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Representing Historically Marginalized Communities in Archives: Moving Beyond LCSH to Create More Inclusive Subject Headings

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Abstract

The Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) are widely used around the world in libraries and archives to add access points for users searching their collections. This can be problematic because LCSH has many embedded issues including inconsistency and complexity, the myth of neutrality that surrounds it, systemic biases, and how slow it is to change. These problems lead to poor descriptions of people, especially those who belong to historically marginalized communities. Archives can move beyond LCSH to create local thesauri, crowdsourced vocabularies, and collaborative partnerships with historically marginalized communities to create more inclusive subject headings.

Keywords: Archival Description, Historically Marginalized Communities, LCHS Problems, Community Connections

Representing Historically Marginalized Communities in Archives:

Moving Beyond LCSH to Create More Inclusive Subject Headings

Many archives use the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) to add access points to their collections. This can be problematic because LCSH has many embedded issues including inconsistency and complexity, the belief it is neutral, systemic biases, and how slow it is to change. These problems lead to poor descriptions of people, especially those who belong to historically marginalized communities, and can cause them emotional and physical harm.

This paper will give a short history of the Library of Congress (LC), briefly explore the problems with LCSH and the harm it can do, and suggest ways archives can move beyond LCSH. Options discussed are to create local vocabularies, use crowdsourced folksonomies, and build collaborative partnerships with historically marginalized communities. The end will review the points covered in the paper and conclude that collaboration with communities is the best way to create more inclusive subject headings.

History and Context of LCSH

On April 24, 1800, the United States Congress established the Library of Congress (LC). The collection originally focused on law and legislative procedure until the British burned all 3,000 volumes in 1814. To restart the library, Thomas Jefferson sold Congress 6,487 volumes he owned covering a variety of subjects and changed the focus of the library going forward (LC, n.d.; LC, 2022). The Library of Congress Subject Headings, in their current form, began about 1898 and LC celebrated its centennial in 1998 (Stone, 2000). In 1898, Congress was composed of white men who were concerned with protecting the interests of other white men. Black Americans had been freed from slavery for only 33 years, the Wounded Knee Massacre was yet to happen, and women were 21 years away from being able to legally vote (History.com Editors, 2022; History.com Editors, 2023; National Archives, 2022).

Although the United States has undergone many changes since 1898, and Congress more closely matches the diversity of its citizens, its system of organizing information is still largely unchanged and closely tied to the white, landowning founders. Over the years it has retained limitations that were embedded into it including inconsistency and complexity, the belief it is neutral, systemic biases, and how slow it is to change.

This can cause problems in how it describes the various subjects covered in its materials, especially when it attempts to describe people.

It was determined that in addition to describing materials held by the LC, LCSH was "appropriate for the very largest public libraries, some colleges and many university libraries" (Stone, 2000, p. 3). It is used by information institutions in many countries and is probably the most used controlled vocabulary in the world (Lo, 2019; Olson, 2000). Now over 100 years old, it is hindered in its effort to describe people by the systemic problems of inconsistency and complexity, the myth that it is neutral, bias, and how slow changes are made to problematic headings. These shortcomings can lead to emotional and physical harm to the most vulnerable members of society (Adler, 2016; Baucom, 2018; Christen & Anderson, 2019; Howard & Knowlton, 2018; Jules, 2016; Lacey, 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Lo, 2019; Olson, 2000).

Inconsistent and Complex

The LCSH was created as an index to the Library of Congress Classification system and contains preferred terms, as well as directing which nonpreferred terms they should be used for, and broader, narrower, and related terms that can be used (Lo, 2019). These headings can also be subdivided to cover topical, form, chronological, and geographic aspects, which makes tools such as the *Subject Headings Manual* necessary to assist catalogers in creating these headings. A free version of the *Subject Headings Manual* can be found online at https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeSHM/freeshm.html. An example of how complex system rules are is section H 0320, "Headings Qualified by Nationality, Ethnic Group, Language, etc." Rule two reads:

> Inverted or uninverted headings. Establish all qualified headings in the inverted form except for those qualified by ethnic groups of the United States or by Indian groups, major literary forms (see H 306, sec. 2.a.(1); H 351), and a few other well-established patterns. (LC, 2018)

