formulation of *Women as...* is the same formulation used to announce the actors in a play. “*William Shakespeare as Dr. Watson.*” So the headings could suggest that women, specifically, are performers, or even, still children playing dress-up, and not real contributors or active participants outside the house.

For a while the subject headings were changed to a *Women in...* formulation, but this also met with criticism as being too passive and still not equal treatment. Neither formulation exists anymore in Library of Congress Subject Headings. Though, these terms are still not given equal treatment, with some having been subsumed under a broader heading.

*Separate and unequal treatment*

A great deal of book *On Equal Terms* discusses inconsistent and unequal treatment of subject headings. The examples discussed so far all exhibit inconsistency and unequal treatment of the subject: firemen, pilgrim-fathers, women as librarians, and women as judges are examples. Another example, is the heading *Delinquent women*. *Delinquent women* is much criticized due to its similar structure to the subject headings for delinquent children. The very usage of the word *delinquent* suggests childishness and the pettiness of the crime. The heading *Delinquent women* implies that women could not commit a bona fide crime or pursue a genuinely criminal life in the fashion that men can (Berman, 1993). The heading *Delinquent women* was changed in 1974 to *Female offenders* to reflect its usage in the criminal justice literature (Marshall, 1977). I guess women now can say that they have offended someone, and not just mildly irritated them. The lack of symmetrical terminology for men and women
criminals indicates that there is some qualitative difference between their crimes (Wood, 2010). Inconsistent treatment of a subject suggests that for some reason there is a difference in treatment, quality or value. Or that the subject is the focus of special interest or concern.

Omissions

The final problem identified by Marshall is that of omission. Omissions can be a particularly frustrating problem in Library of Congress Subject Headings. Mostly it can be characterized as a lack of specificity, but sometimes the words to describe the subject at hand just are not there. This missing terminology amounts to a lack of representation and has the effect of marginalizing to the point of invisibility groups of people and ideas (Wood, 2010). For example the subject heading Women in war was not added until 1988, thus women’s narratives and experiences of war were marginalized. Even today, key concepts and perspectives are missing from the headings related to the feminist movement. Examples of subjects that were or are missing include: African-American feminist theory, lesbian feminist, Chicana feminist theory, Anarcha-feminism, and Christian feminism (Wood, 2010; Berman, 1993).

Conclusion

Library of Congress Subject Headings provide valuable access to an amazing array of materials. A full one third of all library materials would not have been retrieved without those headings. Bias hinders direct and practical access to library resources (Gross & Taylor, 2005). Yet, the Library of Congress Subject Headings have historically exhibited bias against women in many ways, including unequal treatment of concepts, abnormal subject headings, and omissions. Such treatment makes finding materials difficult and marginalizes by making invisible important voices in our communities.

Since the splash made by Prejudices and Antipathies in 1971, the Library of Congress has acted to minimize this bias in Library of Congress Subject Headings, leading to many changes. Yet, despite the hard work, some bias still remains, for example, the omission of key feminist concepts and movements in the subject headings. As society continues to change, new ideas about gender and people’s roles in that society will change too. Thus, we will be bound think anew about the biases in LCSH. To continue to make LCSH better, we must work to be inclusive, accepting of the multiplicity of viewpoints, be descriptive, sensitive, and respectful of people (Marshall, 1977). Subject headings are important tools - their use, and biases, are the concern of everyone.

Racial Minorities

Human beings like to describe, classify, and catalog themselves and everything around them. We put cats and dogs both together as animals, but they are separate types of animals. By grouping together like objects we can categorize items ranging from the general to the specific. In this way we also classify ourselves by age, gender and ethnicity. To reflect this
categorization, the Library of Congress created subject headings to describe these topics. Racial minorities are people that are culturally or ethnically different from the majority population. The Library of Congress does not have a subject heading for race or racial minorities, but it does have one for human beings. In the past, the Library of Congress has been accused of having been designed with Western libraries in mind and to somehow supposedly reflect their historical bias.

