

## The old and the prudish: an examination of sex, sexuality, and queerness in Library of Congress Classification

By: [Tiffany Henry](#), Rhonda Kauffman and Anastasia Chiu

Henry, T., Kauffman, R., & Chiu, A. (2022). The old and the prudish: an examination of sex, sexuality, and queerness in Library of Congress Classification. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2022/the-old-and-the-prudish/>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](#).

### Abstract:

Despite the fact that scholarship and knowledge about sex and sexuality have grown enormously in the last century, these topics in the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) schedules have remained stagnant, particularly in the HQ schedule (a classification subclass), entitled “The Family. Marriage. Women.” In this schedule, multiple structural issues in organization and placement of topics demonstrate a deeply sex negative attitude that has seen relatively little change in over a century. This article takes a deep dive into the negative attitudes toward sex and sexuality in the LCC HQ schedule, analyzing the ways in which sex negativity manifests structurally in LCC, and is informed by a thematic review of schedule editions between 1910 and 2020. It turns critical efforts that are traditionally applied to the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) in critical cataloging literature, to the deeper underlying structure of LCC. Though critiques and shortcomings of both LCC and LCSH on the treatment of LGBTQIA+ topics are well noted in the literature, very few examine the underpinnings of LGBTQIA+ marginalization as informed by sex negativity. This article examines some major issues in the HQ schedule with an eye toward providing a roadmap for future revisions. We aim for readers to realize what it means for structural inequity to exist in LCC, the harm that that structural inequity can impart, and to take a critical eye to the foundational classification used within numerous libraries, beyond the subject headings overlaying and masking that classification.

**Keywords:** classification | LCC | Library of Congress Classification | queerness | sex | sex positivity | sexuality

### Article:

#### Introduction

“Curiosa.”

“Marriage with deceased wife’s sister.”

“Social purity.”

These are but a few topics within the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) that focus on human sex and sexuality. Despite the fact that scholarship and knowledge about sex and

sexuality have grown enormously in the last century, the treatment of sex and sexuality topics within LCC have remained stagnant.

Library classification systems like LCC organize knowledge into a systematic order whereby catalogers assess materials and assign classification numbers based on standardized criteria in tandem with subject headings, resulting in the physical embodiment of that classification that we see on the shelves – a shelf list of titles grouped by common subjects or authors, situated relationally adjacent to one another. Catalogers rely on Library of Congress publications like the Library of Congress Classification Schedules to help guide them in selecting the right classification number for their materials, often relying on scope notes and references to help guide their decisions.

In thinking about library organization structures, classification can be understood metaphorically as a skeleton that organizes the physical collection of a library, overlaid (and sometimes masked) by controlled vocabularies. Much of the research involving the critical cataloging movement has focused on controlled vocabularies and subject analysis, and particularly examine the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). We argue that classification structures also deserve substantial critique and work. The topics that a classification structure lifts up can be seen as individual “bones” of a library’s skeleton. A topic’s appearance in classification makes it a locus point that many controlled vocabulary terms can be organized around — a bone with its attendant muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Interrogating the ways that subject headings reinforce oppression and marginalization and changing them as we expand our understanding of “inclusive language” is a worthy endeavor. Yet, these efforts cannot add up to structural change if we do not also attend to the bones around which the muscles are organized, and the ways that they also perpetuate erasure, stigmatization, stereotyping, and disempowerment.

This marginalization is particularly evident in the section of the Library of Congress Classification schedule that deals with sex, sexuality, and queerness. Housed within the H schedule for social sciences, the bulk of the LC classification that deals with sex and sexuality occurs in subclass HQ, entitled “The Family. Marriage. Women” (see Table 1 for an excerpt of this subclass). Its title is the first clue as to its outdated overall outlook. The order, structure, and hierarchy presented in the HQ class schedule has changed very little since its creation in 1910. The implication of the lack of change and adaptation in the HQ schedule is both negative and significant considering that LCC is the primary classification scheme used in academic and research libraries worldwide.

As catalogers working within academic and research libraries, all three authors have come across titles classed in HQ and individually questioned placement or presence of specific class numbers or the structure of the schedule itself. As people trained to classify materials and who have either currently or previously done classification as part of our regular job duties, we are often baffled or outright offended by some structural choices within the HQ schedule. To determine why warrants further investigation.

**Table 1.** Excerpt from the *Library of Congress Classification Outline Subclass HQ* (HQ12-449 Sexual Life) (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, n.d., p. 16).

- HQ1-2044: The Family. Marriage. Women
  - HQ12-449: Sexual life
    - HQ19-30.7: Sexual behavior and attitudes. Sexuality
    - HQ31-64: Sex instruction and sexual ethics
    - HQ71-72: Sexual deviations
    - HQ74-74.2: Bisexuality
    - HQ75-76.8: Homosexuality. Lesbianism
    - HQ77-77.2: Transvestitism
    - HQ77.7-77.95: Transexualism
    - HQ79: Sadism. Masochism. Fetishism, etc.
    - HQ101-440.7: Prostitution
    - HQ447: Masturbation
    - HQ449: Emasculation. Eunuchs, etc.

## **Problem Statement**

The HQ schedule presents many areas in need of further critique and structural change given the broad range of topics classed there. Despite its title, the HQ schedule includes a large, yet unnamed section dedicated to sex and sexuality. We chose to interrogate the way sex and sexuality show up in the LCC HQ schedule, primarily in the range of HQ12-472, a section that specifically covers human sex, sexuality, and similar topics. In our analysis, we identified an extreme level of sex negativity, defined as “a negative attitude or stance toward any sexual behavior other than procreative marital coitus” (“Sex Negativity,” n.d.). Sex positivity, by contrast, is “a positive attitude or stance toward sexual activity between consenting individuals when this is seen as promoting healthy relationships and forms of self-expression. Sex is seen as neither good nor bad, per se, and the purpose of sexual relations is not deemed to be confined exclusively to procreation through marital coitus” (“Sex Positivity,” n.d.).

Sex negativity, which is deeply and systemically ingrained in our society, is intimately tied with anti-queerness because it narrowly normalizes procreative marital sex only. This effectively marginalizes a great many queer people, in part because the institution of marriage is denied to queer people in many legal jurisdictions, and in part because many queer ways of being include an understanding of sex as relationship-building, identity-building, and pleasurable, which is seen through a sex negative lens as inherently immoral, dirty, or otherwise negative. Sex negativity shows up in many ways, and in many places across HQ12-472. For example, many classmarks in this range lack explanatory notes to clarify vague and dubious labels, such as “Curiosa” (HQ25), implying an unwillingness to engage directly with topics related to sex.

Queerphobia and transphobia are also deeply endemic to HQ’s treatment of sexuality, and are often underpinned by sex negativity, precisely because sex negativity denies the possibility that for many people, relationality can be more important in sex than procreation. HQ reduces queer identities down to what is visible in mainstream media, and by lumping together topics that queer and trans communities and scholars often understand as separate, even if related. For example, as the section on “Human sexuality. Sex” (HQ12-449) handles queer sexual orientations, it lifts up

“gay,” “lesbian,” and “bisexual” people, but otherwise only provides “sexual minorities” as a catch-all, without specific designations for any other specific sexualities, and provides no room for works exploring the broad spectrum of sexuality, including but not limited to pansexuality, greysexuality, aromanticism, polyamory, and asexuality.

We see HQ manifest its sex negativity and anti-queerness through five major mechanisms: granularity or spacing issues, scope note issues, harmful topical correlations due to proximity, issues with labels, and high stagnancy over time. The presence of sex negativity and anti-queerness in the structure of HQ can impart harm by reflecting back at library users either perspectives that may disparage part of their personal identities or promote a very narrow and singular idea of what sex is and should be for everyone. How knowledge is organized is directly shaped by the culture and era that produced the system; LCC is no exception. The presence of both sex negativity and anti-queerness merely reflects how both topics have historically been regarded in U.S. culture, given the history and origin of LCC.