From its earliest days, it was criticized for these inverted headings (Stone, 2000). While headings are now often created in natural language style, they were originally inverted because it was assumed users would search by nouns rather than other terms. The practice was continued because in the days of card catalogs keeping all topics on a subject together kept people from walking between multiple cabinets in different locations to conduct searches (LC, 2016). Howard and Knowlton (2018) note LCSH has "lack of consistency in

word choice" and dated terminology. For example, "Alien artifacts" refers to extraterrestrial beings and until it was changed in November 2021, "alien detention centers" referred to noncitizens (Albanese, 2021; Lo, 2019). Part of this is because subject headings are created as they are needed, not ahead of time, so it has been pieced together by catalogers with varying philosophies and perspectives (Lo, 2019).

For an example of the complexity of the system, when a cataloger looks up Native American, they are directed to "USE subject headings beginning with the word Indian" and a search for American Indian directs them to, "USE subject headings beginning with or qualified by the word Indian" (LC, 2022). They then go to Indian to read this direction:

> Indians
>
> (Not Subd Geog)
>
> [E51-E99]
>
> Here are entered works on the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere, including Eskimos. Works on citizens of India who are not currently residing in India are entered under East Indians.
>
> For convenience, the Western Hemisphere has been divided into five basic geographical regions: North America, Mexico, Central America, West Indies and South America. Works pertaining to Indian groups located within the confines of one of these regions are entered under Indians of the pertinent region, e.g. Indians of North America; Indians of Mexico. (LC, 2022)

This heading condenses all the various tribes in Canada and the United States into one major group. Whether describing Canadian First Nations Peoples or tribes Indigenous to the United States, the cataloger is directed to use the broad subject heading "Indians of North America". This effectively separates the tribes from their unique cultures and makes them all one generic people. There may also be confusion with people who are citizens of India who do live in India. After the term "Indiamen" which states that it should now be used for "Indiamen, East" is the term "Indian actors." Does this mean they are actors from India or actors that belong to the group "Indians of North America" (LC, 2022)? Does the heading "Indiamen, East" also include women? The inconsistencies and complexities in the system make the already difficult task of describing

people more so by requiring catalogers to double- and triple-check rules to make sure they are doing it properly. In a field where time and resources are short, that means this often does not get done as well as it should.

Myth of Neutrality

The information professions were founded on ideals of neutrality, yet systems that were created hundreds of years ago when only white landowners had true rights cannot be neutral or free of bias. Classification systems, techniques, and tools used under the umbrella of professionalism maintain power with the people who put it in place (Christen & Anderson, 2019). Lo (2019) states LCSH is an imperfect attempt at "neutral, universal, standardized vocabulary to represent materials" but things do not fit in neat categories because reality is messier and classification systems, no matter how neutral the intent, reflect the biases of the authors (p. 176).

The LC may be the de facto library of the United States, but it is tied to the political institution it was built to support (Lo, 2019). These ties to the U.S. Congress and the materials in its collections give it a North American government document slant that often reflects the majority ideology at the time a heading is added, and makes it poor at representing its global user base (Lacey, 2018; Lo, 2019). Lacey (2018) says it is hard enough to keep up with all the changes in language, especially surrounding "sexuality, ethnicity, and migration" without having to deal with politics (pp. 358-359). People are trying to live their lives without having their existence become a political game. If the headings they must use to find information about themselves is tied to terms that come from harmful political policies, they may choose not to look for that information at all (Crowl, 2018).

Biased

Biases in the system come from publishers, catalogers, and the dominant culture, all of which reflect the historical biases of western libraries and users (Berman, 1993). Publishers usually select a "narrow cross-section of society" that reflects their views while excluding and marginalizing others (Lo, 2019, p. 179). Typically, LC waits until something is published about a concept before creating a subject heading for it, so it can only reflect the contents of what is in the texts it collects and not add to the conversation (Lacey, 2018; Lo, 2019). This literary warrant causes problems when describing people because many of the works are not

literature, and are filled with political motivations, prejudices, and hate speech. When vocabulary creators pull

terms out of these works without thinking about repercussions, they can damage perceptions of historically

marginalized people by those in the majority as well as members of the group. If archivists rely entirely on

literary warrant, they are not doing everything they can to provide access to diverse communities (Lacey,

2018). An archivist dealing with unpublished concepts and ideas must rely on imperfect headings which,

historically, have been created from a white, Protestant, male perspective and have left out people with other

backgrounds and worldviews, thus privileging the dominant culture and not acknowledging that the other has

always existed alongside it (Lo, 2019; Hardesty & Nolan, 2021). For example, headings for "male privilege" and

"white privilege" were rejected from LCSH because it says they are already covered in other headings.

