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Expand, Humanize, Simplify : An Interview with Sandy Berman

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Expand, Humanize, Simplify : An Interview with Sandy Berman Sanford Berman & Tina Gross

Sanford "Sandy" Berman is best known as an outspoken critic of the biases, omissions, and anachronisms of the *Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)*. He has inspired and challenged generations of catalogers to prioritize the needs of library users over deferential adherence to standards. His unrelenting efforts to improve and expand subject access for library users came to prominence with the 1971 publication of his seminal *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*,¹ written while Sandy was working at the University of Zambia. For over 25 years as the head cataloger at the Hennepin County Library (HCL), Sandy led a cataloging operation that devised and maintained its own subject headings system and pioneered practices designed to better facilitate access, often deviating from established standards. Subject headings created and other innovations implemented at HCL were shared with the library community through the *HCL Cataloging Bulletin*, published from 1973 until Sandy's retirement in 1999. He calls it a "forced retirement," having resigned after an involuntary reassignment announced following clashes with library administration.² In 2002, HCL got rid of the bibliographic database and authority file created under Sandy's leadership, replacing them with standard catalog records with *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. A digital backup of the "Berman catalog" is part of the Sanford Berman Papers at the ALA Archives at the University of Illinois

(<https://archives.library.illinois.edu/alaarchon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=7831>).

As a long-time member of the American Library Association's (ALA) Social Responsibilities Round Table (and founder of its Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force) and of the Progressive Librarian's Guild, Sandy has long been a driving force in social justice activism in libraries. His most recent book, *Not in My Library! "Berman's Bag" Columns from The Unabashed Librarian, 2000-2013*,³ was published by McFarland in 2013. Awards and honors received include Minnesota Librarian of the Year in 1977, the ALA/ALCTS Margaret Mann Citation in 1981, the Honeywell Project Anniversary Award for Peace and Justice in 1988, the ALA Equality Award in 1989, the Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award in 1996, and the GALE/EMIERT Multicultural Award in 2000. Sandy was named an honorary member of ALA in 2004. In retirement, Sandy has continued to make proposals for new subject headings (and changes to existing subject headings) to the Library of Congress (LC) on a frequent basis, which he tracks in his "Personal LCSH Scorecard." (The June 2017 update of the "LCSH scorecard" is available online as supplementary material, along with a selected bibliography of publications by and about Sandy, and samples of his subject heading proposals to the Library of Congress.)

TG: When and how did you decide to become a librarian?

SB: Visiting the downtown Washington, DC public library, in private moments for reading and all that, was a longtime habit. One day as I entered, I saw a notice posted on a bulletin board that said investigate our work study program, so I investigated it. They were so hungry for professional librarians that they said go to library school (and the only one nearby was Catholic University of America, so that is the one you pick), and we will give you a professional level job within DCPL. The deal was you enter library school, work for us full time and study whenever you can. So I became assistant chief of the acquisitions department, and I studied some nights

and certainly weekends, and it took four years. I produced a massive thesis which I think was the biggest they ever had submitted. The title was: "Spanish Guinea, An Annotated Bibliography."

TG: How was your experience at library school?

SB: Two anecdotes are necessary here. One is that (if they reported it correctly) the greatest amount of book theft at Catholic University was committed by—do you want to guess which students from which faculty? I think Library Science was number two, but number one was Canon Law, meaning that a lot of monks with the big robes were going into the stacks and sticking the goodies under their robes, and it was goodbye.

Number two is that the only instruction we got related to intellectual freedom or censorship was from a friar who taught the only classes in book selection. So this is where you would expect something about the breadth of opinion and diversity and all that. The closest he came to anything that involved intellectual freedom was to warn all of us one day in class, "Don't buy or stock anything about or performed by Paul Robeson, because you will be directly contributing to the international communist conspiracy." That's it. That is the closest we got.

TG: Something many people probably don't know is that while at your first position after library school, working as a librarian for the Army Special Services in Germany in the 1960s, you were involved in the publication of an underground GI magazine. Could you talk about that?