Below, we situate our approach and perspective as part of the critical cataloging movement, and provide some analysis of major ranges and themes in HQ that exemplify sex negativity and anti-queerness.

## Literature Review

To inform our analysis of HQ, we consulted sources that we see as “secondary sources,” analyzing cataloging systems and issues with a critical, or social-justice-oriented, lens, as well as “primary sources” which directly govern the cataloging systems that we are interested in. Our secondary literature helps us frame our perspective and analysis within the movement of critical cataloging (or #critcat). The “primary” literature provides an understanding of the overall governance of LCC, and thus, how the issues that we see came to be and how they compounded over time.

### Brief overview of critical cataloging

We situate our work within the critical cataloging movement overall, by analyzing HQ with a critical, queer, feminist, and holistic lens. The lens through which we work is by no means original or new, and many radical and critical catalogers have argued for similar ways to critique cataloging work and cataloging tools. Sanford Berman is perhaps the most well known for his work to author and submit numerous changes to biased LCSH beginning in the late 1960s, targeting terms that were outright chauvinist, racist, and Euro- and Christian-centric (Berman, 1971; Roberto, 2008). Berman is commonly known as the founder of *radical cataloging*, a term used to describe ways in which catalogers can look critically at catalog records and headings (especially those supplied by LC), as they are often incomplete and disregard the viewpoints and experience of marginalized populations (Roberto, 2008). Radical cataloging was originally imagined as an approach that “addresses the root issues that can make access to information problematic” (Lember et al., 2013).

Somewhat recently, critical cataloging evolved within critical librarianship, a movement of librarianship that examines social justice issues in our work (*Critlib: About / Join the Discussion*,

n.d.). Critical cataloging, which revitalizes some of the principles of radical cataloging, recognizes the power of labeling and naming (Olson, 2002), takes into account potential harm or benefit of terms being used, and exposes and challenges the ways in which we replicate the systems of oppression within society and the library profession (*Critlib: Critcat*, n.d.; Drabinski, 2008; Watson, 2020). The current wave of critical cataloging efforts to revise subject headings and classmarks includes perhaps most famously the recommendation for the change to the subject heading “illegal aliens” to “noncitizens” or “unauthorized immigration,” and “aliens” to “noncitizens” (Baron et al., 2016; Price, 2021). A collaborative worksite, the Cataloging Lab (Fox, 2018a, 2018b), was recently created to lower barriers to proposing new classification numbers, subject, and name authority headings. New headings have been created thanks to the work of Cataloging Lab participants, including “Afrofuturism” (“Afrofuturism,” 2019), and “SayHerName movement” (“SayHerName Movement,” 2021), and many new headings and revisions to existing headings have been suggested. Indeed, the current movement in radical and critical cataloging has remained true to its roots of calling attention to the systemic systems of oppression within which we work, a framework within which this article is placed.

A bulk of cataloging literature that criticizes Library of Congress Classification and Subject Headings, which we seek to add to, points out that these systems were not originally intended to organize the entirety of knowledge as we currently use it; their original intent was to organize a very specific collection of volumes for the United States Congress in the late nineteenth century. This is evidenced by large sections of the LCC specifically devoted to American history (classes E&F); and political, military and naval science (J, U, and V schedules respectively) (Higgins, 2012; Watson, 2020). Their scope and focus have a definite bias toward Western, American, white, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian, and male points of view as one would imagine would be the case for a controlled vocabulary and a classification system created “within a Western framework of late Victorianism, rampant industrial expansion, and feverish empire-building” (Berman, 1971).

### Treatment of sex and queerness in LC cataloging systems

A major body of scholarly criticism about LCSH and LCC’s treatment of sex and queerness already exists. A bulk of this literature focuses on LCSH, which correlates strongly to LCC, but is separate from it. While this article focuses on a classification rather than on subject headings, many of the approaches that we take to analyze a portion of the HQ schedule are drawn from approaches detailed in this LCSH work.

It is no secret that the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) have a problematic history of using pejorative and outdated terminology. LC has a process for suggesting new or modifying existing terms and references for the vocabulary, which is the same process used to suggest additions or changes to LCC. However, both can be considered “rigid system[s] defined by hierarchical organization that [are] extremely slow and resistant to change” (Howard & Knowlton, 2018). The process of creating or changing terms can be challenging, as Watson (2020) summarized for the proposal process for the terms “Asexuality (Sexual orientation)” and “Asexual people;” previously “Asexual” only appeared in reference to asexually reproducing plants in biology. The proposal was first rejected, and after much philosophical discussion and rewriting, the two headings were accepted as new subject headings in 2016. If making changes to

LCSH is difficult and painstakingly slow, the process for making changes to LCC is even slower.

Throughout LCSH, queer identities are heavily stigmatized, if not outright erased, a trend that we find correlates strongly to how queer identities are represented in LCC. The only subject heading that uses the term “queer” in LCSH is “Queer theory” (Roberto, 2011; Kauffman & Anderson, 2018), compared to the 100+ terms that include “queer” in Homosaurus, the international linked data vocabulary of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) terms (*Homosaurus: An International LGBTQ+ Linked Data Vocabulary*, 2019). Terms that do appear in LCSH are heavily binary, with straight as the default, and gay, lesbian, or bisexual as the other options for sexual orientations (plus, now, asexuality). The options for sexual orientations and identities fail to illustrate the fluidity and nuances of sexual identities. As Roberto (2011) observes, “Queer identities do not have an explicit place in LCSH.” We argue that for both similar and different reasons, the same is true of LCC.

Since Roberto’s 2011 article on transgender identities was published, some hierarchies of terms within LCSH have changed. Roberto notes that at the time of writing, “Gays” was used for “Gay people,” “Gay persons,” and “Homosexuals,” which still holds true today, as does the term “Sexual minorities” for LGBTQ people at large. Roberto also noted cross references for “Sexual minorities” included “Gender minorities,” “non-heterosexual people,” and “Sexual dissidents,” all of which are “use for” references for “Sexual minorities” today. “Use for” references are acknowledgements of natural-language terms in LCSH, and they lead people from natural-language versions of a term to the authorized version of a term. Much like “Soft drinks” is a use-for term for “Soda pop” and “Sodas (Beverages),” if a person searches for “Gender minorities” in a catalog, they will be redirected to resources with the subject heading “Sexual minorities.” Cross references are those related terms that LC includes to say to a user, “You might also like...” Cross references for “Sexual minorities” today include, “Asexual people,” “Bisexuals,” “Gays,” and others. While there have been changes to LCSH within the last decade, there still exists the element of marginalization and othering of non-gay, non-lesbian, non-bisexual people, lumping them into “Sexual minorities,” without even acknowledging that they are people.

Substantial literature analyzes how the terms chosen as the authorized form in LCSH and references between terms can also be problematic. The act of naming terms is quite powerful and encodes systemic bias into the means by which library materials are discovered and organized (Matienzo, 2015; Olson, 2002). “Paraphilias” is the current term for what was previously called “Sexual deviation,” and prior to that, “Sexual perversion.” These changing terms originally drew directly from medical literature, such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*.

Likewise, a term’s placement within the LCSH hierarchy can be problematic. For instance, “homosexuality” was filed under “Sexual deviation” and prior to that under “Sexual perversion” before it was moved to “Human sexuality. Sex” after 1980 (Adler, 2017; Drucker, 2017). LCSH terminology regarding homosexuality and its placement within and outside of sexual deviation and perversion has mirrored its treatment within the DSM, and subsequent social movements to remove homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder from the DSM (Adler, 2017). Sandy Berman even petitioned to have the subject heading “Sexual perversion” changed to “Sexual deviation”

and went further to suggest its cancellation as a cross reference to “homosexuality” and “lesbianism” (Berman, 1971). In short, the placement of terms within a vocabulary’s hierarchy insinuates judgment, and while changes have been made, they are slow to match the speed of societal change.

These issues of naming, placement, harmful correlations through proximity, and stagnancy over time also show up in LCC, in part due to the high level of correlation between it and LCSH. Our analysis adds to these existing observations by digging into precisely how they show up in LCC, and by adding consideration of an issue that manifests most clearly in classification: a lack of space for granularity on topics of queerness and sex.