Substitutes given for "white privilege" are: "Racism," "Race discrimination," "Race relations," and "Whites—

Race identity" but they are different concepts that reinforce the idea that white male is the default way people

experience the world (Lo, 2019). This exclusion gives the illusion that white privilege, which Collins (2018) says

has to do with white people having an advantage over people of color who share their same socio-economic

level, is the same as racism, which Collins (2018) defines as action taken by a member of one racial group

against that of another based on beliefs they hold. This makes it more difficult for people of all races to find

this information. They would still be able to find materials with white privilege in the title, but searching by

subject headings would result in zero hits unless a system other than LCSH was used, or one subject heading

included the word white and another privilege.

Slow to Change

Changes come to LCSH much slower than languages evolve (Baucom, 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Lo, 2019;

Stone, 2000). It took 13 years to eliminate the problematic heading of "Jewish Question" and 18 to delete

"Yellow Peril" (Berman, 1993) and there are many more that they have not made progress on. With the "rapid

expansion of knowledge and information" during the Cold War, catalogers felt LC "was too slow in adopting

new subjects or revising antiquated terminology" (Stone, 2000, p. 5).

Reasons given for the slow rate of change include waiting for Congress to change terminology in

legislation, waiting for new terms to show up in publications (literary warrant), and instead of allowing

catalogers to add headings like they did in decades past, requiring groups to petition for change (Lo, 2019;

Olson, 2000; Stone, 2000). Even after being petitioned to change headings, LC still has the final word on whether it will (Lo, 2019). Being deliberate about change can be good when you are trying to represent materials that span across decades, but often makes LCSH unusable for patrons in the present (Lo, 2019). Furthermore, these reasons are often contradicted by actions because sometimes LC changes offensive language before Congress. LC Stopped using "Negro" in the 1970s but Congress was still replacing the term in legislation in 2019, which means LC could have also stopped using "Illegal Aliens" in 1993 as it was already considered prejudicial well before then (Lo, 2019). Instead, the "Illegal Aliens" controversy became a prime example of just how hard it can be to change subject headings.

It took from July 2014, when the Subject Authority Cooperative Program proposed LC change "Illegal Aliens" to "Undocumented Immigrants," to November 12, 2021 for LC to replace "Aliens" and "Illegal Aliens" with the terms "Noncitizens" and "Illegal Immigration" (Albanese, 2021). The power play that unfolded between LC and the US Congress over "Illegal Aliens" "let the mask of library neutrality slip." (Lacey, 2018, p. 358). Involving politics in a simple effort to acknowledge that these outdated terms did not effectively describe the people they had been given to tied up resources and time that could have been spent elsewhere instead of fighting over respectful descriptions of living people.

Harmful to Historically Marginalized People

Berman started questioning the LCSH as they related to people in the 1970s and Olson discussed problems with representation starting in the 2000s (Lee et al., 2021). The discussions continue in library and information science texts and articles in graduate level classes. Harm from LCSH can occur because LCSH tends to "other" people, and present "historically marginalized people as fundamentally different from white heterosexual men" (Howard & Knowlton, 2018). Women and racial minorities are seen to be lesser than a white man and that leads to hurtful, untrue descriptions in the archival record. When people are described poorly, they see a bad reflection of themselves; Hope Olson (2000) says, "The mirror may be cracked or crazed to send back a distorted image, affecting self-esteem for some and just making others angry" (p. 55).

In 2019, Lo noted that Melissa Aracely Padilla noticed even neutral articles on immigration used "Illegal Aliens" for a subject heading, sometimes shortened to "illegals" and it felt like calling it illegal for people in their situation to even exist. Representative Joaquin Castro told Congress the term is "dehumanizing" and said

Congress should allow it to stop being used, but Congress ignored his input and said LC had to keep certain subject headings that reflect terminology used in Title 8 of the U.S. Code. (Lo, 2019). If Congress can tell a second-generation Mexican American elected to the House of Representatives that it does not care if a term it uses is dehumanizing to people, it sends the message to people who are first-generation immigrants, whether they be documented or undocumented, that their feelings and their stories do not matter.