SB: A number of the GIs and I, just before there was a GI underground press, did two issues of what now maybe people would call a zine, a little periodical totally produced within the barracks area. It was called *Yin/Yang*,⁴ and it included poetry and essays, photographs, and some art work, all done by the GIs. It was their work and a lot of it was really good. Maybe as many as a dozen guys participated in the writing, layout, reproduction, and then distribution. We had it available in the library.

I asked nobody's permission to do this. I have discovered that sometimes it's better not to ask permission. If you are dealing with something that ultimately is going to cost your institution a lot of money or get them in trouble, then you have to use good sense and ask permission. But if not everything is on the line, then sometimes asking may mean that they will say no and you don't do it. So we didn't ask, we just did it.

The reaction from the superiors was not laudatory, and in fact it was not so gently suggested that it had subversive overtones, particularly a poem by one of the black GIs. He was talking hopefully about ultimate liberation for himself, and getting out of this, and living a decent life. At one point a colonel was telling me how maybe it would be better to let up on this, to reconsider. He was sitting on top of a counter, and underneath where he was sitting was a drawer with proofs for the next issue. I just heard him out and we both smiled and shook hands and he left.



Figure 1. Sandy Berman at the "Edina Promenade" greenway in Edina, MN.

TG: When you wrote *Prejudices and Antipathies*, how did you decide what to include? Were there issues you had to omit because of space considerations?

SB: I was working at the University of Zambia Library. It was largely a matter of what I encountered either in the course of cataloging or handling materials that were being cataloged. I am almost embarrassed that it was so short, but at the time this was the best I could do. Subsequently, in effect, we updated it through the *Hennepin County Library Cataloging Bulletin* which from about 1974 until about twenty years ago was published every two months. In essence everything in there could have become a lot more *Prejudices*... not that all of what the *Cataloging Bulletin* reported represented prejudice or bias. Some of it was oversight, like why doesn't LC create a heading for this. *Butch and femme* is one example. There is a vast literature on that topic, and a lot of other people (not only me) have pointedly and repeatedly provided documentation and practically begged that they do a heading so that stuff can be revealed to people making a search, so you don't have to hit and miss, and not find everything, which is the

point of cataloging. They finally established *Butch and femme (Lesbian culture)*, but it came woefully and inexplicably late.

TG: Your work at the Hennepin County Library is legendary. How did that come about?

SB: When I was hired as head cataloger in 1973, the initial reason was that they had a lot of AV stuff—like records. At that point there were no rules for those, and they figured (on the basis of my reputation established by virtue of the book, mostly) that I could be innovative enough to put together some rules so they could move out some of these music records and AV that had been backlogging for a long time.

Plus they were in the mode of having automated from index cards into a fully machine-readable database. They grafted two systems together: New York Public Library's automated authority system and something from the University of California's Institute of Library Research (ILR), their data handling system. That automated database meant that you could do some changing (like changing a heading or adding a cross reference) without having to change every damn card. So that seemed very attractive and knowing that I maybe had a predilection toward doing that kind of thing, I think that somewhat underlay the invitation to join the staff.

We would make new headings when we thought we needed new headings, when we couldn't find anything in LCSH to cover what the material that was coming through was about. And then we would change things. I went through my book, and if we had a heading for "kafirs," we changed that to *Blacks* or to *South Africans* or to *Xhosa*, if that was what it was about, or *Zulu*, or whatever.

The irony is that we were using the New York Public Library's automated system in ways that they weren't. We changed *Near East* to *Middle East*. At the same time we would do that, New York Public Library would not, although we were doing it because of the ease of their system. They wouldn't use their own system to effect the same beneficent change because, this gets back to the old problem which stays with us to this day, they were so slavish. It took many years for them to do it, until LC said it's okay now to do it.

I think it's sad because a lot of local libraries could be enhancing access to the resources in their collections if they would allow catalogers more latitude. I think it's because of what I have suggested is slavishness, and also this kind of mindless adherence to standards that every entry has to look like every other entry because somehow that's the professional ideal. I have no problem with standards like a subject heading system or a classification system. You have to have some base that you are working on, but deviations it seems to me are not only possible, but it has always seemed to me that they are absolutely essential if you are going to liberate a lot of your materials from the narrow access that they are confined to now, by virtue of too rigidly applying the present standards. And of course you work to try to expand the standards and change general practice too.