### Critical classification

The body of literature on critical classification and knowledge organization looks like a trickle in comparison to the roaring waterfall of literature on subject terms and controlled vocabularies, and our article seeks to contribute to filling some of the gap by offering a classification-specific analysis. Yet, the existing body of literature is not insubstantial. For example, it is particularly robust in the area of Indigenous Knowledge Organization. Yeh & Frosio (1971), Lincoln (1987), Webster & Doyle (2008), and Lee (2011) all problematize LCC’s treatment of Indigenous people and cultures. Cherry & Mukunda (2015), Littletree & Metoyer (2015), and Littletree, Belarde-Lewis, and Duarte’s work (2020) delve further to highlight and present Indigenous-centered ways of seeing and understanding Indigenous knowledges.

LIS scholarship also includes many other critical perspectives specific to LCC. Foskett (1971) presented a (White) feminist critique of LCC, as well as a general critique of cultural norms in cataloging that upheld (and uphold) the myth of “neutrality” in classification work. Soltani (1996); Kublik, et al (2003); Idrees & Mahmood (2009); Higgins (2012); Baker & Islam (2020); and Hart (2021) each presented cases of LCC’s othering, exoticization, and erasure of women and people of color all over the world, and put forth guidance to radically correct LCC, or to adapt it to local and culturally specific contexts. A common thread across these pieces is their reminder to catalogers that it is always significant that LCC originated as a system designed for the specific collection focuses of the United States Congress’s library, and holds all of that collection’s biases.

Additionally, a growing body of critical literature on LCC focuses specifically on queer sexualities and genders. Keilty (2009) illustrates the paradoxical nature of classifying queerness at all, pointing to many ways in which queerness simultaneously defies and relies on categorization and classification. In their paper on classifying a queer community organization’s collection, Nowak and Mitchell (2016) detail the practical problems of using LCC, including how extremely small the call number ranges for queerness and queer people are. Adler (2017) provides a great deal of historical context for the rampant bias against queer sexualities in HQ, and contends that LCC is not just a reflection of mainstream bias against queer people, but a structure that reseeds and recreates that bias in research libraries across the US and around the world. Howard & Knowlton (2018) depict the practical difficulties of describing and classifying African American Studies and LGBTQIA Studies works that result from LCC’s and LCSH’s anti-Blackness and anti-queerness.

We draw, with gratitude, on all of these existing observations to critique HQ, and seek to add to these threads by showing, through an analysis of sex and queerness in HQ, that the ways that bias manifests in LCC can be complex and intertwined, well beyond what the systems that exist to correct it were designed to address.

### LCC/LCSH proposal process and the problem of literary warrant

To better understand how the issues that we see came into being and are maintained over time, it is important to understand how the official revision process works for LCC. Accordingly, we also consulted both the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) Manual (Schiff & Program for Cooperative Cataloging, 2007) and the Classification and Shelflisting Manual (CSM)'s "F50" classification proposal guidelines (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, 2013).

The SACO Manual is important because the SACO program is responsible for organizing the maintenance of official LC vocabularies such as LCSH and LC Demographic Terms, as well as the LCC schedules. It is part of the Library of Congress's Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC), and its proposals are reviewed and decided upon by the Library of Congress Policies and Standards Division (PSD). LC PSD is also the body that maintains the CSM, which provides guidance to catalogers on how to understand and use the LC Classification system. The policies set forth in the SACO manual on how to propose new subject headings and class numbers serves as a supplement to the rules set forth by CSM, providing extra guidance on how and when to create proposals, as well as examples.

Both of these major manuals display a deeply-ingrained reliance on "literary warrant" for all alterations and new class numbers in the governance of LCC and LCSH. Literary warrant is a principle based on the idea that "classes are created to cope with the literature that must be classified by the scheme, rather than on the basis of any theoretical analysis of knowledge, either documentary or philosophical" (Broughton, 2015, p. 164). It requires catalogers to furnish a title as evidence that the change requested in the LCC proposal is "necessary." Both the CSM F50 and SACO manual provide multiple examples of specific titles and situations that would demand a proposal. In twenty examples given in the SACO manual, only one did not contain or require literary warrant. In that example, the illustrated modification was a minimal change to ensure that terminology used in LCC matched a corresponding LCSH (2007, p. 223). Similarly, within CSM the only proposal example without a specific work tied to it is an example of adding a "see reference" (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, 2013, pp. 56–57). Both examples are very small in relation to the overwhelming body of literary-warrant-based examples; this weighting of examples creates an impression that proposals not based on literary warrant should be extremely rare and that catalogers are virtually always expected to provide a work as a basis for their proposals.

The critique of literary warrant is already something of a tradition in critical cataloging (Biswas, 2018; Watson, 2020). To add to it, we offer an observation that orienting the proposal process around literary warrant introduces two major issues, one regarding the size and scale of proposed changes and another around its reliance on the publishing industry for equity and representation.



The proposal process is optimized for smaller alterations to LCC. The examples given in both the SACO manual and CSM F50 guidelines suggest that successful proposals alter only one or a couple of classmarks at a time. Otherwise, changes may require multiple proposals, often contingent on prior ones' acceptance and implementation. That approach is prohibitive given the time and effort required by both the petitioner and PSD review committee. Even with breakthroughs in knowledge published in the formats that libraries value most, reflecting those changes in LCC for collection organization will be a slow process. There are also known inequities around who and what traditionally gets published, and thus, what gets collected by libraries (Roh & Inefuku, 2016). For example, Roh (2016) highlighted in her article the racial disparities found within publishing by noting the whiteness of both scholarly publishing (Greco et al., 2016), and mainstream publishing (Lee and Low Books et al., 2016, 2020). Literary warrant then replicates the inequities in publishing in our knowledge organization systems.

### **Thematic Review of HQ Over Time**

In order to explore how classmarks and class ranges have or have not changed over time, including their placement within the hierarchy, as well as the introduction of new topics, we compared editions from 1910, 1920, 1950, 1965, 1980, and 2020, analyzed particular labels, themes, class ranges, and classmarks over time. Some general findings are noted here.

We see labels and granularity of categorizations for sex and sexuality remain largely unchanged until after 1965, with the introduction of distinct classmarks for "Lesbians," "Gay men," "Bisexuality" (see Table 2), "Cross-dressing. Transvestism," as well as "Sexual behavior and attitudes" for specific groups of people like boys, girls, men, women, etc. introduced in the 1980 edition, and remain largely unchanged today.

"Homosexuality" has appeared since the first edition in 1910, and was initially nested under "Abnormal sex relations," whose label was changed to "Sexual deviations" by the 1980 edition. It currently sits under "Human sexuality. Sex." (See Table 2)

Curiously, HQ73 has undergone some changes and is currently described as "Sexual minorities. General works." However, prior to and including the 1965 edition, this same classmark was described as "Abnormal sex relations. Sexual perversion in woman." We did not see any entry for HQ73 in the 1980 edition.

The majority of changes within HQ regarding sex and sexuality that we see in the 2020 edition were made in the 1980 edition and after, broadly acknowledging the sexual revolution, women's liberation, and gay liberation movements of the 1960s-1980s. Further analysis of our findings is detailed below.