As librarians and catalogers we need to use subject headings that accurately define an item. Hope Olson used the “theories of a postcolonial critic as a framework to argue that LC could choose to eschew the exclusion or marginalization of certain peoples or cultures and instead become a change agent aspiring to the enrichment of the lives of all library users” (Stone, 2000). We cannot determine what is to be "included in a cultural authority by defining what is excluded" (Stone, 2000). We don’t want to be biased by excluding a subject. The Library of Congress is defining its “boundaries and illustrates the culture it endorses and enforces” (Stone, 2000). We owe it to ourselves as librarians to represent our profession by being neutral, inclusive and unbiased. To do this we must update our catalogs by removing old subject headings and including new ones.

In the Library of Congress the subject heading for African Americans has changed multiple times. At first the term was *Negroes*, then it was changed to *Blacks*. It was changed again to *Afro-Americans* and finally became *African Americans*. Latinos in the United States, Mexicans and Hispanics in the U.S. were all precursors to Latin, Hispanic and Mexican Americans. Those of Asian descent were similarly categorized by country of origin followed by the words *in the U.S.*, purposely separating them from United States citizens by implying that they were still citizens of another country or culture. Native or indigenous peoples were some of the early subject headings for Native Americans. However, the current LC subject heading is *Indians*, not Native Americans.

**Non-Christian Religions**

Knowlton (2005) examined Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) to assess what changes had been made since Berman (1971), and in doing so he explained why there is a bias in LCSH in the first place. Knowlton asserted that LC is trying to identify the “average” reader who, based on the demographics of the United States, is deemed to be American, Western European, Christian, white, heterosexual, and male. A 2008 study done by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2008) found that about 78% of adults in the U.S. identified as being Christian. As bias tends to favor the majority, with these numbers it is hardly surprising that LCSH has a bias towards Christianity.

Berman’s (1971) main argument about LCSH bias was that, at the time when he wrote the book, many subject headings were biased towards Christianity, specifically because

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religious concepts and other related terminology were qualified for other religions and the unqualified headings were meant to be used for Christianity. Sometimes this was explicitly stated in the scope notes, but other times it was evident simply because there was no qualifier for Christianity. For example, the record for *Converts*, when Berman published his book, stated:

> Here are entered works on converts to Christianity... Works on converts to Judaism are entered under Proselytes and proselytizing, Jewish... Works on converts to other religions are entered under Buddhist [Mohammedan, etc.] converts... (Berman, 1971, p. 79)

Here the note specifically states that the unqualified form of the heading was to be used for Christian converts. Also, Judaism converts take a different form than converts from other religions. Berman (1971) recommended that all headings for converts should be consistent and demonstrate the religion converted to and the religion converted from, if applicable, his examples including *Converts to Buddhism* and *Converts to Christianity from Hinduism* (p. 80).

These headings were changed in 1999 and address both of Berman’s suggestions (Knowlton, 2005). The current scope note for the *Converts* record states:

> Here are entered general works on persons who have changed their religious affiliation or adopted a new religious affiliation. Works on converts to specific religions are entered under headings of the type Buddhist converts; Christian converts; etc. Works emphasizing the religion from which conversion takes place are entered under headings of the type Muslim converts from Bahai Faith; Muslim converts from Christianity; Christian converts from Hinduism; etc. (Library of Congress [LC], 2014a)

This is an impressive change for LCSH because the end result for this record shows no further bias; there is no perceivable limit to which religions can be used in relation to this heading, all of the headings are consistent in form, and, rightly so, the heading *Converts* with no qualifier represents general works about converts from any religion.

Another problematic heading during Berman’s time was the subject heading for God. Belief in a higher being, oftentimes a single god or multiple gods, is intrinsic to many religions, and so one would assume there would be an entry for the god of each religion. As Berman (1971) described it, the main heading for *God* did not contain any notes to describe when it should be used, but other main headings for *God* included parenthetical qualifiers with the name of the religion to demonstrate the different concepts of God. However, no heading for God (Christianity) was included, thereby assuming God without a qualifier is meant to signify the Christian God by default (Berman, 1971). Surprisingly, despite this being an obvious example of Christian bias, the subject heading *God (Christianity)* was not added until the fall of 2006 (Hiatt, 2006).

