

*In a Fall 2004 Counterpoise interview, I was asked "How would you update your comments in 'Jackdaws Strut in Peacock's Feathers,' which appeared in Librarians at Liberty, six years later?" I replied:

SB: Of course, some specific examples might be dropped or revised, but I'd retain the overall complaint and indictment. Let me stipulate the continuing problem in a few pithy observations:

- Cataloging should unmistakably identify a given work, convey its nature, content, and thrust, and specify how it can be accessed: e.g., by subject headings and various added entries for title variations, editors, illustrators, notable contributors, translators, associated groups or agencies, and local, specialty, and alternative presses.
- Electronic tinkering and keyword searching do not compensate for rigorous, accurate, fulsome, and fair cataloging at the start: that is, the crafting of a functional bibliographic record.
- Most US libraries rely on Library of Congress cataloging for the bib-records that will appear in their local OPACs. This is especially so for US trade publications, which constitute the bulk of new acquisitions by public, school, and some college libraries.
- Increasingly, most libraries do not review "outside copy" (i.e., the LC or network-supplied data) in a constructively critical fashion. Too often, paraprofessionals or clerks may be assigned merely to check on call number suitability and verify such basic elements as main entry and title, nothing more.

• As demonstrated in “Jackdaws” (reprinted in the *Librarians at Liberty* section of this issue—Ed.) and numerous other sources, LC-originated copy is often deficient in notes, subject tracings, and other access points. Further, despite some fairly recent improvement in the liberality of heading assignment and the topical and genre treatment of literary works, such assignments remain inconsistent and spotty. Moreover, much subject heading vocabulary is still biased, awkward, or absent.

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imperfect and dysfunctional. What to do? Undertake more local enhancement and revision, realizing that poor cataloging may undo the considerable effort and expense of selecting and processing material. If the items can’t be found, what’s the point? Also, support LC’s future requests for greater funding and staffing, providing they acknowledge what particularly needs repair, like the more timely establishment of topical headings and the accelerated inclusion of content-clarifying and keyword-searchable notes.

For recent examples of LC cataloging infelicities, see my column, “Berman’s Bag,” in *UNABASHED LIBRARIAN*, no. 132. Last week, I received a gift from students at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul: *Shut Up Shut Down: Poems* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 2004). It’s by Mark Nowak, with an Afterword by Amiri Baraka. It consists largely of poems about work, workers, and the labor movement, punctuated by black-and-white photos, quotations, and reading lists. Coincidentally, it is a case study in what’s wrong with standard cataloging. LC assigned a generous four headings: Corporate culture, Corporations—Corrupt practices, Business ethics, and Greed, all subdivided by—Literary collections. The sole added entry: I. Title. So what’s amiss? No added entry (access point) for notable contributor Amiri Baraka. No turnaround title added entry for “Shut down shut up.” No tracing for the alternative publisher: Coffee House Press. No note indicating the graphic dimension, the photo-documentary aspect. No genre heading for “Working class poetry.” No topical headings for plant closings, downsizing, and labor

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movement. Nor for, say, “Employee resistance and revolts.” And “Greed” is way too broad. This is emphati-

cally about corporate greed, which demands an appropriate new heading. Also needed: “American poetry—21st century.” Finally, Dewey classifiers placed this essentially verse collection in “American fiction” Not quite bibliocide-by-cataloging, but close.

For the record, over two years or longer I submitted suggestions and documentation regarding cataloging improvements and possible new or substitute headings to LC’s Cataloging Policy & Support Office. No replies. Then, finally, after some 40 or 50 submissions, came a response, which I believe materialized only because the CPSO Chief was ordered to do so by her superior. Since that December 16, 2004 letter, more have arrived. I would dearly like to report that the “thaw” betokens a genuine responsiveness, manifest in concrete reforms or new-heading creation. Alas, that hasn’t quite happened. Mostly, it’s been perfunctory acknowledgments or tortured explanations about why they won’t do what they should do.

Among other things, I’ve been trying to get them to introduce subject headings for CULTURE WARS , INFOSHOPS, STUDENT ANTI-SWEATSHOP MOVEMENT, PLUTOCRACY, and NATIVE AMERICAN HOLOCAUST, as well as either replacing FANZINES with ZINES or creating ZINES as a complementary descriptor. The latest LC communication was a full-page rebuke, dated 2-10-05 (See p. 10—Ed.), for daring to mention the inadequate Cataloging-in-Publication entry for Nan Levinson’s *Outspoken: Free Speech Stories* in my upcoming *College & Research Libraries* review.