**Table 2.** Selection of HQ classmarks across Library of Congress Classification editions, with nesting terms included.

<b>Edition Year</b>	<b>2020 ed.</b>	<b>1980 ed.</b>	<b>1965 ed.</b>	<b>1950 ed.</b>	<b>1920 ed.</b>	<b>1910 ed.</b>
Group 1	HQ18.6: Sexual attraction	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Group 2	HQ25: Curiosa	HQ25: Curiosa	HQ25: Curiosa	HQ25: Curiosa	HQ25: Curiosa	HQ25: Curiosa
Group 3	HQ71-72: Sexual practices outside of social norms. Paraphilias	HQ71-72: Sexual deviations	HQ71-72: Abnormal sex relations	HQ71-72: Abnormal sex relations	HQ71-72: Abnormal sex relations	HQ71-72: Abnormal sex relations
Group 4	HQ73: Sexual minorities. General works	N/A	HQ73: Abnormal sex relations. Sexual perversion in woman.	HQ73: Abnormal sex relations. Sexual perversion in woman.	HQ73: Abnormal sex relations. Sexual perversion in woman.	HQ73A: abnormal sex relations. Sexual perversion in woman.
Group 5	HQ75-76.965: Human Sexuality. Sex. - Homosexuality. Lesbianism	HQ75-76.8: Sexual deviations. - Homosexuality. Lesbianism	HQ76: Abnormal sex relations. - Homosexuality	HQ76: Abnormal sex relations. - Homosexuality	HQ76: Abnormal sex relations. - Homosexuality	HQ76: Abnormal sex relations. - Homosexuality
Group 6	HQ75.3-.6: Lesbians	HQ75.3-.6: Lesbians	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Group 7	HQ75.7-.8: Gay men	HQ75.7-.8: Gay men	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Group 8	HQ74-.2: Bisexuality	HQ74-.2: Bisexuality	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

## Analysis

We have selected seven topical examples to highlight how sex negativity, anti-queerness, or both manifests in the HQ schedule. Each instance of sex negativity or anti-queerness analyzed here carries one or a combination of the five mechanisms named earlier: issues with granularity, a lack of or problematic scope notes, harmful associations created by proximity, issues with the labeling of class numbers, and high stagnancy of the class schedule over time.

### Naming sex and sexuality in the schedule

The first and largest example of sex negativity in HQ lies in the incongruence between the name of the schedule, “The Family. Marriage. Women” and the fact that roughly its entire first third (HQ12 to HQ472) is about sex and sexuality. Notably, sex and sexuality topics are organized and placed before class numbers that speak to the schedule’s title, including families, marriage, parenthood, and women. This treatment of sex and sexuality in the class schedule, and the conspicuous lack of direct naming of sex in the schedule title, ensure that sex is heavily framed as being inseparable from marriage and family.

Furthermore, there is very little in the schedule that builds room for any understanding of sex and sexuality as having significant purposes of pleasure, relationship-building, or building self-identity. The closest that the 2020 edition of the HQ schedule comes to any acknowledgment of these aspects of sex lie in the range “Sex instruction and sexual ethics” (HQ 31-64), which includes some space for works on specific sexual practices. Yet, even here, because the focus of the section is on “teaching” and “ethics,” its main impact is not ultimately to affirm that sex serves more purposes than procreative ones, but rather to signal that only specific types of sex are normative and appropriate, namely sex between married heterosexual couples.

### Treatment of queer sexualities and identities

A prime example of HQ’s failure to provide granularity or sufficient space to topics related to sex, is its treatment of sexualities and sexual identities, particularly queer ones. We define granularity or spacing issues as instances in which there is either a dearth of numerical space given to broad topics, disproportionate space devoted to niche topics within the classification subclass, or the absence of specifically naming topics. Avoiding specifically allotting space and naming topics for non-majority sexualities and sexual identities contributes to the erasure of non-heterosexual identities. In this instance, non-heterosexual identities are only allotted a meager five integers’ worth of space between HQ73 and HQ78, with little delineation among the many varied sexual identities that exist. The HQ73 to HQ78 range is the only space that delves into non-heterosexual identities, with minor exceptions for same-sex marriage (HQ1033) and same-sex divorce (HQ825). The inadequate level of space for granularity directly contributes to the queer and trans erasure throughout the entire schedule.

**Table 3.** Excerpt adapted from *Library of Congress Classification, HQ: The Family. Marriage. Women* (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, 2020, pp. 456–458)

- HQ73-73.63: Sexual minorities
  - Sexual minority parents
    - Cf. HQ75.27+: Gay parents
    - Cf. HQ755.7+: Parents. Parenthood
- HQ74-74.9: Bisexuality. General works
  - Cf. HQ1035+: Bisexuality in marriage
  - Cf. RC560.B56: Psychiatric aspects
- HQ74.2-74.6.A-Z: Bisexual women
- HQ74.7-74.9.A-Z: Bisexual men
- HQ75-76.956.A-Z: Homosexuality. Lesbianism
  - Including queer theory
  - Cf. D804.5.G38: Gay victims of the Holocaust
  - Cf. E98.S48: Indian gays and lesbians
  - Cf. HQ1033+: Same-sex marriage
  - Cf. QP81.6: Physiology
  - Cf. RC558+: Psychiatric aspects
- HQ75.14-75.16.A-Z: Gay and lesbian studies
- HQ75.25-75.26.A-Z: Travel
- HQ75.27-75.28: Gay parents
  - Cf. HQ75.53: Lesbian mothers
- HQ75.3-75.6.A-Z: Lesbians
  - Cf. HS3357.L47: Lesbian Girl Scouts
- HQ75.7-76.2.A-Z: Gay men
- HQ76.25: Homosexuality. Lesbianism. General works
- HQ76.26: Juvenile works
- HQ76.27.A-Z: Special classes of gay people, A-Z
- HQ76.34-76.35.A-Z: Same-sex relationships
  - Cf. HQ1033+: Same-sex marriage
- HQ76.4-76.45.A-Z: Homophobia. Heterosexism
- HQ76.5-76.8.A-Z: Gay rights movement. Gay liberation movement. Homophile movement
- HQ76.85: Gay conservatives
- HQ76.9-76.95.A-Z: Gay press publications
  - Class here works on publications of any type produced by the gay and lesbian community
- HQ76.96-76.965.A-Z: Gay and lesbian culture

It is clearly visible that too many subjects have been crammed into a small range of class numbers given the liberal use of decimals in that range to expand. What falls between HQ73 and HQ78 attempts to capture and place nearly all things pertinent to queerness, not only naming (a select few) queer identities, but also aspects of queer culture, and more. While attempting to be inclusive, this is actually to the detriment of the people that this space describes and represents. Some examples of what falls into this range include “Travel” specifically for queer people at HQ75.25, “Gay parents” at HQ75.27, “Gay rights movement. Gay liberation movement.

Homophile movement” at HQ76.5, and “Gay and lesbian culture” at HQ76.96 to name only a few. This demonstrates how broad the subjects are in this range for so little space within the classification schedule. The use of decimal points to fit in a newer class number within the established schedule is a typical LCC cataloging practice and is seen in numerous, if not all available LCC schedules. Its pervasive use in the HQ73 to HQ78 range indicates initial disregard during design of the class schedule.

Providing very little space for subjects covering numerous aspects of queer and trans identities illustrates the indifference LC catalogers had for it during construction and development of the schedule. There was no anticipation that the subject would grow, and that more than five class numbers would be needed in the future. This is another example of how heteronormativity is reinforced by the class schedule if the inclusion of queer identities and people are treated as an afterthought. Due to the lack of initial space afforded in the class schedule and the use of more decimals to accommodate new subjects, it does not encourage further growth. Catalogers using LCC are less inclined to establish new class numbers in a range where the numbers are already so close together. It is work that can be done but becomes harder to do as time passes and subject area knowledge expands. Encouraging growth within a LCC class schedule is visualized via numerical gaps between class numbers and the overuse of decimals in class numbers indicates the opposite.

Again, this already small class number range and lack of delineation of subcategories does a poor job at differentiating sexual identities, providing nuance where needed, as well as placing topics relating to all queer and trans communities together without critical thought on placement or distinctions. Broad strokes are utilized in the HQ73 to HQ78 range for all queer identities. Only “gay”, “lesbian”, and “bisexual” identities are directly named while other queer identities that might fall outside the popular imagination and mainstream media such as pansexuality, greysexuality, aromanticism, polyamory, and asexuality receive an inadequate umbrella term of “sexual minorities.” While space is given for both trans and intersex people at HQ77.7 and HQ77.97 respectively, the placement and labeling of the class numbers appears to be less of a thoughtful integration of these subjects.