LCSH has made progress in eliminating the Christian bias, but there are still many examples where the bias still exists. Berman (1971) mentions several of these including *Devotional literature, Hymns, and Preaching* that at the time were unqualified for Christianity even though those headings appeared for other religions with some sort of qualifier whether it
be parenthetical, as a subheading, or written into the main heading. These examples from Berman, and others besides, still appear as they did when Berman pointed out the bias. In looking at the current records for both *Hymns* and *Preaching* they state to use those forms for *Christian hymns* and *Christian preaching* respectively (LC, 2014f; LC 2014g). Christianity is not the only religion with hymns and preaching and there are in fact headings for those under other religions including *Buddhist preaching*, *Jewish preaching*, *Islamic preaching*, and the same forms under *Hymns* as well for those and other religions (LC, 2014g).

The heading *Devotional literature* also remains unchanged, and shows a similar bias in that it does not contain a qualifier for Christianity and the record says to use this heading for *Christian devotional literature* (LC, 2014c). Furthermore headings for devotional literature for other religions and Christian denominations appear as *[Religion] – Prayers and devotions* (LC, 2014c). Not only is it biased towards Christianity, but headings on this topic for other religions are not consistent with the Christian heading. This is even more perplexing when you consider that when Berman wrote his book, the headings appeared more consistent, one example being *Devotional literature, Hindu* (Berman, 1971, p. 66). That heading now appears as *Hinduism – Prayers and devotions*, as the *Devotional literature* record states (LC, 2014e).

Thus far the examples discussed have focused on bias by omission of qualifiers, but there are a few historical and modern day examples of offensive terminology used for religious headings. One mentioned adamantly by Berman (1971) is the use of *Mohammedanism* and *Mohammedan*, used for *Islam* and *Muslims* respectively. Berman (1971) emphasized that these words not only do not accurately represent the religion and its followers, but also that they are words used outside of the faith and are considered offensive to people within the faith. The current *Oxford English Dictionary* further notes that Muslims find this name offensive because it puts a human being (Mohammad) as the center of the religion rather than Allah or God (Mohammedanism, 2014). Thankfully these headings were changed to *Islam* and *Muslims* in 1964, even prior to the publication of Berman’s book (LC, 2014d).

There is a more modern example of offensive terminology in LCSH that has yet to be changed, the use of the term *Cults*. Library of Congress (2014b) says to use *Cults* for “works on groups or movements whose system of religious beliefs or practices differs significantly from the major world religions.” *Satanism* and the *Rastafari movement*, which are hardly related to each other, are considered narrower terms under *Cult* and are not considered cults by many people. LCSH differs rather significantly from the definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which defines a cult as “a relatively small group of people having (esp. religious) beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or sinister, or as exercising excessive control over members” (Cult, 2014). This definition fits more into the general populace’s idea of cults.

Nectoux (2008) echoes this concern about the use of *Cult*, complaining that the Library of Congress “does not take into account the negative connotation the term ‘cult’ carries, or the limitations it manifests for catalogers” (p. 107). She also notes that “[c]lassifying all non-mainstream societies and cultures as *Cults* unfairly marginalizes and devalues them” (Nectoux, 2008, p. 108). Because of the negative perception of this term, various groups have been
petitioning the Library of Congress to eliminate cross-references to Cults with their religions, including the Organization of African Traditional Healers in reference to African religions (LC, 2003). This group received a response from the LC Director of Cataloging stating, “We are making some minor adjustments to the captions to allow these groups to be treated as religious movements instead of as cults,” many of these adjustments including changing the term Cult to Religion (LC, 2003).