Indigenous peoples are harmed because many non-native people think about Indigenous tribes in the past tense (Christen & Anderson, 2019) instead of seeing them as a living, thriving community. Lee et al. (2021) say Indigenous scholarship subject headings are "often inaccurate, inappropriate, and misrepresent the identities and work of these authors. The continuation of these harmful cataloguing practices only serves to reflect and instantiate discrimination present in the rest of American and Canadian society." (Lee et al., 2021, p. 299). People may not see the point in describing Indigenous people accurately because they do not believe anyone will care since they are not around to see it. Not describing them in terms of an active community can give the impression they are no longer part of the modern world and may cause them to be excluded from decisions that affect them.

The official subject heading used to describe people who were colonized by European settlers in North America is "Indians" and is not divided by geographic region. If division by geographic region is desired, "Indians of North America" is the provided term. This effectively decides that all descendants of the survivors of colonization in Canada and the United States belong to one group. As Bone and Lougheed point out, dividing by arbitrary borders makes it seem like a tribe in Texas has more in common with tribes in Manitoba than Mexico (2018). No matter whether a particular member of any tribe prefers using American Indian, Native American, First Nations, or Indigenous Person, LCSH places them under the subject heading "Indians of North America." All of these terms are vague and lump various unique tribes into one subject heading where they risk being misunderstood or even erased from the catalog. However, using a tribe's preferred name and connections to similar tribes makes them more visible. Although language is fluid, and terms that are used today may not be appropriate tomorrow, there is some agreement by members of different tribes, including some who are information professionals, that "Indian" should only be used when talking about "The Indian Act" or other historical legislation (Vowel, 2016; Lee et al., 2021).

"Native American," "American Indian," and "Indian" are terms the U. S. Government used to control people with, and Indigenous peoples tend to use their tribal names. For example, someone from the Navajo Nation would use Navajo or Diné (Haberstock, 2019). Failing to care for the materials or the people associated with them has kept "racist, colonial, and unjust scaffolding within archives" and has transferred them to the digital world (Christen & Anderson, 2019, p. 112). This not only "others" Indigenous peoples around the world but allows their cultures to continue to be repressed.

Stories by tribal members need to be told, like that of Donald Soctomah, Tribal Historian of the Passamaquoddy Tribe. He shared that elders had to wait until convent lights went out to play their drums and sing their songs because they would be punished if caught, sometimes by having food withheld, and those who practiced the old ways would be looked down on and "people from the church would call them witches" (Christen & Anderson, 2019, p. 88).

An example of ongoing discrimination is the subject heading "Indian Gays" which is not used in academic scholarship and is composed of two terms that are problematic on their own, yet Lee et al. (2021) found LC cataloged 45 books from about 2016-2021with that subject heading. They then stated, "these terms do not reflect the way Indigenous Peoples, Nations, and communities in North America prefer to represent themselves as individuals and collectives" (p. 303).

In 1890, the same year as the Wounded Knee Massacre, as the government and the church were trying to destroy Native cultures, people like Jesse Walter Fewkes set out to "track and monitor" Indigenous peoples by making wax cylinder recordings of Native languages under the guise of documenting them before they disappeared, never linking the cause of the predicted disappearance to the federal government (Christen & Anderson, 2019, p. 94). These recordings and other materials taken for documentation purposes were placed in non-native repositories and categorized and described with "settler colonial logics" that excluded their voices and silenced their history (Littletree & Metoyer, 2015; Christen & Anderson, 2019, p. 97). In the 1980s the American Folklife Center (a part of the LC centered on archiving ethnographic materials) began to talk with Native communities about, among other things, mistakes in original metadata (Christen & Anderson, 2019; LC, 2022). Correcting those mistakes in metadata can repair some of the profession's past mistakes and prevent future harm.

At the end of WWII members of the LGBTQIA+ community began to refer to themselves as "gay" instead of "homosexual," a term taken from the field of psychology and placed in the LCSH hierarchy under sexual perversion (Baucom, 2018). When members of this community research their history in archives they may experience stress and feel stigmatized and discriminated against when they encounter terms that or derogatory or slurs that they do not identify with, which adds to the difficulty of finding resources (Baucom, 2018). In S. Paige Crowl's 2018 essay *Queerly Categorized: LGBTQ+ Subjects and Language in the Catalog,* she recounts not being able to find materials on asexuality and not asking the librarian for help because she was not sure how to frame the question, or what the question even was. This made her feel like the library had failed her and it took three years before she found information she could have used earlier.