By contrast, the class numbers assigned to Computer Science (QA75.5-76.95), an entirely new field of research since LCC was originally constructed, was squeezed into a small space but is organized with multiple delineations for subcategories and aspects of the field. Subcategories include reserved class numbers for many topics, including types of programming (QA76.6-76.66), an A-Z list of individual programming languages (QA76.73 A-Z), and another A-Z list of special topics in computer software (QA76.76 A-Z). Even within this small number range, a breadth of topics is covered with surprising granularity. Applying similar attention to sexual and queer identities by assigning specific class number ranges to them would give a legitimate place to these otherwise erased sexual and queer identities that fall outside of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans.

Discrimination based on gender, sex, or sexuality

Another example of HQ’s lack of granularity on topics related to queerness and sex is that there are very few class numbers directly dealing with discrimination based on gender, sex, or sexual

orientation. There are four named class numbers total related to sexuality- and gender-based discrimination within HQ:

- Homophobia. Heterosexism (HQ76.4)
- Transphobia. Transgender discrimination (HQ77.96)
- Intersex discrimination (HQ78.4)
- Sex discrimination against women. Sexual harassment of women. Sexism (HQ1237)

Each of these topics is broad in nature, but cramped within very little numerical space in the schedule. The lack of space afforded to a broad swath of topics further reinforces the reduction and erasure of queer identities, by restraining classification of the ways that anti-queer and anti-feminist movements have impacted the histories and cultural processes of queer communities. Topics as nuanced as discrimination, gender-based harassment, and sexism in totality need more than four LCC class numbers to adequately delve into each subject. The lack of granularity is a disservice to the importance of the topic, especially within a schedule purportedly about sex and human sexuality. We see less than whole integers between the numbers assigned for each of these very broad types of discrimination, cramping catalogers' capacity to describe them with the specificity that they need to be understood.

The remaining class number dealing with discrimination is a numerical outlier compared to the other three but also has a similar granularity issue. The class number HQ1237 covers the subjects of sexual harassment, discrimination against women, and sexism. It is worth noting that the distance in the schedule from the HQ73-HQ78 range implies that this class number was conceptualized to cover works about cisgender women. This only furthers the trans erasure seen throughout other parts of the schedule. Unlike the other class numbers covering the topic of discrimination in multiple forms, HQ1237 is allotted a whole integer. While this presents more of a modicum of space than the four discrimination-related topics that we identified in the range that we were primarily interested in (HQ12-472), it nevertheless allots only a single integer to three related, but distinct topics. Each subject covered by HQ1237 could warrant its own class number at a minimum, given the potential depth of the topics.

We observed above that only a few queer identities that are visible in the mainstream media are afforded their own place in HQ. In a similar fashion, HQ only recognizes a few select types of discrimination and harassment based on gender and sexuality. While the discrimination against people who are queer, trans, intersex, and women is certainly worthy of their own space carved out in the classification, these groups of people are not the only ones who experience oppression or discrimination. The existing discrimination-oriented call numbers are afforded so little space, that it is difficult to imagine room for acknowledgement for the discrimination against other groups of people who also experience gender- or sexuality-based discrimination. Although we find that all four class numbers are more recent additions to the HQ schedule based on our historical analysis, we also find that there are other new classmarks and ranges with deeper and more granular coverage in other classes, which makes the argument that the topics are "new" a rather inadequate excuse for the lack of space made for them in HQ. As phenomena, sexism and discrimination or harassment based on gender, sex, or sexual orientation are not new, and the level of scholarship and cultural conversation about them warrant far more space and granularity than they are given in HQ.

## Curiosa

During our examination, we collectively stopped in our tracks at HQ25 “Curiosa,” which occurs under “Sexual behaviors and attitudes.” There are no subcategories, and it is also separate from the miscellaneous category of “General special.” It lacks any scope notes or explanation to clarify what should be classed in this vaguely-labeled class number, and the vagueness and prurience of the label engenders sex negative and anti-queer understandings of the topics classed there, which though not clear, can still be understood as being non-normative, and related to sex. To find out what has been placed in this section, we searched our libraries’ and LC’s catalogs, as well as OCLC’s WorldCat, and discovered that books classed here cover a range of general topics pertaining to sex and sexual activities, including sex tips to spice up a marriage, aphrodisiacs, and one title called *Curiositates eroticæ physiologiæ; or tabooed subjects freely treated* by John Davenport, published in 1875, with the table of contents “Generation — Virginité and chastity — Marriage — Circumcision — Eunuchism — Hermaphroditism — Death.” Many of the works were published in the late 19th and early 20th century, with a large break until the 1970s and then again in the 2000s, where many are presented as popular culture books on human sex and sexuality, and are given the subject heading “Sex – Miscellanea,” for example *Sex facts : a handbook for the carnally curious* by Leslee Welch (1995) or *The Mammoth book of erotic confessions* by Barbara Cardy (2009).

Curiosa appeared in the first edition of HQ in 1910 and remains unchanged today. While curiosa might mean “unusual or erotic books” (“Curiosa,” n.d.) or be a euphemism for pornographic works (“Curiosa, n.,” 2021), we posit that in HQ, this was a puritanical catchall for those sexual activities and subjects that are not considered polite to speak of, but are not quite considered “sexually perverse.” The lack of scope notes and poor terminology creates a veil of mystery behind a term that severely needs updating. In a more sex positive environment books classed here could be placed under a term like “Human sexuality. Sex – Popular Works” that celebrates human sexuality and curiosity, rather than placing it in an antiquated moral catchall of “Curiosa.”

### Sex instruction, sex education, and sexual ethics

Morality, religion, and marriage are embodied deeply into the section of HQ that addresses sex instruction, sex education, and sexual ethics (HQ 31-59). The ways the class numbers and labels within the HQ31-59 range purport a specific view of sex through the moral and ethical lens of heterosexual marriages is a prime example of type of structural sex negativity seen in HQ.

As if to create a foundation for this section, one of the first references for “Sex instruction and sexual ethics” is a “see also” reference for “HQ728-743 Treatises on marriage,” associating sexual ethics with marriage, and connoting that sexual ethics outside the context of maritality or extramaritality, such as ethics of consent, or ethics of shared marital agreements around extramarital sex, are not worth speaking of. The label and structure of “Sex instruction and sexual ethics” insinuates a moral judgment on sexual pleasure. This is the portion of the schedule that directly addresses specific sexual practices, even if they are enormously phallic-centric, and includes “Specific practices and techniques A-Z” and explicitly mentions dildos, oral sex, and penis pumps (HQ31.5 A-Z). Even these somewhat sex positive sections are lacking inclusivity of

other activities and preferences, such as BDSM, sexual role play, or sexual positions, to name a few. Immediately following this section is “Sexual ethics” (HQ32) – its placement not unnoticed.

Embedded within “Sex instruction and sexual ethics” is “Sex teaching,” which has no scope note to help a cataloger distinguish this from “Sex instruction,” or to define the parameters of the topic. Embedded within “Sex teaching” occurs “Sex instruction in the schools,” which lacks a clear scope note as well and can mean many different things. The labeling and placement under “Sex instruction and sexual ethics” connotes the anti-sex-education view that any type of sex education equates to mechanical instruction on sexual intercourse, and to endorsement of sexual risk-taking. Without a scope note, it is unclear what the topic encompasses. Is “Sex instruction in the schools” comparable to sex education that students might get from school that includes various topics including human sexual anatomy, sexual activity, sexual reproduction, “safe sex” practices, sexual health, or abstinence-only sex education, or any combination thereof? None of the subtopics relating to current sex education curricula in schools appear in this range or near the current label. The only mention of “sexual health” within the HQ31-59 range is a see reference in a completely different class schedule for medicine (RA788). The lack of a scope note or additional related subtopics forces catalogers to guess what is meant to be classed in “Sex instruction in the schools.”