I know this sounds terribly inflated, but I used to feel coming to work every day that we were actually in the business of liberating materials by making them more accessible to the people who are using the library and to our colleagues. That is actually how I felt, like we were engaged

in a liberatory operation, but that did mean violating some of the cherished standards. I would say it was improving on them.

TG: When I invited folks to suggest questions for this interview on social media, by far the most common theme was "What did Sandy think of the efforts to get the Library of Congress to change the subject heading *Illegal aliens*?" You've commented in your column in the *U*N*A*B*A*S*H*E*D*TM *Librarian* newsletter and elsewhere, but what would you want to say about it to readers of *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*?

SB: First, when LC instituted *Illegal aliens*, it was a bad choice even then. Better, more precise and "unloaded" options were available. In early 1981, Hennepin County Library established *Undocumented workers*, citing as authority the *Chicano Thesaurus for Indexing Chicano Materials* (1979). HCL duly reported this innovation to LC in its bimonthly *Cataloging Bulletin* (#51, p.39). The LC concoction should have been assailed immediately. As far as I know, it wasn't. The only serious opposition arose in 2014, when Dartmouth College students appealed to LC to drop the term. On 1-12-2016, the American Library Association Council supported that appeal, overwhelmingly approving a resolution that characterized the LC rubric as "dehumanizing, offensive, inflammatory, and even a racial slur," and specifically recommending its replacement by *Undocumented immigrants*.⁵ Subsequent developments I related in this 12-6-16 submission to American Libraries (which has not been published yet as of June 8, 2017):

Dear Colleagues,

After much agitation, the Library of Congress in March 2016 announced that it intended to cancel the subject heading, "Illegal aliens," replacing it by two new rubrics, "Noncitizens" and "Unauthorized immigration." The broader descriptor, "Aliens," would also be dropped, in favor of "Noncitizens."

The ALA Subject Analysis Committee (SAC) created an "Illegal aliens" Working Group, chaired by Tina Gross, which reviewed LC's proposed changes and on July 13 issued a report⁶ that supported substituting "Noncitizens" for "Aliens" but compellingly argued that "Illegal aliens" itself should be transformed into one new form only: "Undocumented immigrants." The report included detailed proposals for new and revised heading entries, featuring precise scope notes and extensive cross-references.

In the meantime, LC's intended changes aroused opposition among several Republican House members, who attached a rider to the FY 2017 House Legislative Branch Appropriations Act (H.R. 5325), instructing LC to retain its current terminology...

Treading warily, LC invited comments on its plan "from the library community and the general public," ...the comments to be reviewed by the Policy and Standards Division and "final disposition of the proposals... announced later this year."

Right now (12-8-16) there has been no formal implementation of LC's original plan, nor has LC either accepted or rejected the SAC revisions. In any event, it seems unlikely that "Illegal aliens" will soon be replaced with anything, especially given the Congressional

objections and pending bill. So perhaps it's time to stop whining and hand-wringing about the House know-nothings who may have thwarted the "illegal aliens" reform and instead defy and outwit them. How? By individual library systems and consortia implementing the superbly-crafted SAC recommendations themselves. Congress has no direct control or dominion over non-federal public, school, and academic libraries. And most of those entities already have automated authority control, making it relatively easy, for instance, to flip "illegal aliens" to "undocumented immigrants," thus both scrapping an anachronistic, pejorative heading and improving topical access by employing widely familiar terminology.

The SAC workups can be efficiently used as templates for local revision.

We can wallow in a mix of sorrow, fury, helplessness, and cynicism at the Congressional interference or we can exert our own professional autonomy, expertise, social commitment, and initiative to do what is right and helpful even if LC itself can't or won't (or does so awkwardly and ineffectually).

