

PARAPHILIAS: The Perversion of Meaning in the Library of Congress Subject Headings

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The Library of Congress is a federal institution that occupies a critical space where medical, social science, political, literary, and other discourses are collected, arranged, and disseminated to Congress and the public. This paper is part of a larger project that examines the social construction of sexual deviance through the lens of the Library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH), “Paraphilias,” the term that replaced the earlier authorized headings, “Sexual perversion” (1898-1972) and “Sexual deviation” (1972-2007). An intertextual reading of relationships between a specific subject heading and the works to which it affords access reveals and problematizes LCSH as an interface where the prevailing attitudes and assumptions in scholarship emerge in and produce universalized and authorized terms. It also shows the shifts over time in scholarship, including changes in what counts as a perverted expression or behavior. and opens up questions regarding the potential of tagging and social media for organizing materials on sexuality. I suggest that the authorized term “Paraphilias” offers a particularly interesting lens through which to build upon existing research on LCSH and classification more generally. Because LCSH is used by a huge range of library types and sizes, including digital collections, and serves a variety of disciplines and audiences, the purpose of this paper is to raise the disciplinary and historical problems inherent in LCSH and conclude by offering a glimpse of what social media can tell us about sexual deviance. Drawing especially on sexuality scholar Judith Halberstam’s “perverse presentism” and Sanford Berman’s three principles for subject access, I will demonstrate approaches to this particular heading.

This study builds on a body of scholarship that examines the effects of state, scientific, and cultural institutions on sexual politics and practices,¹ as well as classification research in

¹ To name a few: Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009). Jennifer Terry, J., *An American obsession: Science, medicine, and homosexuality in modern society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); John D'Emilio (1983).

Library and Information Studies.² It relies heavily on feminist and queer theories, which expose the inherent slipperiness, expansiveness, and limitations of categories, and situate sexual expression and regulation within historical, social, and political contexts. Such approaches bring various ironies and paradoxes of library classification to light. Categories are necessary for information retrieval. Librarians assign books call numbers and place them on shelves near related subjects, and they assign subject headings so that people can find information on various topics in the catalog. As patrons, scholars of sexuality studies know all too well the joy of browsing and getting swept away in the HQs.

Because LCSH is an institutionalized expression of societal customs and beliefs, it should be understood as a part of an entire matrix of social practices and discourses. It not only reflects mainstream ideas, but it also perpetuates and influences them. The Library of Congress operates at the center of scholarly discourses; research from medical, social science, political, and other disciplines are collected, arranged, and disseminated to Congress and the public. This study will enhance understanding of the role of knowledge production in the construction of deviance by looking to the place where these discourses are stored and categorized.

Doing the History of Sexuality--Perverse Presentism

Taxonomic discourses for sexual practices and identities are constantly changing, expanding, reappropriating, offending, and refusing to be pinned down, presenting a challenge

“Capitalism and Gay Identity.” In *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).

² Ellen Greenblatt, “Homosexuality: the Evolution of a Concept in the Library of Congress Subject Headings.” In *Gay and Lesbian Library Service*, ed. Cal Gough, C & Ellen Greenblatt, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1990).; Carole L. Palmer, and Cheryl Knott Malone, “Elaborate isolation: Metastructures of knowledge about women.” *The Information Society*, 17; Hope A. Olson, *The Power to Name: Locating the limits of subject representation in libraries*. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 2002); Hope A. Olson, . *Difference, culture and change: The untapped potential of LCSH*. In Stone, A.T. (Ed.), *The LCSH century: One hundred years with the Library of Congress Subject Headings system*. (Birmingham, NY: Haworth, 2007). Sanford Berman, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People* (Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1971); Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Boston, Mass: MIT Press, 2000).

for the Library of Congress, which strives to describe its literature in contemporary terms. As Patrick Keilty observes, classification's goal to fit phenomena neatly into categories for information retrieval is in direct conflict with the elusive, expansive nature of “queer.”³ LCSH and the Library of Congress catalog are sites where present-day authorized terms are used to facilitate the retrieval of works published over the course of history. Classification of materials on sexuality has presented particular issues, as definitions and membership within categories have shifted rapidly since the Library first started categorizing its collection with subject headings on printed cards in 1898. Depending upon the social, professional, and historical position from which the speaker occupies, practices and identities, such as “queer,” may be considered perverted or deviant.