#### Marriage with deceased wife’s sister

One of the most surprising class numbers that we found during our analysis of the HQ schedule was one that fell outside our primary range of interest, HQ12-472. It was “Marriage with deceased wife’s sister” at HQ1028, and we include it in this analysis because of the parallel that we see between its issues and those of the other topics that we analyze from HQ12-472. Appearing in the first edition of the schedule published in 1910, works classified here date back to the early 18th century about men marrying their sister-in-law after the death of their previous spouse. This class number and its label initially struck all the authors as an oddly specific instance of remarriage to name so plainly. To get a sense of how this call number has been used and is applied in cataloging, all three authors did a cursory search of our respective institutional library catalogs, OCLC, and the Library of Congress Catalogs. Searches of our catalogs yielded either no results or lead to works published in the late 19th or early 20th century. OCLC and LC catalogs contained mostly works from the 18th and 19th centuries on discourses, sermons, and pamphlets on the morality and legalization of men marrying the sister of their deceased wife. These quick searches confirmed that the call number might be a historical relic of an earlier era. The cursory catalog searches gave us a sense that the call number is no longer in regular use and that this topic is not currently being written about. Falling out of contemporary scholarly discourse while still maintaining space in the classification structure is stagnancy in action. The potential strangeness of this class number is more visually evident in a modern catalog to contemporary library users and illustrates the unchanging nature of the class schedule. Moreover, this stagnancy leads to issues with appropriate labeling, proximity imbuing problematic associations, and further reinforcement of sex negativity.

“Marriage with deceased wife’s sister” (HQ1028) appears with a range (HQ1018-1026, HQ1031-1041) dedicated to either stigmatized or “non-normative” forms of marriage (see Table 4). This is another example where the influence of sex negativity influences the structure of the



schedule, imbuing the social stigma regarding what kinds of sex are appropriate to nearby HQ1028.

**Table 4.** Excerpt adapted from *Library of Congress Classification, HQ: The Family. Marriage. Women* (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, 2020, p. 473).

- HQ1018: Remarriage
- HQ1026: Consanguineous marriage
  - Cf. HV4981: Social pathology
- HQ1028: Marriage with deceased wife's sister
- HQ1031: Mixed marriages. Intermarriage. Interfaith marriage
  - Including material on mixed marriages in general
  - Cf. GN254: Racial crossing
  - Cf. HQ750+: Eugenics
- HQ1032: Intercountry marriage
- HQ1033: Same-sex marriage
  - Cf. HQ825: Same-sex divorce
- HQ1035: Bisexuality in marriage
- HQ1036-1041: Marriage of people with disabilities

“Consanguineous marriages,” another term for close kin marriages, occurs at HQ1026, and “Mixed marriages. Intermarriage. Interfaith marriage” at HQ1031. All three of these class numbers were established in the 1910 edition of the schedule, with HQ1031 originally labeled as only “Mixed marriages” with a reference to “Racial crossing” or interracial marriages. A class number for “Same-sex marriage” was added at HQ1033 in the 2020 edition of the Library of Congress Classification Schedule. The past and present class numbers in this swath of the schedule all allude to marriages that were stigmatized and often legally regulated (within a U.S. context, at least). Tacitly, it commonly stigmatized non-marital sexual relations, and the class numbers and labels gathered in this range exhibit extremely similar patterns to those that we observe in HQ12-472. We posit that this is because of who tends to be coupled in the marriages that are specifically called out in this range. These kinds of marriages have been or are culturally frowned upon due to the presumption that these couples would have sex. Proximity of these class numbers to each other strengthens the sex negative ideas present elsewhere in HQ and promotes a specific idea of which sexual relationships and interactions are deemed culturally normative. It reinforces a type of cultural gatekeeping by perpetuating ideas around who is permitted to marry and which unions are considered appropriate.

### Sex work

The class range labeled “Prostitution” (HQ101-440.9) has appeared in all editions of LCC since 1910. Unsurprisingly, it is a range in which sex negativity is rife both in analysis of the current schedule and in analysis of historical changes over time. At the broadest level, sex work has always been seen and understood as “abnormal” in LCC, and for many years, this manifested literally, through labeling as it was included in the “Abnormal sex relations” range (HQ71-449). (As noted above, that range also contained “Homosexuality,” limited at the time to a single classmark, HQ76). By 1980, “Prostitution,” had been subsumed within a larger range, called “Sexual life” (HQ31-449). However, by tacitly retaining the norm that “Prostitution” is part of a

logical cluster with “Sadism, Masochism, Fetishism, etc.” (HQ79), “Sex tourism,” (HQ444-445), and “Masturbation” (HQ447), the issue that began as a judgmental label became an issue of proximal association between topics that aren’t particularly related, other than by being types of sex that are even more taboo than sex already is in general.

In its present form, the range displays its sex negativity in many other ways. This includes the high granularity of classmarks that associate sex work with criminality and “impurity,” and low granularity of classmarks that associate sex work with anything other than social stigma. Because most taxonomies function with the assumption that a parent concept is fully explored by its child concepts, this creates a social reality within HQ wherein sex work has no salient traits other than criminality and social impurity. There are no classmarks, or references to classmarks in other schedules, about sex worker movements for decriminalization and labor protections. Nor are there any classmarks or see references about anti-poverty and sex work legalization policies as sex trafficking prevention policies, despite the growth of these efforts in the global sex workers’ rights movement, particularly after the 1970s. However, there are long-established classmarks for “Regulation” of prostitution (HQ121–125), “Human trafficking” (HQ280-285), and “Social purity” (HQ291-295). These absences and presences tell a story about how LCC sees and understands sex work – as something to be socially stigmatized as non-procreative sex, and legally criminalized to solidify the social stigma.

The granularity issues are compounded by the associations created by many of the sequences of classmarks in this range, as well as by explanatory note issues interspersed within the range. For example, the sequencing of “Human trafficking” (HQ280-285), “Social purity” (HQ291-295), and “Rescue work” (HQ301-440.9) directly one after another tells a particular story about how sex workers are seen and understood in the schedule (see Table 5 below). To start that sequence, “Human trafficking” has a note directing catalogers to classify works that are about human trafficking in general, in addition to works about sex trafficking specifically, in this subrange. Given that this is a subrange nested within “Prostitution,” this implies an understanding of sex trafficking as the main form of human trafficking, erasing significant histories of other types of labor exploitation involving trafficking.

**Table 5.** Excerpt adapted from *Library of Congress Classification, HQ: The Family. Marriage. Women* (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, 2020, p. 460)

- HQ101-440.9: Prostitution
  - Class here works on prostitution in general and on female prostitution
  - For works on male prostitution see HQ119+
  - (...)
  - HQ280-285: Human trafficking
    - Class here works on human trafficking for prostitution as well as human trafficking in general
  - HQ280: Periodicals. Societies. Serials
    - e.g., International Congress for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic
  - HQ281: General works
  - HQ285.A-Z: Cases, A-Z
  - HQ291-295: Social purity
    - HQ291: General works

- HQ293: General special. Prophylaxis
- HQ295: The White Cross
- HQ301-440.9: Rescue work

From there, the ranges that immediately follow are “Social purity” (HQ291-295) and “Rescue work” (HQ301-440.9). Although there is room for new classmarks to be established between each of these, nothing has been established to interrupt their proximal associations in over a century, calcifying the association between human trafficking, the concept and movement of “social purity,” and “rescue work.” The “social purity” of HQ291-295 refers specifically to the 19th century anti-prostitution movement, evidenced by the inclusion of a special classmark for the White Cross, a social purity organization founded in the 1880s. The social purity movement is often understood as a response to moral panic over high levels of news reporting of the time on sexually transmitted diseases and sex trafficking, and was largely informed by Christian moral ideals of sexual chastity. “Social purity campaigns surrounding moral policing of prostitution, incest, masturbation, drink, sex education, and the censorship of obscene forms of literature and entertainment took place [...] throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Europe, each exhibiting their own distinctive national emphases” (Morgan, 2008). The continued retention of “social purity” in HQ recognizes that even in the absence of the movement itself, the concept of “purity” as something that diametrically opposes sex as work continues to be a cultural force that drives the stigmatization of sex and sex work.