It's now one year since LC declared that it would scrap *Illegal aliens* and several months beyond the promised date for either actually doing so or admitting that it wouldn't. Several things are remarkable--no, appalling--about this saga. LC's failure to act isn't one of them. More telling is that--at least to my knowledge--no individual library system or consortia have themselves instituted the change. Everyone agrees the present heading is wrong. With SAC's aid, everyone also knows how to fix the problem. But no one does it. Which leads inevitably to the conclusion that this episode starkly illustrates a sickening abandonment of professional judgment and independence, a refusal to exert (or reassert) control over local authority files and bibliographic databases, a staggering lack of social responsibility toward catalog users, and a frankly numbing deference to distant authorities (like LC) and mindlessly imposed standardization (e.g., *LCSH*) that simply don't deserve such knee-jerk acceptance and embrace. For more on this theme of cataloger-enslavement, see my "Jackdaws Strut in Peacock's Feathers: The Sham of 'Standard' Cataloging."⁷

TG: I must confess that we haven't done this yet at my library, and the main reason is that we share an authority file with 80 other libraries—we'd need to get the consortium to agree to it first. That's a possibility, but I haven't advocated for it yet because I think everyone will want to wait for LC to announce what they've decided. Do you have any thoughts or advice for catalogers in situations like this? (Am I being strategic, or just too timid?)

SB: My admonition to "Just Do It!" necessarily applies to library systems that can do it, that control their own authority files. If your consortium requires 100% approval among 80 institutions (or is majority assent enough?), then the best, most ethical approach would seem to be convincing the 80 stakeholders to ratify the change. WHEN to undertake that campaign? Perhaps set a reasonable date for LC to either effect the switch or not. It's now one full year since the announcement that they'd dump *Illegal aliens*. And many months since they promised to make a final decision. Realistically, they may never reach an actual decision to do it--or just never do it without saying why. In either case, we're all stuck with the goddam "aliens" forever, barring local action. In short, LC's already had plenty of time to enact the substitution (ideally

based on your SAC work)—or to admit that they won't do so, probably due to Congressional constraints.



Figure 2. Sandy Berman and his granddaughter Jasmine.

TG: How has your relationship with the Library of Congress changed over the years?

SB: This may be unbelievable to people who think it has always been a totally contentious relationship, but at one point I was actually invited to lecture at the Library of Congress. There was even a reception and some small meetings with people in the Cataloging Policy and Support Office before the talk. In the aftermath of that, one positive outcome was that the director for cataloging agreed that I would, as I had been doing, send them HCL cataloging bulletins and specifically mark the subject headings that I wanted to call their attention to for possible adoption. And then they would get back to me. I actually got periodic emails saying we are going to do this, or we are not going to do that, and there was a bit of opportunity to dialogue—not a lot, but a little bit. But then that door kind of slammed shut, I think with a change of leadership, and after that it was either contentious, or I must say often smarmy, dismissive correspondence that I would get, and then finally it was that we are not going to write you anymore. And I was not sending them inflammatory missives. It was usually, "I really think you need to do this, and here are other places that have done it. Here's what Hennepin is doing."

TG: Do you have hopes that LC will be more willing to communicate with you under the leadership of Carla Hayden?

SB: Well, that's exactly what I wondered myself, which prompted my 10-20-16 missive:

Dear Carla,

I realize you've only been on the job a short time, but I feel an urgency about the fact that these critical topics relating to public policy and much-discussed issues have not been recognized by Library of Congress subject headings, although all have been formally recommended and could immediately be assigned to catalogable material:

MASS INCARCERATION
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
WAGE THEFT
SCIENCE DENIALISM
CLIMATE CHANGE DENIALISM
ANTIVACCINE MOVEMENT
NATIVE AMERICAN HOLOCAUST (1492-1900)
REVENGE PORN
ROBIN HOOD TAX
"BROKEN WINDOWS" POLICING
WHITE PRIVILEGE
HISTORICAL TRAUMA
SEX WORKERS
INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION
MORAL INJURY
BENEFIT CORPORATIONS
STEREOTYPE THREAT
IMPACT INVESTING
WAR PROFITEERING
STOP-AND-FRISK (POLICING)
DRONE WARFARE
HATE ROCK MUSIC
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE DENIALISM
MALE PRIVILEGE
UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME
EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM
GEOLOGY, STRATIGRAPHIC—ANTHROPOCENE (PROPOSED)
CLASSISM IN LENDING
EVOLUTIONARY MEDICINE
EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHIATRY
SECULAR PARENTING
CRITICAL LIBRARIANSHIP
ANARCHA-FEMINISM

To state the obvious, library users everywhere making subject searches under these descriptors are likely to find nothing, since most institutions will not employ subject rubrics unless LC has done so first. And LC has not done so. The result: potentially useful resources are rendered invisible and inaccessible. I trust this is not an outcome that any of us desires.

While there are other continuing deficiencies in *LCSH*, this matter of "currency" (or omission) seems paramount.

Hoping you can intervene to unlock these missing topics,

Sanford Berman

That produced a 2-3-17 response from Beacher Wiggins, Director of LC's Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate.

[Permission to reprint Wiggins' letter was requested but could not be obtained. In the letter, Wiggins recommends that Sandy use the formal SACO proposal process rather than sending recommendations through the mail, outlines several common reasons why Sandy's suggestions are not accepted (LC considers them media buzzwords for concepts that are already covered by other subject headings, they are not needed for materials in LC's collections, they have already been implemented), and comments on several of Sandy's specific proposals: Benefit corporations, Denialisms (e.g. Science denialism, AIDS denialism), Industrial pollution, Mass incarceration, Native American Holocaust (1492-1900), Sex workers, Stop-and-frisk (Policing), and White privilege.

Here is Sandy's response to Beacher Wiggins:]

Dear Colleague,

Many thanks for your 2-3-17 letter, prompted by my 10-20-16 missive (updated 11-17-16) to Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress.

In random reply:

1. I plead guilty to recommending new and revised subject headings outside the officially-prescribed channels. I have been doing so for decades, earlier through the medium of bimonthly *HCL Cataloging Bulletin* issues. Not mere dozens, but hundreds of these suggestions have been added to *LCSH*. All are proposed with model scope notes and cross-references and frequently accompanied by usage-examples, assignment candidate citations, and definitions from authoritative thesauri and other sources.

Just since 2002, some 3 years after my retirement at Hennepin County Library, at least 97 recommendations have either been accepted by LC in original or modified form. All have been duly acknowledged in my continually-updated

"Personal LCSH Scorecard" (February 2017 iteration enclosed). Inasmuch as you admit that "we have acted on some of your recommendations," apparently my out-of-the-box style of proposing changes and innovations has not proven an insuperable obstacle.

You note that MILITARIZATION OF POLICE was based on my suggestion. In fact, I recommended POLICE MILITARIZATION on 9-2-14 and recorded the LC version on my "scorecard."

2. I applaud your creation of STOP AND FRISK (LAW ENFORCEMENT) in September 2016, but I'm compelled to note that I had recommended STOP AND FRISK (POLICING) fully four years earlier, on 7-13-12.
3. I'm well aware that SEX WORKERS is presently a see-reference to PROSTITUTES. The trouble with that is that "sex workers" is a much broader term, encompassing not only prostitutes, but also exotic or pole dancers, stripteasers, phone sex operators, and erotic film actors, among others.
4. NATIVE AMERICAN HOLOCAUST (1492-1900): Your defensive "explanations" for why this is an unsuitable heading mask LC's scandalous, decades-long failure to establish a rubric that denotes the massive population loss, genocide, and dispossession suffered by Native Americans since the Columbian landfall. The closest descriptor available in *LCSH* seems to be the laughable INDIANS, TREATMENT OF. (Kindly consider the manifest absurdity and imprecision of cataloging materials on the Jewish Holocaust under an equivalent JEWS, TREATMENT OF.)

