

## **Bibliographic Classification of Documents Dealing with the Subject "Holocaust"**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1968 the Library of Congress created a major new category under the heading **Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)**. This heading subsequently appeared in the 9th edition of the Library of Congress Subject Headings which is used in all major academic and research libraries across North America. An examination of the public access catalogs and national bibliography of the Biblioteka Narodowa in Warsaw (National Library of Poland) however, revealed that the "Holocaust" does not exist as a subject heading there. Instead, the same documents classified under "Holocaust" by the Library of Congress appear under "Martyrology, Jewish" [Martyrologia Zydowskie]. The use of these dissimilar terms to classify the same historical event opens up the possibility of examining the role of the national library in promoting an image that is particular to each state.

As a public institution, the national library is a powerful agency within the cultural milieu of the state. Organized as it is to collect and promote the printed patrimony of the state, the national library serves as a guardian of the state's cultural and intellectual heritage. Professional tools created at the national library level, such as classification schemes, cataloguing procedures, and subject headings, set standards for organization and retrieval of documents which are followed by other libraries within a particular state. Therefore, when a new subject heading is created, its influence permeates throughout the society, as it becomes an established index term in printed and automated catalogs and bibliographies.

In our research we seek to examine the distinct ways in which the historical event we call the "Holocaust" is classified by a number of national libraries including the National Library of Canada, the Library of Congress, the Biblioteka Narodowa (Warsaw), the Deutsch Bibliothek (Frankfurt and Leipzig), the Bibliotheque nationale (Paris), and the Jewish National and University Library (Jerusalem). Specifically, through an analysis of bibliographic classification practices, this study seeks to enquire into those procedures by which the institution of national library works to promote and sustain the distinct vision that each state has of itself.

### **NATIONAL LIBRARIES AND THE NATIONAL WARRANT**

As a public institution, the national library has been legislated into existence with the idea of promoting the specific interests of the state, one which accentuates the differences between states.

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By collecting its culture, and its citizens' relation to it, the national library recollects not only the shared knowledge that binds individuals into a nation, but also the relation of reverence without which national sensibility is not possible. The very possibility of a national consciousness is contingent on the willingness of its people to elevate their particularity to the absolute and to worship it as such. In the words of Martin Buber, "Every nation, has a guiding spiritual characteristic to which all other faculties are subordinated, its genius is acknowledged as its 'prince' or 'god'"<sup>1</sup>

As a modern manifestation of reverence<sup>2</sup> for the "collective consciousness"<sup>2</sup> the national library is called upon to honour and celebrate the creative achievements of its members by collecting their works and classifying them in such a way that other members may have access to them. The work of conserving national distinctiveness is thus inseparable from the collection and classification of artifacts in ways consistent with the national ethos in question. Insofar as this ethos extends beyond the library to include the totality of those who are members of the nation, the selection of words or phrases as subject classification are necessarily and inevitably drawn from "common usage"<sup>3</sup> In short, bibliographic categories are categories of societal life. By importing them into bibliographic classification schemes, the actual social relations expressed by them become invisible. Although divorced from the constraints of actuality, such classification schemes are nevertheless anchored there.

While the work of bibliographic classification is performed in definite settings demanding specialized skills and the everyday exigencies of realizing them, it remains that such work is controlled by the librarian's knowledge of socially organized processes in which categories are used to name events in the ongoing life of the society. We find support for this view in Beghtol's work on semantic warrant in which she states that "a library classification system rooted in the existing literature will necessarily reflect the intellectual tendencies and preoccupations of the society in which this literature is published."<sup>4</sup> Librarians, as members in good standing of the society in which they live, share in the values of the writers and scholars whose work they are classifying. Keeping in mind that the semantic or categorical basis of a given classification scheme is a product of the culture that produced it, is to be aware of the ways in which collection and classification of Holocaust materials are socially constructed so as to exemplify the interests of the collective. As James E. Young points out in *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, "The different names (given to the same event) explain great gulfs in understanding between different nations and people, reflecting disparate experiences of the period as well as the different shapes respective national mythologies and ideologies necessarily confer on events. Every language's name thus molds events in the image of its culture's particular understanding of events. Naming these events is thus inevitably to conceive of them, to constrain as well as to create conditions for acting on events."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Martin Buber, *Israel and the World*. N.Y.: Schocken, 1948: 197.

2. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*. N.Y.: Free Press, c1933, 1964: 79.

3. Robert D. Rodriguez, "Hulme's Concept of Literary Warrant", *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 5:1 (Fall 1984): 19.

4. Claire Beghtol, "Semantic Validity: Concepts of Warrant in Bibliographic Classification Schemes", *Library Resources & Technical Services* (April/June 1986): 119.

5. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Driven by distinct visions of their own history and culture, each national library is thus engaged in revising the historical events that Lucy Dawidowicz has called "the war against the Jews."<sup>1</sup> Short of creating an entirely utopian classification scheme, without any previous meanings, associations, assonance or even rhymes, the terminology used in collecting, classifying and disseminating "Holocaust" material is inevitably drawn from the culture and for the sake of that culture. Accordingly, the event we have come to call the "Holocaust" has become nothing more than a socially approved version of the events that took place between 1933 and 1945.

### RETRACING THE NATIONAL WARRANT: POLAND AND AMERICA

The purpose of such an inquiry is not to neutralize or exorcise the cultural weight that is brought to bear on the "Holocaust", but to remind ourselves as librarians that which as citizens we tend to forget; that the very act of bibliographic classification is informed by a cultural agenda whose implementation transforms the librarian into an agent in the service of the state.

An examination of the mandates of various national libraries makes it clear that the prime aim of these legally instituted agencies is to protect and promote the "national patrimony" of their respective peoples. The mandate of the National Library of Canada states, "As the guardian of the nation's published heritage, the National Library must have the foremost collection of Canadiana in the world, or material published abroad that has a Canadian creator or Canadian subject."<sup>2</sup> In a similar manner, Biblioteka Narodowa is compelled "by virtue of the legislative statute...to collect all Polish and foreign publications dealing with Poland."<sup>3</sup> And, as legal depository for all printed material in the United States, Library of Congress is called upon in much the same spirit as the Canadian and Polish national libraries, to take up responsibility for being "the library for these United States of America." Inasmuch as collection and conservation respects the distinct qualities of a national ethos, be it "Canadiana", "Polonia" or "Americana", such distinctiveness draws boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in relation to the national patrimony. For while the library collection is governed by distinct qualities of national ethos, such qualities construct a bibliographic frontier around the nation, building boundaries which separate the intellectual output of its citizens from that of other nations. The rules of inclusion/exclusion that define the differences between citizens and non-citizens, have direct bearing on the "Holocaust". For as each national library goes about reshaping this event in ways which privilege its national ethos over and above others, the national pride or ethnocentricity of this practice repeats in its own way the very discrimination which allowed for the Holocaust to begin with. In observing the ways in which national libraries contextualize the "Holocaust" in their subject headings and classification schemes, we are witness to both the appropriation of the past and, more important, a bibliographic incapacity to learn from the past.

While the impulse of the national sentiment is to celebrate itself, often in opposition to other nations, it is also the case that the institutionalization of such celebration, in the form of a National Library, relieves the individual librarian of the responsibility of critically examining the cultural categories that informs his or her work. Debates, disputes, controversies, struggles that are integral

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1. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews*. N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975.

2. "Collection Management Policy: Team Results." *National Library News* 23: 12 (Dec. 1991): 11.

3. *Information about the National Library*. Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, n.d.

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to collective life of the nation, within the confines of these classifications, become merely additional subject categories. As Pierre Nora remarks, "[National]Memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstruction. Its new vocation is to record: delegating to the *Lieu de memoire*, the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin."<sup>1</sup> Not only is the preservation of the nation relegated to institutions, but such preservation becomes the job of the functionary, the bureaucrat, who is in this instance, the librarian. Further study of the ways in which such preservation has become institutionalized within the National Library, and how it is authorized, would contribute to a more critical understanding of classification practices, especially at a time when standardization allows the National Library to take a leading role.