The weight of words used in society cannot be understated. This is exemplified by a study done in Nebraska that asked residents about joining a new religion described using three different categories – cults, new religious movements, and new Christian churches (Olson, 2006). The results found that the people responded least favorably to the idea of a cult and most favorable to the idea of a new Christian church, demonstrating that just the label alone turned them away (Olson, 2006). Library of Congress (2014b) says to use Cults for New religious movements, yet perhaps it would be better to swap those terms since New religious movements does not carry the negative connotations.

Arguably in cases both for Mohammedanism and cults, the terminology used by the people who are part of the religion should have a say in what terminology is used. Muslims did not use the term Mohammedanism for their religion; this was a term used by people outside of the religion. The term Cults is used similarly by people on the outside looking in. Whether these people’s intentions are good or not, attaching a name to a group one does not know much about or is not a part of results in misconceptions and misnomers. This can again be demonstrated in the Library of Congress changing the subject heading from Voodooism to Vodou in 2012 because of concerns raised by those who practiced the religion and scholars who studied it (Ulysse, 2013). It makes sense that the people who are the most qualified to determine the terminology that should be used should be consulted before subject headings are created and petitions against them started.

Immigrants

The discussion about bias in subject headings first appeared in professional literature in the late 1960s. Critics contend that many subject headings, especially those that are used to identify groups of people, use language that shows a prejudice in favor of particular points of view. The Library of Congress Subject Headings have been criticized for containing biased subject headings that are clearly pointed at a targeted user who should be an American/Western European, Christian, white, heterosexual male while discriminating against all the rest.

Sanford Berman was one of the first who drew attention of the whole cataloging community to the problem of biased language in subject headings. He was “[t]he pioneer and leading proponent of the need to update LC terminology and remove terms with pejorative connotations to racial, ethnic or religious groups” (Knowlton, 2005, p. 125). From the beginning of his work in the library field Sanford Berman pushed boundaries. In 1971 he published his book Prejudices and Antipathies where he fiercely criticized many subject headings related to
different groups of people pointing out their discriminating and even insulting nature. Additionally, he offered replacement subject headings that were neutral. He was constructive in his criticism and in discussing every term he suggested alternatives.

Yellow Peril is an example of an extremely insulting subject heading. The term appeared in the late nineteenth century. It was a color metaphor for race used for naming of Chinese immigrants as coolie slaves or laborers to various Western countries, notably in the United States. Later it was also associated with the Japanese due to Japanese military expansion. Finally, it extended to all Asians of East and Southeast Asian descent. It sounded so evidently insulting that without a long discussion he recommended the deletion of this heading to “ensure that it does not reappear even as an unused See reference to other forms” (Berman, 1993, 30) which has been done. As possible alternatives he suggested using East or West or Pan-Pacific relations. Both avoid a racial component and that is why they appear as appropriate alternatives for LCSH.

Japanese in the U.S., Mexicans in the U.S., and Chinese in the U.S. are headings that unite appropriate peoples by national origin. Each of them permanently segregates these ethnic groups as foreigners living in the United States even though they are “American in nationality, citizenship, and actual residence” (Berman, 1993, p. 31). These headings made them permanent aliens. Fortunately, these terms no longer exist as LC Subject Headings and have been replaced by Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans and Chinese Americans which emphasis both their nationality and ethnic background. Since 1981, the Subject Headings Manual Rule H 1919.5 Nationalities recommends to “establish headings for individual nationalities living in the United States in the composite form [...] Americans (May Subd Geog), for example, Japanese Americans (May Subd Geog)” (Subject Headings Manual, n.d.).

Berman reviews and criticizes many LC Subject Headings yet neither Aliens nor Illegal aliens are included in his list of offensive terms. In his influential book he several times used the term “aliens.” For example, when discussing the above headings related to national origins he wrote that “existing heads could continue to play a role, but much narrower, applying solely to “aliens” (like Mexican seasonal laborers) whose permanent abode is clearly outside the country” (Berman, 1993, 32). He used it naturally like any other word without implication of a negative connotation. The Subject Headings Manual says to “assign Aliens to works that discuss collectively persons who are not citizens of the country in which they reside, including recent immigrants, foreign students, foreign visitors, illegal aliens, military personnel, or government employees temporarily stationed in a foreign country” (Subject Headings Manual, n.d.).