Scholars have utilized the "Holocaust" term with respect to the Indian experience. So have Native Americans themselves. Over the years, I've forwarded such examples, for instance: *Eating Fire, Tasting Blood: An Anthology of the American Indian Holocaust* (Thunder's Mouth Press), David Stannard's *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*, artist Francis Yellow, quoted in the 2-2-07 *Star Tribune* ("Yellow's maps deal with what he calls the 'American Holocaust'"); Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways' 2011 *American Indian Boarding Schools: An Exploration of Global Ethnic & Cultural Cleansing* ("Federally sanctioned massacres that occurred between the 1500s and 1900s resulted in cultural and tribal desecration. Some scholars consider it an American Holocaust, which spanned across two continents and four centuries, consuming the lives of millions of indigenous peoples... The American Indian Holocaust and the Jewish Holocaust were both based on the goal of stamping out the perceived inferior population"); and Jack Weatherford ("Within another 50 years, the Taino people had been made extinct—the first casualties of the holocaust of the American Indians").

In 2008, the Colorado legislature passed a resolution comparing the deaths of Indians to the Holocaust and other acts of genocide. According to a 5-1-08 *Star*

Tribune report, "the measure, passed 22-12 in the Senate and 59-4 in the House, says that Europeans intentionally caused many Indian deaths and that early American settlers often treated Indians with 'cruelty and inhumanity.'"

In 1990, the Minnesota Library Association approved a "Columbus Quincentennial Resolution," a similar statement also being passed that year by the American Library Association. These resolutions declared, in part: "WHEREAS Columbus' voyage to America began a legacy of European piracy, brutality, slave trading, murder, disease, conquest, and ethnocide, and further, engendered the Native American Holocaust which saw a population of over 5,000,000 American Indians in the land area of the United States decline to about 250,000 by the last decade of the 19th century... THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Minnesota [American] Library Association urges librarians to provide Columbus Quincentennial programs and materials which examine the event from an authentic Native American and non-European perspective, dealing directly with topics like cultural imperialism, colonialism, and the Native American Holocaust."

The "1492-1900" gloss represents the period of continual Native American population decline.

The proposed heading appeared in the Hennepin County Library catalog for many years, producing no complaint.

For more on this "inflammatory" suggestion, see my "Whose Holocaust is it, anyway? The H word in library catalogs," co-published in *The Reference Librarian*, nos.61/62, 1988, p.213-25, and *The Holocaust: Memories, Research, Reference*, edited by Robert Hauptman and Susan Hubbs (Haworth Press, 1998). (If not readily available, I'll gladly forward a hard copy.)

5. Why would scholars and writers and filmmakers trouble to invoke "mass incarceration" if it were equivalent to "incarceration?" Clearly, because they're not the same, the "mass" form being a subcategory of the unmodified term. Placing materials on mass incarceration under the broader heading in effect buries them, making data and opinion on the more specific topic harder to identify and retrieve. That is distinctly not the purpose of good subject cataloging.

Catalogers need not fret over precisely "how many people would need to be incarcerated, and for what purpose, to qualify as mass incarceration." This seems to be willful obfuscation and bureaucratic nit-picking. If Michelle Alexander says her *New Jim Crow* is about "mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness," then that's what it's about. Likewise Frontline's *Prison State* documentary, self-described as "a look at the impact of mass incarceration in America through four stories." And James Kilgore's *Understanding Mass Incarceration: A People's Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggle of our Time*. Or is this term what you

somewhat haughtily & dismissively regard as a "buzzword"? Well, PBS and the cited authors take it very seriously. So should the Library of Congress.

6. **BENEFIT CORPORATIONS** (aka B-corps): These entities, to quote James Surowiecki in the 8-4-14 *New Yorker*, "are for profit companies that pledge to achieve social goals as well as business ones. Their social and environmental performance must be regularly certified by a nonprofit called B Lab..." In short, B-corps are explicitly incorporated to "adhere to socially-beneficial practices like environmental protection or preserving employee benefits" (from my proposed scope note, 7-12-11). Again catalogers need not make agonized judgements concerning whether Corporation X is "truly" beneficial. If they declare themselves to be B-corps in their charters, then legally they are.