Presentism is a persistent historiographical challenge for anyone trying to explain the past by using current terminologies that did not exist or have significantly changed in meaning since the period under investigation. Historians of sexuality are keenly aware of the changing nature of taxonomies and the inherent struggles in understanding past sexual practices, identities, and scholarship in the context of the present, in intelligible terms. The work of sexuality scholars depends on and contributes to an understanding of how categories have emerged, expanded, disappeared, and changed over time, as well as how these categories have been explained and defined in terms of identities, behaviors, conditions, and difference.

“Perverse presentism,” as proposed by Judith Halberstam, is a methodology that attempts to account for and overcome the problems of presentism by denaturalizing the present as a point toward which all of history is moving and improving, and applying “what we do not know in the present to what we cannot know about the past.”⁴ Using present-day terms and definitions to

³ Patrick Keilty, P. “Tabulating Queer: Space, Perversion, and Belonging.” *Knowledge Organization* 36 (2010).

⁴ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998), 53.

describe the past greatly oversimplifies and distorts the historical record. It leads to a perversion of meaning and misunderstanding, and when speaking of subjects of sexuality, it may inaccurately or unfairly render certain acts and identities as perverted. However, an awareness of the limitations of language and the capacity to know both the present and the past, as well as trying to understand the past in its own terms, expands the opportunities to interpret the historical record. Halberstam uses this methodology to study 19th and early 20th century same-sex desire among women, taking care not to use “lesbian” as a blanket term to describe women who desired women during an era when “lesbian” did not exist.

Using a mixed-method, interdisciplinary approach in her book, *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam illustrates the ways in which female masculinity has been socially and historically constructed. She asks “whether there is a form of queer theory or sexual theory that is not textually based,” and reads social events and phenomena as texts. Approaching popular print, film, late 19th and early 20th century sexological texts, boxing, and drag king performances as social texts, she uses literary analysis, ethnography, and historical research to explore the range of expressions of female masculinities.

Halberstam critiques some lesbian historians,⁵ including Lillian Faderman, for their conflation of early, pre-lesbian behaviors with current understandings of lesbians. She argues that considering women who desired women as lesbians or proto-lesbians erases their histories and the specificities of identities and activities of tribades, female husbands, and a whole range of expressions. Halberstam implores readers to understand that, “far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as

⁵ Faderman is considered a leading scholar and is best known for *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (1991) and *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981).

masculinity.”⁶ She further states that “female masculinity is not simply the opposite of female femininity, nor is it a female version of male masculinity.”⁷ And she reemphasizes these points when she introduces perverse presentism: “This book rises and falls on two propositions....The first claim is that women have made their own unique contributions to what we call modern masculinity, and these contributions tend to go completely unnoticed in gender scholarship. The second claim is that what we recognize as female masculinity is actually a multiplicity of masculinities...”⁸ Essentially, Halberstam is opening up a category to a range of historically situated and ever-changing possibilities and is demanding that we pay attention to context when speaking of gender and sexual expressions. Her methodology invites questions concerning the representations of sexual behaviors and identities in library catalogs, especially with regard to historical works.

Due to the cataloging technology known as “global updating,” all subject headings can be automatically converted in local catalog records to the most current version of the heading. Prior to this technology, records were changed by hand to update bibliographic records. Therefore, everything that was previously assigned “Sexual perversion” would have been manually updated and categorized as “Sexual deviation.” With the global update “Paraphilias” has replaced “Sexual deviation” in most catalogs, including that of the Library of Congress, without any human review of the catalog records. This means that texts that were cataloged in the early part of the twentieth century have retained some of the long abandoned attitudes.

Perhaps the most striking example of perverse presentism and changing conceptions of sexual deviance in the Library of Congress catalog is the case of homosexuality. Once thought to be an indicator of degeneracy and perversion, scholarship explaining homosexuality during the

⁶ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 1.

⁷ Ibid, 29.

