

The Bias in Your Library's Catalog

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Introduction

Cataloging and classification are critical to any library. Without them, finding materials would be impossible. However, there are biases that can result in patrons not getting the materials they need. This poster will illustrate some issues that patrons need to be aware of in order to better utilize their library's catalog.

Key

Green terms = Current Red terms = Unused

Subjects¹

The Politics of Cataloging

On March 22, 2016 the Library of Congress (LC) announced that it was cancelling the subject heading "**Illegal aliens**" in favor of **Noncitizens** and **Unauthorized immigration**

On June 10 the House voted 237–170 to order LC to continue using the term "**illegal alien**," in order to duplicate the language of federal laws written by Congress.² This was the first occurrence of Congress ever intervening over an LC subject heading change.

Myths/Mythology

Merriam-Webster defines myths as "a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon."³ Why then do we have **Buddhist mythology**, **Hindu mythology**, **Jewish mythology**, etc. but not **Christian mythology**?

Affirmative changes

African Americans or Blacks⁴

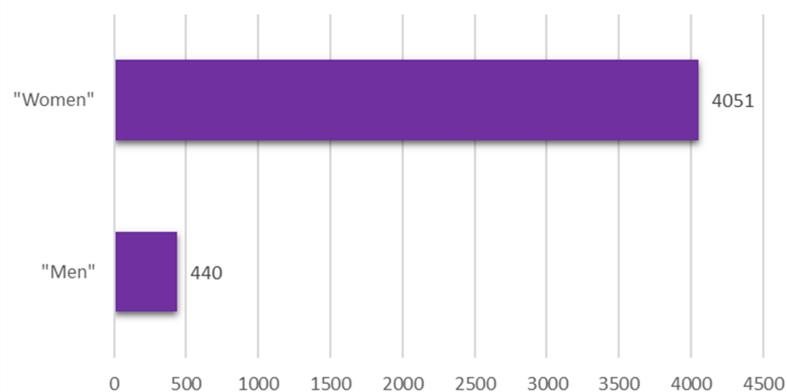
Afro-Americans Negroes

People with mental disabilities

Mentally handicapped Retarded persons

The "Straight White American Man" assumption

Subject Headings Comparison



Professions traditionally perceived as "Female"

"Generic" headings and "gendered" (*) headings

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Librarians</u> | | |
| * Bisexual librarians | * Gay librarians | * Lesbian librarians |
| * Transgender librarians | * Transsexual librarians | * Women librarians |
| <u>Nurses</u> | | |
| * Female nurses | | * Gay nurses |
| * Lesbian nurses | | * Male nurses |
| <u>Prostitutes</u> | | |
| | | * Male prostitutes |

The Classification Dilemma

Many items cover multiple subjects; yet a single physical item can only be shelved in 1 location. Selecting a call number automatically "devalues" other subjects.

Call numbers

The Family, Marriage, Women → Sex Roles

- **Men**
 - HQ1088-1090.7
 - 4 areas (Research, General, Aesthetics, Regional)
- **Women. Feminism**
 - HQ1101-2030.7
 - 22 areas

Gender identity

- HQ1075 (The Family, Marriage, Women → Sex Roles)
- BF692.2 (Psychology of Sex → Sex role, sex difference)

Gender identity disorders in adolescents

Gender identity disorders in children

- RJ506.G35 (Pediatrics → Diseases of children → Mental disorders of children and adolescents. Child psychiatry. Child mental health services → Specific disorders, A-Z)

Affirmative changes

LGBTQIA subjects distinguished and classed under **Sexual minorities*** rather than being grouped together under **Sexual deviants** (HQ70)

- **Bisexuality** (HQ74-74.2)
 - **Homosexuality. Lesbianism.** (HQ75-76.965)
 - **Transvestism** (HQ76.97-77.2.Z)
 - **Transsexualism. Transgenderism.** (HQ77.7-77.9)
 - **Intersex people. Intersexuality** (HQ77.97-78.2)
 - **Asexuality (Sexual orientation)** (HQ21)
- *(Sexual behavior and attitudes)

Where would you class the book

Women of the Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929-1939?
(Women, Depression of 1929, San Antonio history, somewhere else?)

Notes and references:

1 Subject data is based on Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). The majority of academic libraries use LCSH and LC Classification.

2 Peet, L. (2016). Library of Congress Drops Illegal Alien Subject Heading, Provokes Backlash Legislation. Library Journal. Retrieved May 17, 2018 from <https://lj.libraryjournal.com/2016/06/legislation/library-of-congress-drops-illegal-alien-subject-heading-provokes-backlash-legislation>

3 Myth. (n.d.). Retrieved May 17, 2018, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myths>

4 LC Subject Heading scope note for "African Americans": "Here are entered works on citizens of the United States of black African descent. Works on blacks who temporarily reside in the United States, such as aliens, students from abroad, etc., are entered under #a Blacks--United States. #i Works on blacks outside the United States are entered under #a Blacks--[place]."

Biography:

Amanda Ros is currently the Coordinator of Monograph Copy Cataloging at Texas A&M University Libraries. She has over 25 years' experience working in academic and public libraries, primarily in Cataloging. She earned her MSLIS from Florida State University in 2006.