I have previously supplied detailed articles and analyses by Surowiecki, John Montgomery (May/June 2014 *Humanist*), Jamie Raskin (1-9/16, 2012 *Nation*) and Wikipedia (7-6-11). I would have expected that these materials had fully allayed any qualms about being able to assign the proposed rubric "with accuracy or consistency."

7. **WHITE PRIVILEGE**: You report that a "formal SACO proposal for this heading appeared on the October 2016 Tentative List. It was not approved because *LCSH* does not include headings for discrimination in favor of specific racial or ethnic groups." Okay, Why don't you when there's a genuinely vast literature on exactly that subject? A 2015 blogpost, "White privilege is not in the Library of Congress Subject Headings,"⁸ splendidly and concisely demonstrates how headings like **WHITES—CIVIL RIGHTS** and **WHITES—LEGAL STATUS, LAWS, ETC.** emphatically do not adequately denote or represent the content & themes of titles like *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (Rothenberg), *Seeing White: An Introduction to White Privilege and Race* (Halley/Eshleman/Vijaya), and *Dismantling White Privilege: Pedagogy, Politics, and Whiteness* (Rodriguez/Villaverde).

The rationale for failing to establish **WHITE PRIVILEGE** is frankly bewildering. Is the real reason that LC wishes not to offend white people? (Let us profoundly hope not.)

In any event, it's exactly this sort of insensitivity, unresponsiveness, and laggardliness that undermines LC's credibility as a dynamic, reliable, and useful engine for information access.

8. If, indeed, "it is neither necessary nor desirable to establish headings for denialisms because in *LCSH* both sides of an argument are typically represented by a single heading," why do the admitted **HOLOCAUST DENIAL** and **HOLODOMOR DENIAL** exist at all? Apparently, someone (rightly) recognized that there are in fact materials dealing directly and unequivocally with denial and deniers. That is, denial itself is the subject. So it is with several permutations of

science denial. The primary theme of Donald Prothero's *Reality Check: How Science Deniers Threaten Our Future* (2013) is "science denial." Similarly, these works are not primarily about AIDS, but rather address AIDS denialism: Nicoli Nattrass' *Mortal Combat: AIDS Denialism and the Struggle for Antiretrovirals in South Africa* (2007), Seth Kalichman's *Denying AIDS: Conspiracy Theories, Pseudoscience, and Human Tragedy* (2009), and Melissa Meyer's *Politics of AIDS Denialism: South Africa's Failure to Respond* (2010). And Haydn Washington and John Cook's *Climate Change Denial* (2011) unabashedly states what it's about. Further, there are many works that demand the proposed ANTIVACCINE MOVEMENT heading, among them Paul A. Offit's *Deadly Choices: How the Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All* (2010) and PBS' Frontline documentary, *Vaccine War* (2010).

This is not a game for me (despite the futility-fueled "Scoreboard"). Not a business. No one pays me to submit subject heading recommendations or bibliographic record critiques. I do it in order to expand, humanize, and simplify access to library resources and information. I do it to help LC do its job better and more effectively. I do it because I'm a librarian. So instead of berating me for not obediently following your protocols and procedures, maybe an occasional "thank you" would be nice for my bothering to make what you do more relevant and useful.

Why not welcome constructive input from whatever source and in any form?

With best wishes,
Sanford Berman

Honestly, that wasn't quite the outcome I'd hoped for from my Hayden letter. Indeed, I found it condescending, rigid, and laden with oh-so-familiar "reasons" for not doing what obviously needs to be done, like establishing a heading to denote the horrific post-Columbian Native American experience and another to represent--and reveal--resources on Democratic Socialism, a topic widely popularized by a recent Presidential contender. To date, there's been no further "communication."

TG: If someone in SACO agreed to take your subject heading proposals and submit them through the official channels (instead of sending them in the mail), would you be interested?