⁸ Ibid, 46.

majority of the twentieth century moved from language of criminalization toward pathologization.⁹ Until 1946, in LCSH homosexuality was subsumed under “Sexual perversion,” along with a variety of uncataloged sexual practices. “Homosexuality” was first applied to an Italian book entitled *Homosexualismo em medicina legal*, by Antonio Bello da Motta, published in 1937. When it first appeared in LCSH, it was cross-listed with “Sexual perversion,” and given a see also reference to “Sodomy.” The call numbers assigned to it were those assigned to “Social pathology” and “Medical jurisprudence.” Further direction was offered to users regarding the heading: “Works on the criminal manifestation of homosexuality are entered under the heading Sodomy.”¹⁰ The related headings "Homosexuals" and "Lesbians" were created in 1976, and in 1987, "Homosexuals" was replaced by the headings "Gays."

Of the 550 unique titles assigned “Paraphilias,” a significant number of bibliographic records in the Library of Congress catalog are works on homosexuality. For instance, a search using the heading “Paraphilias” and the truncated keyword “Homosexual?” turns up 25 records published from 1961 through 2002. Certainly, it’s very likely that these books were given the headings “Sexual perversion” or “Sexual deviation,” and through global update technology, were automatically changed to “Paraphilias.” Some of the books are general works on sexual deviations with an emphasis on homosexuality. Perhaps the most alarming entry is for the book published in 2002 that associates homosexuality with paraphilias, *Objects of Desire: The Sexual Deviations*. The work is edited by Charles W. Socarides and Abraham Freedman, psychologists whose work aims to treat homosexuals so that they become heterosexual.¹¹ The subject headings include “Paraphilias,” “Gays--Case studies,” and “Lesbians--case studies.” By using

⁹ Canaday, *The Straight State*; Jennifer Terry, J., *An American obsession*.

¹⁰ Library of Congress Catalog Division, *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1948)

¹¹ Socarides, Charles W. & Freedman, Abraham (2002). *Objects of Desire: The Sexual Deviations*. International Universities Press.

pathologizing terminology, the cataloging is in alignment with the authors' assertion that homosexuality is a disease.

Many early bibliographic records lack terms for homosexuality. Although some catalog records marry the concepts of paraphilias and homosexuality, other books are cataloged using only the term "Paraphilias," either because it is a general work that includes a section on homosexuality, or because it was published before the terms "Homosexuality," "Gays," or "Lesbians" were authorized as part of the LCSH lexicon. The records for Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Checklist: A Complete, Cumulative Checklist of Lesbian, Variant, and Homosexual Fiction...For the Use of Collectors, Students, and Librarians*¹² and the first edition of Jeannette Foster Howard's *Sex Variant Women in Literature: A Historical and Quantitative Survey*,¹³ each have two subject headings: "Paraphilias in literature" and "Literature--History and criticism." In fact, there are no words for lesbians or homosexuals anywhere in the Foster Howard record that would turn up this record in a keyword search. Fortunately, later editions of the book do have the appropriate headings, including "Lesbians in literature." Unfortunately, there are no later editions of the Marion Zimmer Bradley text, so it is lost among archaic terms.

This pattern extends to local catalogs. In fact, this study was inspired by a search of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's catalog, which resulted in finding a catalog record for *Bisexual Love*, by Wilhelm Stekel. The headings didn't include bisexuality or homosexuality or what was recognizable at first glance as sexuality at all. Rather, the only headings assigned to this work were "Paraphilias" and "Neuroses." Again, due to global updating, what had been cataloged under "Sexual perversion" and "Neuroses" is now under the pathologizing headings

¹² Marion Zimmer Bradley, *Checklist: A Complete, Cumulative Checklist of Lesbian, Variant, and Homosexual Fiction...For the Use of Collectors, Students, and Librarians* (Rochester, Texas, 1960).

¹³ Jeannette Foster Howard, *Sex Variant Women in Literature: A Historical and Quantitative Survey* (New York, Vantage Press, 1956).

“Paraphilias” and “Neuroses,” with no heading for homosexuality, bisexuality, or any reference to this as a historical text. Incidentally, a book on bisexuality should be in HQ74, but this book is classed in HQ71 which is designated for “Sexual practices outside of social norms.”¹⁴ This means it is not shelved with other books on similar subjects, but rather, it is among other books on sexual perversion and deviation. Halberstam’s methodology indeed proves to be particularly useful for analyzing subject terms for historical texts, and historians should be aware of the limitations and challenges of controlled vocabularies.