The scope note for the term Immigrants in the LCSH schedule states, “Here are entered works on foreign-born persons who enter a country intending to become permanent residents or citizens.” It perfectly clarifies the difference between the terms “immigrants” and “aliens” (Classification Web, n.d.). Although Immigrants is a Related Term to Aliens it is significantly narrower in scope than Aliens. It is limited to persons who intend to become permanent residents or citizens whereas Aliens also includes non-immigrant visitors. Both terms Aliens and
Immigrants are simply stating a fact that a person is not a citizen. In contrast to Aliens, no current negative connotation seems to be associated with the term Immigrants.

America is a country of immigrants, but the countries from where they come have changed over time. As reported by the Migration Policy Institute, in 1970 Mexicans represented 7.9% of all immigrants, but in 2010 Mexicans represented 29.3% of all immigrants (Stoney and Batalova, 2013). Furthermore, Hispanics represented 53.1% of all immigrants in 2010 and this change in immigrant origin has affected the meaning of some words that had been used in Library of Congress Subject Headings.

The addition of “illegal” to the term “alien” has become offensive to many of those who are Hispanic. CNN correspondent Charles Garcia said:

“When you label someone an "illegal alien" or "illegal immigrant" or just plain "illegal," you are effectively saying the individual, as opposed to the actions the person has taken, is unlawful. The terms imply the very existence of an unauthorized migrant in America is criminal" (Garcia, 2012).

The LC uses the term Illegal Aliens as a Subject Heading and neither the Subject Headings Manual nor the LCSH Schedule provide a definition for the term. The UF (Use for) part of the schedule under Illegal aliens (see screenshot below) shows that this heading should be used for works about the legal status of illegal aliens, related laws, illegal immigrants, illegal immigration as well as undocumented aliens. Thus, Illegal aliens is the only authorized heading used to classify works about non-citizens who are considered to be illegal in terms of their legal status in a country.

The term "illegal immigrant" was apparently first used in 1939 by the British who were seeking to stop Jews who were fleeing the Nazis from entering Palestine without authorization. Since the Jews had no legal authorization according to the law they were illegal even though they had no real alternative. Thus, even the original use of the term “illegal immigrants” was clearly biased against an oppressed group of people.

The term “undocumented immigrants” is more sensitively used to replace “illegal aliens” and “illegal immigrants.” For example, The Plan for Dartmouth’s Freedom Budget: Items for Transformative Justice at Dartmouth specifically recommends the use of the word “undocumented” instead of the biased term “illegal” and others make similar suggestions.
“Ban the use of “illegal aliens”, “illegal immigrants”, “wetback”, and any racially charged term on Dartmouth-sanctioned programming materials and locations. The library search catalog system shall use undocumented instead of “illegal” in reference to immigrants” (The Plan..., 2014).

The LCSH Schedule does not use “undocumented immigrants”. Instead, it uses the term Undocumented aliens but only as UF reference. At the time Berman used the terms “aliens” and “illegal aliens” they were culturally not controversial, but have now become controversial. As Olson emphasized, “we decide how to represent subjects and, thus, affect access to and use of information contained in and knowledge derived from the documents we catalogue” (Olson, 2002, 4). For the whole cataloging community it’s time to reflect, to discuss and to act.

The Library of Congress has created a process for the review of LC Subject Headings. The Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) enables member institutions to submit subject heading proposals for inclusion in the LCSH. Barbara Tillett in her interview to Library Juice said that “we update the subject heading terms based both on recommendations from our own catalogers, from about 300 partners in the SACO Program …, and from contributors worldwide” (Tillett, 2006). Suggestions for change are welcomed and outside specialists are consulted when needed. Since it is now 43 years since Berman first pointed out the problem of LC Subject Heading bias, he can be proud of the changes that have been made to specific Subject Headings and to opening the Library of Congress to a formal process to address change to remove bias.
Works Cited


Appendix A

GLOSSARY OF LGBT* TERMINOLOGY

**Bisexual** people are people who are attracted to both men and women, to varying degrees.

**Cisgender** people are people who identify as non-transgender (i.e., they are people whose gender identity corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth) (Greenblatt, 2010, p. 5).

