Bringing the World into the Catalog and the Classroom: Mitigating Western-Centrism with Controlled Vocabularies for Music
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Session presenters: Brad Young, Institute for Knowledge Organization and
Structures; Hermine Vermeij, UCLA; Nancy Lorimer, Stanford University; Kirk-Evan Billet, Peabody
Institute, Johns Hopkins University (Rebecca Belford, Oberlin College, standing in); Casey A. Mullin,
Western Washington University; Allison McClanahan, Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University

In this session, the presenters examined biases that have occurred in the library classification system. Some examples they cited included instances in Library of Congress (LC) thesauri in which some demographic groups were represented inappropriately or the hierarchy of terms seemed to favor some cultural groups over others. The presenters continued with discussions of how catalogers have attempted to correct these issues, as well as how others can help eliminate biases from the classification system.

Brad Young opened the session with a brief history of librarians who have challenged aspects of the library classification system that have generated bias. The chief instigator of this challenge was Sanford Berman. In his 1971 publication *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*, Berman listed over 200 Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) terms he believed merited revisions or even removal from the LCSH thesaurus because of their controversial representations. Among these subject headings were "Jewish question", which Berman proposed to delete from LCSH, and the term "Gipsies", which he proposed be changed to "Romanies". Another critic of the classification system was Hope Olson, the associate dean and professor of the School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Olson disliked the hierarchical structures within the library classification system, as she believed these structures misrepresented subjects outside the mainstream majority view and promoted marginalization. Her 2002 work *The Power to Name: Locating the Limits of Subject Representation in Libraries* further explored how these structures, as well as the classification system's insistence on universal language, endorsed marginalization. A third figure Brad cited was Judith Kaufman, who published a work entitled *Recordings of Non-Western Music: Subject and Added Entry Access*, which analyzed 40 published Japanese music headings. In her study, Kaufman emphasized why having appropriately specific terms and appropriate higher-level collocation were crucial for best representation of these music genres. Brad reiterated the importance of deconstructing LCSH terms and concluded that catalogers should always speak up if they find subject headings that they believe deserve revision or removal from LCSH.

Nancy Lorimer, who is the Coordinator of the SACO (Subject Authority Cooperative Program) Music Funnel Project, continued the session with a brief overview of the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT) and the Library of Congress Medium of Performance Thesaurus (LCMPT). These thesauri were developed by the Library of Congress and Music Library Association between 2009 and 2015, with the main objective being to construe genre/form and medium of performance information from LCSH. The downside of deriving this information from LCSH, however, has been that LCSH music terms are skewed towards Western classical music. Catalogers have therefore attempted to address this issue as they have updated LCGFT and LCMPT. In one specific example, the term for describing a type of Native American dance music was listed as "Chicken scratch music" in LCSH. But after extensive research, catalogers decided to use the preferred and more politically correct term "Waila music" as the primary term when they updated LCGFT. Nevertheless, addressing the Western-centrism problem when

maintaining the LCGFT and LCMPT thesauri still presents many challenges. One problem is that terms from LCGFT and LCMPT are based heavily on terms that are used in the United States. Another issue Hermine Vermeij indicated is that the terms used in LCGFT are only part of a general thesaurus and may therefore be affected by terms in other parts of the hierarchy. Hermine and Nancy noted, however, that catalogers can help attend to these issues by adding more non-Western music items to their libraries' collections (since LCGFT and LCMPT content are contingent on the materials library institutions collect) and proposing new terms or changes to terms, which can be done through the SACO Music Funnel.

Rebecca Belford, who presented on behalf of Kirk-Evan Billet, is the chair of the Music Library Association Vocabularies Subcommittee. She followed Nancy and Hermine's presentation with an exploration of other Western-centrism problems project-based task groups within the subcommittee have encountered as they have updated the LCMPT and LCGFT thesauri. One particular problem task group members have come across is that Western instrument names, such as "tambourine", have been used as the primary category name. Using "tambourine" as the main category name has especially encouraged Western-centrism because "pandeiro" (the Brazilian instrument) has been absorbed into this category. Meanwhile "riqq", the Arabic instrument, has been established as tambourine's predominant narrow term without taking into account riqq's many regional variant names. Another instance of Western-centrism the task groups have faced is that terms that embrace a wide spectrum, such as "Improvisations (Music)", may not work in non-English languages. Rebecca concluded Kirk's presentation with some reflective questions these examples have posed. One question was, "Have we opened a space for the marginalization of non-Western music or colonization of language?" Another was, "Do hierarchies within LC thesauri inflict connotations, such as if a term's position in the hierarchy participates in defining its status?"