The Medicalization of Sexual Deviance

Scholars have explored the relationships between medicine and homosexuality, tracing the history of homosexuality from the classical era. Thomas Laqueur argues that in the classical era through the Renaissance, the accepted belief about gender and sexuality was extremely different from today’s. Males and females were understood to be versions of the same sex. Women were viewed as lesser men, and rather than having completely different sexual organs, the uterus and clitoris were believed to be an inverted penis and scrotum. According to Laqueur, “sex as we know it was invented” was invented in the eighteenth century, with the production of a binary gender system.¹⁵ The notion of “normal” and “natural” gender distinctions continued through the nineteenth century, because the middle class family was a central organizing principle for society.

From the end of the nineteenth century sexologists and psychoanalysts have been instrumental in propelling discourses about normative, deviant, and pathological sexual

¹⁴ Library of Congress. Classification [HQ71-72]. Classification Web. accessed October 12, 2010. <http://classificationweb.net/>

¹⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 149.

orientations and practices.¹⁶ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries homosexuality was viewed as a perversion or a medical problem, and was most often described in terms of sexual inversion, meaning that people take on the roles and bodily features of the “opposite sex.” In other words, a man who has sexual intercourse with men is behaving like a woman, and a woman is considered to be mannish if she has sex with women.

Doctors and sexologists increasingly medicalized and pathologized sexual and gender deviance. Foucault's *History of Sexuality* is based on his view that the discursive practices in the medical community created deviant identities, and produced and regulated sex practices starting in the late nineteenth century. Upon inventing the category homosexual, the medical community produced a "*new specification of individuals.*" Through categorization and diagnosis of deviance, the homosexual became a species.¹⁷ "The machinery of power that focused on this whole alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a *raison d'etre* and a natural order of disorder."¹⁸ My research suggests that the normalizing effects of the medical and psychoanalytic professions are at play in the Library of Congress collection and catalog, as these areas seem to have great influence on subject authorization.

Sanford Berman's three principles for subject headings can guide theory on the disciplinary problems inherent in the heading "Paraphilias." The principles are as follows: Intelligibility (for staff and patrons) of cataloging format, elements, and terminology; Findability, meaning that users should hit on usable results with the first search attempt, especially when

¹⁶ Jonathan Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*; Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*; Terry, *An American Obsession*.

¹⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 43.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

searching for authors or subjects; and Fairness in subject coverage, with accurate language and representation.¹⁹ Berman believes that groups should name themselves and that medical and professional jargon should be replaced with headings that are intelligible to the general user. Each of these three principles is relevant to the discussion of the term “Paraphilias” as it can be argued that this term is not intelligible to most users, and therefore does not enhance findability. Fairness comes into question as sexual behaviors and minorities are authorized based on a psychiatric diagnostic tool--the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (DSM), rather than using language that might be more likely to be used by the wider audiences and people and acts described by the literature.

In fact, the term serves a very limited audience--the psychiatric community--perhaps at the expense of other potential audiences. Although it is intelligible to the psychiatric community and may help them find materials, the term is rarely used by other disciplines. However, the works assigned this heading tend to be aimed at a multidisciplinary audience. As of this writing, 634 books in the Library of Congress collection are currently cataloged with the subject heading, “Paraphilias.” Of these, approximately 550 are unique titles, and 353 are originally written in or translated into English. Searching WorldCat for the 353 books written in English has yielded information about the extent of library holdings in the United States, and which types of libraries own them. The total number of U.S. library holdings for these books is nearly 50,000, with the majority of libraries being general academic libraries, followed by public libraries, with medical and law libraries being in the relatively small minority of holding libraries. According to the Library of Congress catalog, 62 percent of these books are classified in the HQ section, which is the Library of Congress class for family, marriage, and women in the social sciences. It is

¹⁹ Sanford Berman, “Where have All the Moonies Gone?” in *Worth Noting: Editorials, Letters, Essays, an Interview, and Bibliography* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1988).

curious that the Library of Congress would choose a highly medicalized term for a subject that serves a general audience, including literary scholars, social scientists, and the general public, particularly when the U.S. has a national medical library, which serves the psychiatric community.