Not only can people be stressed and discriminated against by words, they may be more likely to face physical harm. Bergis Jules (2016), a Black archivist, implores librarians and archivists to make sure historically marginalized people are represented in the historical record because, "That erasure from records, cultural spaces, and mass media are partly what allow people to accept absurd justifications for killing us." These justifications are often based on just how uncomfortable someone is seeing a black teen in a hoodie, or someone playing music too loud (Jules, 2016, para. 23). None of these things should be a death sentence.

It is unacceptable to ignore the harm in the system and not work to describe marginalized people better. Olson (2000) says change and evolution as a society can only come by recognizing those at the margins and interacting with and learning about them. Archives should be as welcoming to patrons from any community as public libraries have strived to become and re-envision archival description from a human rights framework (Wood et al., 2014). Keeping identity terms current is important because language is fluid and what was neutral may be outdated in a few years (Lo, 2019). Catalogers must keep in mind that "Classification can be hostile or hospitable, depending on the subject and the scheme. It is, therefore, a mechanism by which an organization might validate certain people and penalize others." (Lacey, 2018, p. 358).

If using a non-approved term to describe someone more accurately can show their humanity and how they are struggling to live a life free of undeserved judgment, information professionals must go against the rules and do it. It may help someone find needed information and save them pain, or even their life. Catalogers are never going to be perfect at describing people, but they must try to assign the best possible subject

headings to help users access materials that will allow them to grow personally, professionally, and spiritually, instead of stifling them. If they all do the best job they can, the number of people who go away from libraries and archives still lost will lessen and the number who find the information they need to be empowered will rise.

Not Going Away

Even with the problems of inconsistency and complexity, the myth of neutrality, various biases, how slow it changes, and its potential to harm people, LCSH is unlikely to go away. Sandy Berman says its use is understandable because it standardizes globally where there would be chaos and is a "practical necessity for such a labor-saving, worry-reducing work" but problems occur when describing people because LCSH "others" anyone who is not white, Protestant, middle-income, or male and "exudes something less than sympathy or even fairness toward organized labor and the sexually unorthodox or 'avant-garde'" (1993, p. 15). Describing people is difficult, and describing people without taking their perspective into account can be insensitive and damaging. Littletree and Metoyer (2015) explain that the current LCSH silences Native American history because it disregards the sovereignty of Native nations while historicizing and stereotyping the people and cultures and makes materials related to them harder to retrieve.

Over 15.5 million of the Online Computer Library Center's 460 million bibliographic records were created by the catalogers at the Library of Congress. These records have saved information institutions around the world time and money by allowing them to copy those records into their own systems (Lo, 2019). While archivists are rarely able to benefit from copy cataloging, due to the nature of archival materials, they should still fight to have LCSH updated and find ways to move beyond it to better describe marginalized people and help them feel welcome researching in archives.

Moving Beyond LCSH

The previous sections have outlined problems with LCSH (inconsistency and complexity, the myth of neutrality, systemic biases, and how slow it is to change) and showed how it can cause harm to marginalize communities. Despite those faults, LCSH is still useful to many around the world and is not going to disappear. This is why archives need to go beyond LCSH and add parallel vocabularies to their descriptions, especially when collections represent historically marginalized persons. This section will give ideas of how to do that

work with local vocabularies, crowdsourced folksonomies, and working closely with communities to learn how they want to be described.

Formulating creative ways of delivering better access to marginalized voices is not new. An early example is how Dorothy Porter rearranged materials at Howard University "based on subject matter, genre, and author, categorizing the work based on what it was about rather than the race of the author or the race of any people mentioned in the work" as was the practice with Dewey Decimal Classification in the 1930s and 1940s (Hardesty & Nolan, 2021, p. 3).