The immediate following of “Social purity” by “Rescue work” creates another link in the association chain, positioning the social purity movement’s Christian chastity values as the impetus to “save” sex workers and survivors of sex trafficking, not from the harm inherent in trafficking or exploitation, but from the “impurity” seen as inherent in sex as work. For years, survivors of sex trafficking and trafficking intervention experts have pointed out that this term has the negative impact of centering the “rescuer” as a (White) hero, disempowering and removing agency from trafficking survivors, and removing agency from all sex workers by positioning sex work as something that inherently cannot be consented to. Tying trafficking intervention efforts to the social purity movement in library resource organization in this way has the negative impact of imbuing the organization scheme for sex trafficking intervention efforts with sex-negative values, which are antithetical to many modern anti-trafficking experts’ values.

Further up in the range currently labeled “Prostitution,” the classmark “Drugs and prostitutes” (HQ120) uses race to associate sex work with stigma and criminality. It is notable that this classmark was established sometime between 1965 and 1980, a timeframe that significantly lines up with the rise of the War on Drugs campaign, which destroyed thousands of Black and Brown communities through mass incarceration (Alexander, 2012; Rudolph, 2010), and created an indelible connection in the American consciousness between drugs, Black and Brown people, and the vague idea of “danger” or “risk-taking” (Provine, 2011). The creation of the “Drugs and prostitutes” classmark in this timeframe inescapably imbues it with all the same harmful associations, while also enlarging the range’s clear positioning of sex work as a topic about which the only salient conversations to be had are associated with criminality. This classmark’s establishment in the schedule solidified the sex negativity already inherent in the range, and additionally layered on a deeply harmful idea that drugs, Black and Brown people, and sex work all go hand-in-hand as nexuses of “risk.” Its placement directly after the subrange for

“Prostitution–Regulation” (see Table 6 below) has the impact of strengthening sex-negative associations between criminality and sex work.

**Table 6.** Excerpt adapted from *Library of Congress Classification, HQ: The Family. Marriage. Women* (Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division, 2020, p. 459)

- HQ101-440.9: Prostitution
  - Class here works on prostitution in general and on female prostitution
  - For works on male prostitution see HQ119+
  - (...)
  - HQ119-119.4: Male prostitution. Male prostitutes.
  - HQ120: Drugs and prostitutes
  - HQ121-125: Regulation

Overall the divide between the HQ schedule’s portrayal of sex work and the positions and rhetoric of movements informed by sex workers’ lived experiences is very wide, and riddled with issues that are difficult to address through the LCC proposal process, which arguably discourages catalogers from attempting to create any sex-positive change in HQ101-440.9. For example, though “sex worker” became a Library of Congress Subject Heading in 2017, and is clearly noted as a broader term for “prostitute,” “sex work” remains unestablished and catalogers are directed to use the subject heading “prostitution” in its place. Among other things, keeping “prostitution” as the dominant LCSH to be used in place of “sex work” preserves a tidy 1:1 correlation between the “prostitution” LCSH and the LCC range for “prostitution” (HQ101-440.9), evading the work of expanding the LCC range’s scope at all beyond what it currently covers.

## **Conclusion & Future Work**

The examples detailed above are only a sampling of the sex negativity and anti-queerness in the HQ classification schedule. Overall, they are exemplars of the five distinct ways that sex negativity and anti-queerness manifest (and sometimes intertwine) in HQ. Granularity issues, inadequate scope notes, issues with topical proximity and implication of association, problematic labeling, and high stagnancy over time all contribute to the continued reduction, erasure, and disempowerment of queer identities. Furthermore, the broad range of structural issues in only a limited section of HQ (12-472) on sex and sexuality demonstrates that a feasible solution cannot be achieved solely through the established revision process for LCC.

We decided to approach to detail the problems in HQ through written scholarship, rather than directly engaging in the LCC proposal process for specific reasons. First, the proposal process is currently limited to small changes, at most one or two classmarks at a time. We estimate that the issues that we have analyzed in this article alone could potentially take hundreds of proposals to mitigate, and many would need to be proposed in sequence, with later proposals relying on earlier proposals to be accepted in order to achieve the new goal structure. This is an excessive level of work, even with the power of collectives like the Cataloging Lab or SACO. Second, we realized in our research that the existing proposal system essentially requires a readily available solution that simultaneously fixes the issue and adheres to the guidelines set forth by the PSD. The onus is on the cataloger who submits a proposal to recognize, explain, and find the precise

1:1 solution for the issue with the classification schedule. This requirement for every proposal is overtaxing and causes retention of many problems. It excludes potential solutions that can address structural issues that do not neatly fit within guidelines or structures. Much as a coloring book provides a structure for some creativity but limits our capacity to shape what is depicted on the page, the LCC/LCSH proposal system only allows us to select certain colors for our proposals, and strongly discourages us from straying outside its boundary guidelines and structures. Some of those guidelines and principles, such as literary warrant, (which requires all proposed changes to LCC to be based upon the publication of a book and its acquisition by a library), are such high barriers that it is impossible for LCC to be a realistically “living” document that reflects and responds to changes in knowledge and research.

The proposal system’s barriers essentially limit collective imagination to such a degree that it can be difficult to even imagine the full extent of changes that could affirm queer identities and sex positivity in HQ and beyond. One radical step that we propose to address the named issues with HQ is to re-imagine what changes could occur in the class schedule if the existing proposal system’s constraints were not in place. What could the HQ schedule look like if we tried to unravel its endemic sex negativity and anti-queerness, and replace them with sex positivity plus better integration and inclusion of queer subjects? What shifts could be implemented to the schedule if we could exceed the existing boundaries and color outside the lines?

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to thank the editorial board of *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* for the opportunity to share our research. We wish to particularly thank our peer reviewers, Adrian Williams and Dr. Nicole Cooke, and our editor, Ian Beilin, for their time and thoughtful comments.

### **References**

- Adler, M. (2017). *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge*. Fordham University Press.
- Afrofuturism. (2019). *The Cataloging Lab: Knowledge Base*. <https://cataloginglab.org/kb/afrofuturism/>
- Alexander, M. (2012). The Lockdown. In *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (Revised ed., pp. 59–96). The New Press.
- Baker, D., & Islam, N. (2020). From Religion Class to Religion Classification and Back Again: Religious Diversity and Library of Congress Classification. *Theological Librarianship*, 13(1), 27–37.
- Baron, J. E., Gross, T., & Cornejo Cásaes, Ó. R. (2016). Timeline of “Illegal Aliens” Subject Heading Change Petition. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 54(7), 506–520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2016.1218707>
- Berman, S. (1971). Prejudices and antipathies: A tract on the LC subject heads concerning people. In *Prejudices and antipathies: A tract on the LC subject heads concerning people*. Scarecrow Press.