The term “Paraphilias” was authorized by the Library of Congress in 2007 to replace “Sexual deviation,” which had replaced “Sexual perversion” in 1972. The term itself was coined in 1922 by Wilhelm Stekel and translated into English in 1930²⁰ and was popularized within psychiatric community in the 1950s.²¹ It first appeared in the DSM in 1980, replacing “Sexual deviation.” Researchers, practitioners, and the public disagree on what counts as sexual perversion or a paraphilia. Even the psychiatric community disagrees on the definition and diagnosis of paraphilias. Charles Moser states: “Creation of the diagnostic category of paraphilia, the medicalization of nonstandard sexual behaviors, is a pseudoscientific attempt to regulate sexuality”²² At the heart of Laws and O’Donohue’s description of the controversy surrounding sexual deviance, is the fact that the DSM-IV-TR is an “institutional rather than a scientific resolution to the definitional problem,” which is value-laden, created and negotiated by committees, and subject to personal and political influences.²³ They explain that, although the DSM is the primary, standard-setting diagnostic tool for psychiatrists, it does not describe how decisions regarding inclusion and exclusion in the category were made.

In light of the psychiatric community’s disagreement on the meanings of deviance and paraphilias, the Library of Congress’s simultaneous deference to the psychiatric literature and

²⁰ Wilhelm Stekel, *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomena of Fetishism in Relation to Sex*. (New York, Liveright Pub. Corp., 1930)

²¹ Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. “Paraphilias,” accessed October 12, 2010, <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/cgi/entry/50171251>.

²² Charles Moser, “Paraphilia: A Critique of a Confused Concept” in *New Directions in Sex Therapy: Innovations and Alternatives*, ed. Peggy J. Kleinplatz. (Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge, 2001).

²³ D. Richard Laws and William T. Donahue. *Sexual Deviance: Theory, Assessment, and Treatment* (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 1.

claim to authority over knowledge is problematic, as catalogers have authorized the subjects and assign them to books in the collection. The Library of Congress is at the center of scholarly discourses and is the position to produce meaning and subjects. I would argue that we should consider the act of subject heading creation and assignment to be much more than metadata. Rather, we need to acknowledge the fact that the Library is producing knowledge about knowledge. However, Halberstam might argue that, since it is impossible to “know” what perversion is or what qualifies as a paraphilia today, it is certainly impossible to “know” what perversion was over the course of the twentieth century. The authorization of new terms to replace the old in the catalog, and using present-day terms to describe works on past practices serves to confine the past to the present and erases the historical record.

The 2007 heading change was intended to “reflect contemporary medical and psychological thinking and usage.”²⁴ The authority record cites several sources for literary warrant for the new heading, “Paraphilias,” including *Medical Subject Headings* (MeSH), the *Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms*, *athealth.com*, and *Human Sexuality: An Encyclopedia* (1994), which is quoted in the authority record for justification of the term:

Paraphilia is defined as an erotosexual and psychological condition characterized by recurrent responsiveness to an obsessive dependence on an unusual or socially unacceptable stimulus. The term has become a legal synonym for perversion or deviant sexual behavior, and it is preferred by many over the other terms because it seems more neutral and descriptive rather than judgemental.”²⁵

Interestingly, MeSH is the primary supporting documentation for the justification of the new heading. MeSH takes its definition for “Paraphilias,” as it does for most psychological concepts, from the DSM-IV. This brings a number of questions to mind. Why does LC defer to the medical literature as the authority? Exactly how is this term deemed to be neutral? What are the

²⁴ Paul Weiss. Personal email. June 29, 2009.

²⁵ Library of Congress. *Authorities*, “Paraphilias,” accessed October 12, 2010, <http://authorities.loc.gov/>

implications for finding information? LCSH are supposed to reflect the current literature, but whose literature? What are the implications of using a medical term to describe non-medical research and popular works?

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*, The Paraphilias are characterized by recurrent, intense sexual urges, fantasies, or behaviors that involve unusual objects, activities, or situations and cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The Paraphilias include Exhibitionism, Fetishism, Frotteurism, Pedophilia, Sexual Masochism, Sexual Sadism, Transvestic Fetishism, Voyeurism, and Paraphilia Not Otherwise Specified.”²⁶

The DSM does recognize the socio/cultural quality to defining sexual deviance: “It is important to note that notions of deviance, standards of sexual performance, and concepts of appropriate gender role can vary from culture to culture....The diagnosis of Paraphilias across cultures or religions is complicated by the fact that what is considered deviant in one cultural setting may be more acceptable in another setting.”²⁷ It must be noted that the DSM V, due to be released in May 2013,²⁸ will bring significant changes to the Paraphilias diagnosis. In order to be considered a disorder, the paraphilia must be one “that causes distress or impairment to the individual or harm to others.” The DSM V would still distinguish between normative and non-normative sexual behaviors, but “without automatically labeling non-normative sexual behavior as psychopathological.”²⁹ Certainly, this should carry new meaning into library catalogs, and it could complicate categorization by bringing together non-pathological with the pathological paraphilias, as well as the non-medical fields.