These actions will help represent people with cultural warrant rather than the literary warrant that LCSH normally works under. Cultural warrant places "the public" in charge of cataloging standards (Olson, 2000) and is what Charles Cutter had in mind when he wrote his cataloging rules in 1876 and stated, "colloquial vocabulary is preferable as long as the library judges their readers to be the general public." (Lacey, 2018, p. 366). Therefore, instead of waiting until publishing and LCSH catch up to language evolutions, catalogers should be proactive and change subject headings so catalogs and taxonomies are more hospitable and welcoming to "subjects to whom the state should offer shelter and sanctuary in person" (Lacey, 2018, p. 367). By welcoming historically marginalized communities into archives, we can increase awareness and trust, and work with them to create better descriptions.

Creating Local Vocabularies

Archivists can amend parts of LCSH at the local level and build a more inclusive vocabulary instead of continuing to outsource the responsibility of description to the mainstream public and published works via LCSH (Lo, 2019; Olson, 2000). Archivists should take the time and care to use terms the creator used to keep context as continuing to use someone's preferred terms helps keep a community's history intact as the community changes (Baucom, 2018).

Many libraries in the United Kingdom that use LCSH adapt the headings to local standards like Sandy Berman did in 1981 when Hennepin County Library changed "Illegal Aliens" to "Undocumented Workers" (Lacey, 2018). Lacey suggests looking at the American Library Association's Subject Analysis Committee Working Group proposed LCSH subject headings and/or looking at a collection from a different point of view. Archivists should ask themselves how they would want someone to describe them.

Catalogers need to take time to acknowledge the bias in LCSH and the archives, accommodate blind spots, and investigate archives that already collaborate with their local marginalized communities (Baucom, 2018; Lacey, 2018). Professionals associated with Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia (A4BLiP) (an association of volunteers working to prevent the erasure of Black stories in archives, in response to Black Lives Matter protests) have created recommendations that while focusing on the Black community, can be used broadly to describe records by other communities. Some of the most important points are to use respect, care, and terminology Black people created about themselves and to recognize that as the language evolves it will need updating to remain relevant to the community (Antracoli et al., 2019; Hardesty & Nolan, 2021). Whereas in the past, archives were encouraged to be neutral while at the same time creating descriptions that used aggrandizing language to describe white men, A4BLiP suggests focusing on the humanity of individuals first and their identity/ies second, such as using their name before their race. Instead of "a Black woman named Maria" use "Maria, a Black woman" (Antracoli et al., 2019). If we are to repair past damage in catalogs and represent people in the best possible way, we must respect them and focus on their humanity before assigning subject headings and other descriptors.

Crowdsourcing Folksonomies

A folksonomy consists of user-generated terms (tags) rather than institutionally defined ones. In the case of describing people. the best subject headings are going to come from people's personal experiences (Lacey, 2018). It does not require fixing "existing systems but rather to reconfigure relations according to local and personal vantage points" (Adler, 2017, p. 160). Lacey says readers have proved themselves capable of navigating language as a moving target and crowdsourcing is "the most effective method of correlating the terms of classification with the language of user enquiry" (2018, p. 376).

When involving members of communities, do not assume all members are the same and that speaking with a few will make the folksonomy complete. Take time to represent as much of the community as possible and support relationships and all voices based on peoplehood (Haberstock, 2019). Avoid over-generalization and "look for ways to use the most specific identity terms possible" to "improve findability" (Lee et al., 2021, p. 305). Because close communities tend to use the same terms to describe themselves, adding tags to controlled vocabularies already present in records will help community members find materials they need.

Working Closely with Communities

While creating local vocabularies and crowdsourced folksonomies are good solutions, a better novel solution might be created by cultivating deep ties with communities represented by archival collections. Be transparent about how the flaws in LCSH are and why their keyword searches are coming up empty, and open a dialog to strengthen ties with them (Howard & Knowlton, 2018). Extending hospitality to all community members, teaching them the origins of LCSH and other indexing and classification systems, and showing them that archives staff are open to their input on new ways of performing our description work will help them feel welcome in the archives (Duff & Harris, 2002). Listen in order to understand their point of view and legitimize their existence to help them be more discoverable to each other and the world (Baucom, 2018). Remember this is a service profession and people should be at the core of everything we do (Jules, 2017). Ask what changes they would make to help them find what they are looking for. Archivists can include appropriate LCSH for a record, explain why they may not be ideal and link to subject terms created community members. This commitment to focus on marginalized voices can help people discover and access their own stories and perspectives (Hardesty & Nolan, 2021). Archivists and librarians must transition from being information gatekeepers to actively connecting users to the information they seek.