Casey Mullin discussed the possibilities that the development of the Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms thesaurus (LCDGT) has enabled for catalogers when describing people. These possibilities catalogers can now use include creator/contributor characteristics, such as profession/occupation (374), gender (375), nationality (370), and sexual orientation (368 $c), and characteristics of intended audiences (385). While creator/contributor characteristics and audience characteristics have always been included in LCSH, terms that describe these characteristics, such as "Music by gay composers" or "Music by African American women composers", have only been used in limited cases (such as in compilations). LCDGT, however, has allowed for broader usage of creator/contributor and audience characteristics and a fresher start to demographic terminology. In particular, LCDGT uses more politically appropriate terminology, such as the preferred name of demographic groups (i.e. "Mi'kmaq (North American people)" vs. LCSH's "Micmac Indians") and does not allow compound identities, such as "African American women". Casey nevertheless cautioned that assigning LCDGT terms to people can allow room for biases, such as misgendering or pigeonholing people into categories or emphasizing their "other" identities. A specific example he gave concerned the terms "soprano", "alto" and "tenor". Are all soprano and alto singers adult females or boys? And are all tenors males? Casey noted that the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) Subcommittee on Faceted Vocabularies, of which the music community is represented, was planning to dive deeper into these ethical issues surrounding demographic terms. But in the meantime, he indicated that catalogers should exercise good judgment when assigning demographic terms to people.

Allison McClanahan is the Collections and Cataloging Librarian at Indiana University's Archives of Traditional Music (ATM), and her presentation therefore focused on how the Western-centrism problem in library classification affects not only cataloging but the public services aspect as well.

The ATM consists of one of the largest university-based ethnographic sound archives in the country, and the collections contain recordings from many different ethnographic disciplines, such as ethnomusicology and folklore. Allison indicated that a major challenge of cataloging at an institution such as ATM is that most recordings she catalogs contain non-Western genre/form terms and instrument names that require extensive research and translation. Allison echoed Nancy and Hermine's remarks that non-Western music terms are not very well represented in the LC thesauri. She added that the non-Western music terms that are established in LC, such as "world beat", have ambiguous and conflicting definitions that have resulted in a myriad of mostly unrelated recordings getting grouped in the same genre. In her "world beat" example, Allison described how recordings such as Reptile Palace Orchestra's "We Know You Know", which is a blend of traditional music forms with contemporary instruments, are cataloged as "world beat" music with popular music albums that use traditional Korean instruments. Allison noted that these under-established non-Western music genre/form terms can also pose problems for patrons searching for them in the library catalog. A patron searching for "world beat" music who is interested in the Reptile Palace Orchestra recording, for instance, would probably not be interested in an album of lounge music. Some of Allison's patrons, however, also search for recordings by instrument, and the underrepresentation of non-Western music terms also affects these search results as well. Allison said that Indiana University's catalog database, IUCAT, has an instrumentation facet search. But because many non-Western instrument names are not established in LC thesauri, most of the ATM's pre-2016 recordings do not index in IUCAT. Allison agreed with Nancy and Hermine, though, that catalogers could address the issue of underrepresented non-Western music terms by proposing new terms or revisions to terms through the SACO Music Funnel. However, these changes take time to pass through SACO. And as the sole cataloger at her institution, Allison has had to adapt interim solutions. She concluded her presentation with discussions of the interim solutions she uses, one of which has included using "folk music" or "popular music" for recordings with non-established genre/form terms and adding location subheadings. Another solution has involved assigning the closest related instrument family term to instrument names not established in LCMPT or using partial medium of performance fields. Finally, Allison has used the American Folklore Society's Ethnographic Thesaurus (AFSET) to supplement LC vocabulary terms, as well as Murdock's Outline of World Culture Codes to group together items of similar geographic area and cultural group.