Since that interview, both PLUTOCRACY and ZINES have been established as new headings. They are most welcome, although woefully tardy. And such suggested "Zine" permutations as ZINE DISTRIBUTORS, ZINE LIBRARIES, FEMINIST ZINES, and QUEER ZINES still await creation.

+Adding "Culture wars" as a UF (unused form/"see" reference) under CULTURE CONFLICT effectively buries the considerable literature on that topic, which particularly refers to contention in the U.S. over public morality. In a 12-26-04 missive to LC, I wrote: "Hennepin County Library established this form in late 1996, initially applying it to 13 titles in the collection. This is HCL's new-heading report in Cataloging bulletin 145:

■ Culture wars.*

cn HCL form. Assignment: Mark Gerson's Neoconservative vision: from the Cold War to the culture wars (1996); Ira Shor's Culture wars: school and society in the conservative restoration, 1969-1984 (1986); James Davison Hunter's Culture wars: the struggle to define America (1991); Gerald Graff's Beyond the culture wars: how teaching the conflicts can revitalize American education (1992); Richard Bolton's Culture wars: documents from the recent controversies in the arts (1992); Fred Whiteheads' Culture wars: opposing viewpoints (1994); Russell Jacoby's Dogmatic wisdom: how the culture wars divert education and distract America

(1994); Tom Sine's Cease fire: searching for sanity in America's culture wars (1995); William J. Bennett's De-valuing of America: the fight for our culture and our children (1992), which includes "Culture wars"; Camille Paglia's Vamps and tramps (1994), which includes "Culture wars"; Daniel Storer's Hot topics: everything you wanted to know about the 50 major controversies... (1995), which includes "Culture wars"; Chip Berlet's Eyes right: challenging the right-wing backlash (1995), which includes "Culture wars and freedom of expression."

sf Cultural wars
Wars, Culture

xx Cultural policy
Culture conflict
Educational policy

This innovation was formally recommended to LC. The original cross-reference structure should be augmented with these additional BTs:

xx Church and state
Popular culture
Religion and politics
Social policy
United States--Politics and government--1980-

And this is a possible scope note, derived in part from the myriad "Culture wars" entries presently available (even, I suspect, to LC catalogers) on the Web:

pn Here are entered materials on disputes and confrontations in American public policy and culture dating from the early 1980s and typically involving such ideologically- and religiously-based issues as abortion, gun control, censorship, church-state separation (including school prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, teaching evolution, and faith-based government programs), and homosexuality.

That model scope-note also appeared in a Library resources & technical services "Letter to the editor," Jan. 2006, p. 4.

+Yes, "Mr. Berman" does occasionally submit "news clippings," strictly to further document term-usage for a recommended heading, not as assignment-candidates. (Occasionally, however, a clipping or journal article explicitly mentions books, periodicals, films, or Websites dealing with the subject, in which case I highlight them for possible application.)

+Finally transforming "Vietnamese Conflict" to "Vietnam War" in 2006 should be cause for embarrassment, not exultation.

+ "Lobbying members of Congress" is something I've rarely done. However, if I hadn't prompted the late Senator Paul Wellstone to ask LC why they hadn't yet created a heading for NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE, that rubric wouldn't have entered LCSH. (Nothing else had worked.) Similarly, copying my Minnesota Senators and Congressmen recently when querying Librarian of Congress Billington why ARMENIAN MASSACRES hadn't been converted to ARMENIAN GENOCIDE and how come no one at CPSO would respond to my concern at least produced a reply from Deanna Marcum, Associate Librarian for Library Services (reproduced in Unabashed librarian, no. 139, p. 15-18).

+It's too bad that anyone needs to resort to "grandstanding" to prompt obviously desirable changes. I plead "guilty" to the charge. Publicly ridiculing the heading WATER CLOSETS at an AIA program later that day translated into a conversion to TOILETS. And repeatedly displaying a light bulb during talks and asking the audience what that item was termed in their catalogs eventually spawned a discrete rubric for LIGHT BULBS (which had previously been termed "Electric lamps, Incandescent."). Too bad, but that's what it took to do the sensible thing.