Some of the most visible examples of working closely with marginalized communities come from projects with Indigenous peoples. The Memory, Meaning-Making and Collections Project (MMMC) involved a partnership between the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (NCCT) and FirstStory Toronto and an invitation to Aboriginal seniors who were members of the NCCT (Howarth & Knight, 2015). The NCCT is a charity that works as a meeting place for members of the Indigenous community and visitors (NCCT, n.d.). FirstStory Toronto is an app with a walking tour of Toronto that seeks to correct imbalance in the historic record (Sasaki, 2019). During group sessions, elders touched and held materials in the NCCT's collection of artifacts, mostly handcrafted objects, that had lost their context. The elders were able to recall stories of the items and told how they had been used when they were children. Many of the items were created by children who had been sent to residential schools (Howarth & Knight, 2015). Not only did these group interactions allow community members to remember the crafts they worked on, but it gave the elders the desire to teach community children craftmaking, and the NCCT received valuable information to better represent the collection (Howarth & Knight,

2015). This is an example of what Christen & Anderson (2019) call slow archives, which is not the opposite of

fast, but rather "a necessary space for emphasizing how knowledge is produced, circulated, contextualized,

and exchanged through a series of relationships" (p. 90). It involves slowing the description process down

some to make it more fluid. The MMMC project accomplished this and more for members of several

communities. Creating spaces like this will also allow for course corrections and the realization that every

collection is different and needs different things from archivists.

   Hardesty and Nolan (2021) suggest working with the community being represented first, then after

connecting them and their terms to the collection, add LCSH as a final step. This is important work that

Baucom (2018) says can save communities because online researchers use a lot of keywords and slang so,

when archivists use those terms, it enables "members of the LGBTQ community access to their own history

and bolsters the survival of the community as a whole" (p.69).

   When collaborating with any community, make sure they are not being unduly burdened and the

relationship is process driven instead of results driven (Haberstock, 2019). Make sure communities know the

most important part of the collaboration is that they have a safe space to discuss their perspectives, feelings,

and ideas. If subject terms come out of the process, it is a great, but secondary outcome. By creating better

descriptions and safe spaces within archives, communities will be protected and thrive rather than risk having

their stories and communities erased by outdated, prejudiced terms that keep them hidden from researchers

inside and outside of their communities.

Conclusion

   The Library of Congress Subject Headings are over 100 years old. Originally created to control the flow

of information for Congress, it is now used around the world in libraries and archives to increase access to

materials for people in every type of community that exists. Its inconsistency and complexity, the myth that it

is neutral, its systemic biases, and how slow it is to change outdated terms make it problematic for describing

people in general but can lead to mental and physical harm for people who are marginalized by society.

   Even with its embedded problems, it is unlikely it will ever stop being used because of the time and

money it saves information institutions in creating records. Archives have unique collections by members of

communities that are often hidden by outdated and biased terms, and archivists should take steps to repair

LCSH to make their collections more discoverable. Repairing does not equate to correcting but is "a matter of truth-telling, accountability, negotiation, redistribution, and redress" (Adler, 2016, p. 631). The LCSH should not be the stopping point for archives because, even with calls to standardize, they still have unique, usually unpublished materials that are often far more complex than a mass-produced book. When these collections contain materials from historically marginalized communities, we owe it to them to describe their materials in a way that is reflective of their cultures and beliefs. Archivists can increase access to their collections by moving beyond LCSH and creating local vocabularies, crowdsourcing folksonomies, and most importantly, collaborating with marginalized communities so they see themselves in the collections and are connected to the resources they need (Hardesty & Nolan, 2021).

Archivists must be careful with description because it is a tool that can make the difference in whether victims are remembered or forgotten and can determine whether marginalized communities have a sense of power or are further silenced (Haberstock, 2019; Olson, 2000; Wood et al., 2014). This will necessarily involve giving up some professional control but, the process of this work will be "as important as the product" that is eventually created (Duff & Harris, 2002).

While there will always be things that get left out, doing the work to create parallel vocabularies can reduce and repair harm that has occurred in the past and instead empower those that have been historically silenced. These additional access points will ensure materials created by them can be found by other members of their communities and the rest of the world. By doing this work, archives can move beyond LCSH and create more inclusive subject headings and reduce harm to members of marginalized communities.

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