**Drag kings** are anatomical women who cross-dress as men primarily for performance. Drag kings typically identify as women, and do not wish to change their physical sex (Fenway Health, 2010, p. 6).

**Drag queens** are anatomical men who cross-dress as women primarily for performance. Drag queens typically identify as men, and do not wish to change their physical sex (Fenway Health, 2010, p. 6).

**Gay** men are men who are attracted to other men.

**Gender identity** is the way people self-identify their gender. An individual’s gender identity may not correspond to their outward appearance or their sex assigned at birth (Greenblatt, 2010, p. 5).

**Gender identity disorder** is a diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, used for people who have a strong desire to cross-dress, have a gender identity different to their sex assigned at birth, and which causes them distress in social, occupational, or other settings. The diagnosis is seen as problematic by many trans* people because it pathologizes their gender identity. Some people prefer to use the term **gender dysphoria** because it eliminates the negative associations with the word disorder (Fenway Health, 2010, p. 8).

**Genderqueer** people are people whose gender identities do not correspond to their sex assigned at birth, but who does not wish to transition to the opposite gender. See also: gender non-conforming, transgender.

**Intersex** people are people who were born with either external genitalia or internal reproductive systems that do not correspond to Western society’s expectations for male or female bodies. Babies born with “ambiguous genitalia” are often assigned a gender at birth and may have multiple “corrective” surgeries to make their genitals match their assigned gender. This can result in sexual, gender, and identity crises (Stryker, 2004). Intersex people were historically referred to as **hermaphrodites**, “a term currently out of favor due to its pejorative connotations” (Greenblatt, 2010, p. 6).

**Lesbians** are women who are attracted to other women.
**LGBT** is a term for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Called “alphabet soup,” the term can be extended to include queer, intersex people, asexual, and/or questioning people, among others. Individual people and organizations may add, remove, or rearrange letters as they see fit. Although simply “LGBT” can be used, some people and organizations prefer to use the truncating asterisk (*) at the end to include all people that identify with the LGBT community.

**Queer** is used as a catchall term for people who identify as LGBT*. The term has been on a political rollercoaster for the past century. It began as a term used by members of the community in the early twentieth century, becoming homophobic slur by mid-century. In the 1980s, activists reclaimed the word as a more radical and politically aggressive identity that represents resistance to assimilative language. It incorporates nearly every aspect of the LGBT* community and breaks down ideas of sexual minority, gender roles, and sexual identity (Roberto, 2011, p. 58).

**Queer theory** is a theoretical framework for interpreting fixed categories and systems. It grew out of gay and lesbian studies, but is distinctly different, in that explores gay and lesbian identities and how they came to be. Queer theory interprets sexual and gender identities as shifting, contextual, created by society to be imposed on people, and concerned with the work that those identities do in the world. According to Drabinski (2013), “lesbian and gay studies is concerned with what homosexuality is. Queer theory is concerned with what homosexuality does” (p. 96).

**Trans** is an umbrella term that encompasses both transgender people and transsexuals.

**Transgender** people are people whose gender identity does not correspond to their sex assigned at birth. A transgender person may transition to the opposite gender, but does not have to transition. The term dates to the 1980s and originally meant “anyone who transgresses, or crosses, gender boundaries” (as cited in Johnson, 2010, p. 666).

**Transsexuals** are people whose gender identity did not correspond to their sex assigned at birth, and who have had sex reassignment surgery or are in the process of transitioning (Greenblatt, 2010, p. 6).

**WASP** is shorthand for White Anglo Saxon Protestant. It was used primarily during the 1970s to label the LCSH list-makers and their perceived majority audience of middle-class European-descended Christians (preferably Protestant) library users.