- +I had recommended replacement or dissolution of JEWISH QUESTION as early as 1971 (Prejudices and antipathies, p. 22-26). I (and others) repeated that suggestion for the next many years. Nothing happened. Then, as I reported in Technical services quarterly, Fall/Winter 1984, p. 188-89: "Finally, in June 1985, nearly 15 years after that heading had been publicly and thoroughly denounced, LC agreed to scrap JEWISH QUESTION. Marjorie Greenfield, an irate Jewish-American librarian, persuaded the Anti-Defamation League to intercede. And that did it."
- +Introducing "GOD (CHRISTIANITY)" was likewise proposed in Prejudices (p. 56-7). And has been often repeated by me in print and public speech. There is no compelling reason for not having established the more accurate and fairer form long ago. (This doesn't involve replacing anything, merely creating a new rubric and assigning it consistently to material that treats with God from a Christian perspective, instead of indigestibly mish-mashing such works with material that deals in general or from a multifaith viewpoint with the idea of God. The longer the wait for the new heading, the greater the bibliographic pollution and irretrievability of desired items.)
- +Incidentally, the trouble with the "God"-treatment simply represents a much larger deficiency regarding a host of other religion-related headings (for more examples, see the "Christocentric headings" index entries in the 1993 Prejudices reprint).
- + "Before we made the change from 'Gypsies' to 'Romanies,' staff members from CPSO...consulted closely with a renowned expert and advocate in this field." That expert/advocate was doubtless Ian F. Hancock, Linguistics Professor at the University of Texas-Austin and himself an English Romani. Writings and correspondence by Hancock years before had led Hennepin County Library to make the ethnonym-switch. And those Hancock-sources (as well as HCL's treatment-details) had been regularly forwarded to LC. With no positive result.
- +No explanation is given for continuing to cling to "Lepers" and "Leprosy," except for a reference to Mesh as an authority for such forms. Well, what about the U.S. Public Health Service as a suitable authority? USPHS has favored "Hansen's Disease" and "Hansen's Disease patients" for decades. And they actually deal with HD patients and medical personnel. (For more on this terminological dispute, see Fall/Winter 1984 TSQ, p. 155-60, and "Hansen's Disease, not Leprosy," Librarians at liberty, Dec. 2000, p. 27-8.)
- + "Most of our correspondence contains helpful and constructive suggestions." The clear implication: my correspondence is not either helpful or constructive. Yet for 26 years, I duly forwarded to LC copies of HCL's bimonthly Cataloging bulletin, replete with full syndetic workups for new & changed headings, assignment-citations, and quoted usage-examples. Lately, in retirement, I have privately recommended dozens of new headings and changes, accompanying each with backup documentation and proposed scope-notes and cross-references. (I'll gladly supply photocopies to anyone. Topics range from EROTOPHOBIA and RECOVERED FACTORY MOVEMENT to MORAL PANICS and GENDERQUEERS. Also available: two instalments of "Who did it when?," dating from 1990 and 1992, which compare LC and HCL heading establishment by date and language.)

e unstated reason for why headings aren't created or corrected in a
mely fashion is that catalogers may be discouraged from doing so.
is is from my column in Unabashed Librarian, no. 137, p. 25:

As exemplified by the 12-year (or longer) delay in establishing a ZINES heading, I've repeatedly lamented LC's failure to create needed subject descriptors and also Dewey numbers in a timely, responsive, and even proactive fashion. Invariably, the question arises in talks and conversations: Why? How come the laggardliness? Surely, some of the several plausible reasons include underfunding, insufficient staff, and unending backlogs. But there's another reason, too: Attitudes or management priorities, which currently seem to regard digitization as a panacea for space problems, preservation, and searching. (An older and probably continuing mindset is basically conservative and bureaucratic, hesitant to innovate until somehow shamed or otherwise pressured to do so.) These are not merely the speculations of a jaundiced and frustrated outsider. Lately, when a high-ranking member of the LC cataloging establishment was asked how LC creates new subject headings and whether individual catalogers propose them, she replied:

Yes, catalogers are responsible for setting up new subject headings when needed for a work they're cataloging. However, our catalogers are under a lot of pressure to produce widgets. Since they don't get any credit for setting up new subject headings or classification numbers, this work takes a definite back seat to cranking out cataloging.

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