- Biswas, P. (2018). Rooted in the Past: Use of “East Indians” in Library of Congress Subject Headings. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 56(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2017.1386253>
- Broughton, V. (2015). *Essential Classification* (2nd ed.). ALA Neal-Schuman, an imprint of the American Library Association.
- Cherry, A., & Mukunda, K. (2015). A Case Study in Indigenous Classification: Revisiting and Reviving the Brian Deer Scheme. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 53(5–6), 548–567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1008717>
- Critlib: About / Join the Discussion*. (n.d.). Critlib: Critical Librarianship, In Real Life & On the Twitters. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <http://critlib.org/about/>
- Critlib: Critcat*. (n.d.). Critlib: Critical Librarianship, In Real Life & On the Twitters. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <http://critlib.org/critcat/>
- Curiosa. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved March 3, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/curiosa>
- Curiosa, n. (2021). In *OED Online* (Web). Oxford University Press.
- Drabinski, E. (2008). Teaching the Radical Catalog. In K. R. Roberto (Ed.), *Radical Cataloging: Essays at the Front* (pp. 198–205). McFarland & Co. [http://www.emilydrabinski.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/drabinski\\_radcat.pdf](http://www.emilydrabinski.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/drabinski_radcat.pdf)
- Drucker, D. J. (2017). How subjects matter: The Kinsey Institute’s Sexual Nomenclature: A thesaurus (1976). *Information & Culture*, 52(2), 207–228. <https://doi.org/10.7560/IC52204>
- Foskett, A. C. (1971). Misogynists all: A study in critical classification. *Library Resources and Technical Services*, 15(2), 117–121. <http://downloads.alcts.ala.org/lrts/lrtsv15no2.pdf>
- Fox, V. (2018a). *The Cataloging Lab*. The Cataloging Lab. <https://cataloginglab.org/>
- Fox, V. (2018b, March 1). *Creating Change in the Cataloging Lab | Peer to Peer Review*. Library Journal. <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/creating-change-in-the-cataloging-lab-peer-to-peer-review>
- Greco, A. N., Wharton, R. M., & Brand, A. (2016). Demographics of scholarly publishing and communication professionals. *Learned Publishing*, 29(2), 97–101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1017>
- Hart, F. (2021). Just like Museums, Libraries Aren’t Neutral. *Hyperallergic*. <https://hyperallergic.com/694287/just-like-museums-libraries-arent-neutral/>
- Higgins, C. (2012). Library of Congress Classification: Teddy Roosevelt’s World in Numbers? *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 50(4), 249–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2012.658989>
- Homosaurus: An International LGBTQ+ Linked Data Vocabulary*. (2019). Homosaurus: An International LGBTQ+ Linked Data Vocabulary. <https://homosaurus.org/>

- Howard, S. A., & Knowlton, S. A. (2018). Browsing through Bias: The Library of Congress Classification and Subject Headings for African American Studies and LGBTQIA Studies. *Library Trends*, 67(1), 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2018.0026>
- Idrees, H., & Mahmood, K. (2009). Devising a Classification Scheme for Islam: Opinions of LIS and Islamic Studies Scholars. *Library Philosophy & Practice*, 1–15. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/308/>
- Kauffman, R. Y., & Anderson, M. S. (2018). Diversity, inclusion, and social justice in library technical services. In S. Marien (Ed.), *Technical Services: Adapting to the Changing Environment* (pp. 1–15). Purdue University Press.
- Keilty, P. (2009). Tabulating Queer: Space, Perversion, and Belonging. *Knowledge Organization*, 36(4), 240–248. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2009-4-240>
- Kublik, A., Clevette, V., Ward, D., & Olson, H. A. (2003). Adapting Dominant Classifications to Particular Contexts. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 37(1–2), 13–31. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v37n01\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v37n01_03)
- Lee and Low Books, Laura M. Jiménez, & Betsy Beckert. (2020, January 28). Where Is the Diversity in Publishing? The 2019 Diversity Baseline Survey Results. *Lee & Low Blog*. <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2020/01/28/2019diversitybaselinesurvey/>
- Lee and Low Books, Park Dahlen, S., & Catlin, N. (2016, January 26). Where Is the Diversity in Publishing? The 2015 Diversity Baseline Survey Results. *Lee & Low Blog*. <https://blog.leeandlow.com/2016/01/26/where-is-the-diversity-in-publishing-the-2015-diversity-baseline-survey-results/>
- Lee, D. (2011). Indigenous Knowledge Organization: A Study of Concepts, Terminology, Structure and (Mostly) Indigenous Voices. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v6i1.1427>
- Lember, H., Lipkin, S., & Lee, R. J. (2013). *Radical Cataloging: From words to action*. 19, 9.
- Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division. (n.d.). *Library of Congress Classification Outline: Class H – Social Sciences*. Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division. Retrieved April 29, 2022, from [https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/classification/lcco/lcco\\_h.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/classification/lcco/lcco_h.pdf)
- Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division (Ed.). (2013). Classification Proposals: F 50. In *Library of Congress Classification and Shelving Manual*. Library of Congress Classification and Shelving Manual. <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeCSM/F050.pdf>
- Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division (Ed.). (2020). HQ: The Family. Marriage. Women. In *Classification. Class H: Social Sciences (General)* (6th ed.). Library of Congress Policy and Standards Division. [https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/Archived-LCC2020/LCC\\_H2020TEXT.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/Archived-LCC2020/LCC_H2020TEXT.pdf)

- Lincoln, T. (1987). Ethno-Linguistic Misrepresentations of the Alaskan Native Languages as Mirrored in the Library of Congress System of Cataloging and Classification. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 7(3), 69–90. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v07n03\\_06](https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v07n03_06)
- Littletree, S., Belarde-Lewis, M., & Duarte, M. (2020). Centering Relationality: A Conceptual Model to Advance Indigenous Knowledge Organization Practices. *Knowledge Organization*, 47(5), 410–426. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2020-5-410>
- Littletree, S., & Metoyer, C. A. (2015). Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 53(5–6), 640–657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1010113>
- Matienzo, M. (2015). To Hell With Good Intentions: Linked Data, Community and the Power to Name—Mx A. Matienzo. In *Matienzo.org*. <http://matienzo.org/2016/to-hell-with-good-intentions/>
- Morgan, S. (2008). Social purity. In S. Mumm (Ed.), *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Love, Courtship, and Sexuality through History: The Nineteenth Century* (1st ed.). Greenwood.
- Nowak, K., & Mitchell, A. J. (2016). Classifying Identity: Organizing an LGBT Library. *Library Philosophy & Practice*, 1–13.
- Olson, H. A. (2002). *The power to name: Locating the limits of subject representation in libraries*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Price, G. (2021, November 12). *ALA Welcomes Removal of Offensive 'Illegal Aliens' Subject Headings*. LJ InfoDOCKET. <https://www.infodocket.com/2021/11/12/ala-welcomes-removal-of-offensive-illegal-aliens-subject-headings/>
- Provine, D. M. (2011). Race and Inequality in the War on Drugs. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 7(1), 41–60. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-102510-105445>
- Roberto, K. R. (Ed.). (2008). *Radical Cataloging: Essays at the Front*. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Roberto, K. R. (2011). Inflexible Bodies: Metadata for Transgender Identities. *Journal of Information Ethics*, 20(2), 56–64.
- Roh, C. (2016). Inequalities in Publishing. *Urban Library Journal*, 22(2), 17. <http://academicworks.cuny.edu/ulj/vol22/iss2/2>
- Roh, C., & Inefuku, H. (2016). Agents of Diversity and Social Justice: Librarians and Scholarly Communication. In K. Smith & K. Dickson (Eds.), *Open Access and the Future of Scholarly Communication: Policy and Infrastructure*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. <https://repository.usfca.edu/librarian/8>
- Rudolph, A. (2010). The Impact of Poverty on African American Children in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems. *Forum on Public Policy*, 2010(4). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ913052>



- SayHerName movement. (2021). *The Cataloging Lab: Knowledge Base*. <https://cataloginglab.org/kb/sayhername-movement/>
- Schiff, A. L. & Program for Cooperative Cataloging. (2007). *SACO Participants' Manual*. Library of Congress Program for Cooperative Cataloging. <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/documents/SACOManual2007.pdf>
- Sex negativity. (n.d.). In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 14, 2022, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/sex-negativity>
- Sex positivity. (n.d.). In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 14, 2022, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/sex-positivity>
- Soltani, P. (1996). Translation and expansion of classification systems in the Arab countries and Iran. *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control*, 25(1), 13–15.
- Watson, B. M. (2020). “There was Sex but no Sexuality\*:” Critical Cataloging and the Classification of Asexuality in LCSH. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 58(6), 547–565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2020.1796876>
- Webster, K., & Doyle, A. (2008). Don't class me in antiquities! Giving voice to Native American Materials. In *Radical cataloging: Essays at the front* (pp. 189–197). Macfarland & Co.
- Yeh, T. Y.-R., & Frosio, E. T. (1971). The Treatment of the American Indian in the Library of Congress E-F Schedule. *Library Resources and Technical Services*, 15(2), 122–131. <http://downloads.alcts.ala.org/lrts/lrtsv17no2.pdf>