²⁶ American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV-TR*. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2004) STAT!Ref, accessed 5/6/2010 <http://online.statref.com>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ American Psychiatric Association. Timeline. accessed 3/2/2011 <http://www.dsm5.org/about/Pages/Timeline.aspx>

²⁹ Kenneth J. Zucker. *Report of the DSM-5 Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders Work Group*. (Arlington, Va: American Psychiatric Association, 2009). accessed 3/2/2011 <http://www.dsm5.org/progressreports/pages/0904reportofthedsm-vsexualandgenderidentitydisordersworkgroup.aspx>

By deferring to the psychiatric literature as the authority and medicalizing alternative sexualities, it seems that the Library of Congress has effectively made it much harder to find information on this topic. The term “Paraphilia” is meaningful for psychiatrists and addresses a subset of the total literature on sexual deviance. The social science and humanities literature infrequently uses this terminology. While the librarians and authority record states that this term is preferred because it is neutral, the truth is that the term is anything but neutral, being a term that is authorized by the DSM IV-TR, pathologizing certain sexual behaviors. One might speculate that the neutrality derives from the fact that people aren’t familiar with this term and therefore it is rendered meaningless.

Tagging and social media

The discussion of disciplinarity leaves out an entire segment of the population who would potentially seek and use materials on sexual practices that the Library of Congress and the medical establishment might consider paraphilias. The people who engage in or are curious about such practices are simply underserved by this heading. To understand the information needs of these people, we can look to social media to find the terms they use to describe themselves and their practices. LibraryThing.com provides a good point of comparison as users of the site organize their personal collections and find related books by adding and searching tags. The social network site enables members to catalog their own books by pulling bibliographic information from such sources as Amazon.com and the Library of Congress. The folksonomies that have arisen out of user-generated tags reveal the multiplicity of terms that people use to describe sexualities that might be categorized as paraphilias by the Library of Congress. Folksonomies respond to shifts in terminologies as they happen, as terms are added immediately to the vocabularies through tagging by any member of the network. A large

taxonomy such as the Library of Congress classification scheme may take years to add a heading, if it is added at all. Whereas all terms are retained in a collective folksonomy, if a controlled term is updated in LCSH, the older form disappears from the catalog records. The range of gender and sexual expressions may shift over time in the vocabulary along with cultural and political shifts in society. Rather than the meanings being perverted by the authorization of controlled terms, members have the freedom to use the terms that are meaningful to them.

Not surprisingly, members of LibraryThing rarely tag books in their personal catalogs with the term “paraphilias.” The term and the singular form “paraphilia” have only been assigned a combined total of 21 times by ten different users, and most of these were assigned by special collections libraries, rather than individuals. “Perversion” or “sexual perversion” is applied 180 times by 80 members. “Sexual deviation” or “sexual deviance” is used 37 times by 28 members. Much more common are tags for specific practices, such as bdsm, fetishism, fantasy, etc. In fact, bdsm is used 6,365 times by 704 LibraryThing members, and “kink” is assigned 1,489 times by 113 users. Historical texts, such as Richard Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, originally translated into English from German in 1892, is assigned a wide variety of terms ranging from “bdsm,” “gay,” “historical,” “gender,” “psychology,” and “necrophilia.” The Library of Congress records for various editions of this early work only includes “Paraphilias,” omitting terms for range of practices and identities covered in this text and providing users with no information about its historical significance.

One can easily draw key differences between the tagging of personal collections and the creation and assignment of the heading “Paraphilias” by the Library of Congress and libraries using LCSH. I would suggest that the tags assigned by users of LibraryThing can inform and contribute to discussions of authorizing and assigning subjects in public, academic, and special

library catalogs, as well as digital library metadata. Certainly, local libraries would better serve patrons interested in alternative sexualities by paying attention to the terms that users assign to their own collections. The Library of Congress would better serve the wider library community by authorizing a term less embedded in medical discourses and more accessible to the general population who would seek materials on alternative sexual practices.

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