SB: At the likely risk of seeming a foolish, stubborn *alte kacker*, I'd prefer to bypass SACO and directly submit any future recommendations (which may include *Trumpism* and *Fake news*) to CPSO [Cataloging Policy and Support Office, which is now titled the Policy and Standards Division]. Primarily, it's a matter of ownership and accountability, permitting me to assume personal responsibility for what I suggest and to instantly transmit more supporting documentation or possible revisions without being delayed by an intermediary. Secondarily, let's face it: at 83, this compulsive activity isn't going to continue much longer. So what-the-hell...



Figure 3. Sandy Berman with friend Max.

TG: In a casual lunchtime discussion of Mashcat participants (<http://www.mashcat.info> - "a loose group of library cataloguers, developers and anyone else with an interest in how library catalogue data can be created, manipulated, used and re-used by computers and software"), the idea of "forking" *LCSH* came up—using it as a base, but with deviations to address problematic subject headings like "Illegal aliens" and to create needed ones that LC rejects. It sounded like what you did at Hennepin County Library, except as a cooperative community effort. Leaving aside the huge question of feasibility, does this seem like a promising approach to you, or are local practices by individual libraries preferable?

SB: I've never encountered "forking" as a term, but what you describe was essentially the HCL approach, employing *LCSH* as a framework that could be freely enhanced and corrected. In addition to creating totally new descriptors (clearly denoted "HCL form" in the Authority File), we replaced many obsolete, biased, or awkward rubrics (e.g., *Aged* became *Seniors*, *Intervertebral disk displacement* morphed into *Slipped Disc*, *Near East* flipped to *Middle East*, *Water closets* was dropped in favor of *Toilets*, and *Saame* was substituted for *Lapps*. We added numerous cross-references and scope-notes and deleted "see also" references that inaccurately and often pejoratively connected certain topics (like Gypsies--i.e., Romanies—with *Rogues and vagabonds* and *Anarchism and anarchists* with *Terrorism*). Whether such "forking" happens within a single system or "as a cooperative community effort" seems immaterial. What's key is that it happens, making local catalogs vibrant and responsive and relevant. It won't happen as long as systems and individual institutions remain inflexibly locked into "standards" and tools that too frequently prove unhelpful, actually obscuring or denying access to library resources.

TG: Is there a message you'd like to close with?

SB: Just this: Catalogers, arise! Cast off your bondage and passivity! Say no to creativity-stifling conformity! Demand a role in decision-making! Prioritize professional integrity and unleashed imagination! And never forget who you really work for: library users and colleagues. Not bosses and bureaucrats!

¹ Sanford Berman, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1971; corrected reprint, with new foreward, preface and index, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1993)

² Burl Gilyard, "Sandy Berman's Last Stand," *City Pages*, July 14, 1999. (Available at <http://www.sanfordberman.org/cityp/ber1t.htm>)

³ Sanford Berman, *Not in My Library! "Berman's Bag" Columns from the Unabashed Librarian, 2000-2013* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2013).

⁴ Yin Yang: An Independent Journal of Art, Ideas, and Imagination (Coleman Barracks, Germany: Special Services Library, 1966)

⁵ American Library Association Council, "Resolution on Replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading 'Illegal Aliens' with 'Undocumented Immigrants'" (January 12, 2016) (Available at http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org/aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2016_mw_council_documents/cd_34_Resol_on_LC_Headings_11216_FINAL.pdf)

⁶ ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee, "Report from the SAC Working Group on the LCSH 'Illegal aliens'" (July 13, 2016) (Available at <http://connect.ala.org/node/255185>)

⁷ Sanford Berman, "Jackdaws Strut in Peacock's Feathers: The Sham of 'Standard' Cataloging," *Librarians at Liberty* 5, no. 2 and 6, nos. 1 & 2 (June 1998) 1, 4-21 (Available at <http://www.sanfordberman.org/biblinks/jackdaws.pdf>)

⁸ "White Privilege is not in the Library of Congress Subject Headings," in *I Never Metadata I Didn't Like*, a blog by Netanel Ganin. <https://inevermetadataaididntlike.wordpress.com/2015/10/10/white-privilege-is-not-in-the-library-of-congress-subject-headings/>