While the examples that follow in no way produce a comprehensive analysis of Biblioteka Narodowa or Library of Congress, they do however evoke the power of the national warrant. And it is the national warrant which must be engaged if we are to return to the individual librarian his or her critical power.

When the heading **Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)** appeared in 1968 in the Library of Congress Subject Headings, it replaced the indeterminate **World War II, 1939-1945 — Personal narratives, Jewish**. An examination of the public access catalogues and national bibliography of the Biblioteka Narodowa in Warsaw reveals that the same documents classified under "**Holocaust**" in Washington, are classified under "**Martyrology**" in Warsaw. Such distinct differences in subject classification serve to underline not only the presence of two distinct worldviews, American and Polish, but also the role that the National Library plays in sustaining the image a nation has of itself.

Clearly, neither "**Holocaust**" nor "**Martyrology**" are Jewish in the sense that "Shoah" or even "Churban" are. These headings are however, remarkable for their disclosure of the notions "American" and "Polish" which allow for the usage of such terminology. "Holocaust" is derived from the Greek *holokauston*, meaning 'a body wholly burnt', a phenomenon which is used in the Septuagint as 'sacrifice by fire'. While acceptable as a reference point to a great many within the United States, this value-laden term has led some, notably Emil Fackenheim,<sup>2</sup> to question its appropriateness. Although some point with unease to the moral and theological undertones that serve to prejudice and thereby obscure the specificity of the Holocaust, others question the temporal parameters "**1939-1945**". Without doubt, World War II and "the war against the Jews" do overlap, but these wars cannot be said to be the same. As the Final Solution to the Jewish Question, the war against the Jews began as early as 1933. To insist on using the subject heading "**Holocaust**" with the year 1939 as its beginning is not an error so much as an expression of a criteria that is indifferent to the particularity of what "**Holocaust, Jewish**" names.

It is significant to note the Israeli response to the same subject heading. Those libraries in Israel which have adopted L.C. classification as the standard have, in addition to changing the time frame for "**Holocaust**" from **1939** to **1933**, omitted the qualifier "**Jewish**" as well. For from within the Israeli context, the event represented by "Holocaust" is understood as unique to the Jewish people.

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1. James E. Young. *The Texture of Memory*. Cambridge: Yale University Press, 1993: 5.

2. Arthur Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds. *Contemporary Jewish Thought*. N.Y.: Scribner's, 1972: 399-408.

making the qualifier "Jewish" redundant. But if "Holocaust" stands as the Israeli bibliographic response to the particularity of "the war against the Jews", in maintaining "Holocaust, Jewish" as its heading, the American Library of Congress insists on treating this war as but one instance of a genre. The qualifier "Jewish" is significant from the American point of view, because in allowing for the possibility of other holocausts, such as Holocaust, Armenian, or Holocaust, Cambodian, or any other genocidal event, it is clear that what happened to European Jewry is not considered unique. Moreover, any attempt at privileging this event stands as an ethnocentrism that is inconsistent with the way Americans understand themselves.

Although thematically different, the bibliographic situation at the Polish National Library is remarkably similar. The signpost at Auschwitz-Birkenau introduces us to a commonly understood category: it reads "Monument to the Martyrdom of the Polish and Other Nations". "Martyrologia Żydowskie", the name of the block housing the Jewish exhibition at Auschwitz, resonates with the same understanding. While the use of such a profoundly Christian notion to categorize the "war against the Jews" is, from a Jewish point of view, obscene, within the Polish worldview "Martyrology" is central to the way that the Polish people understand themselves. In *The Holocaust and The Historians*, Lucy Dawidowicz argues that the sense of martyrology unique to the Polish people emerged after the 1830-31 uprising when, defeated and exiled, Polish intellectuals, writers and poets articulated a vision of Poland as a nation martyred and resurrected.<sup>1</sup> This image, so closely identifying national sensibility with Christianity, has become, according to Dawidowicz, an enduring national myth, one that Poles call upon in an attempt to make some sense of the catastrophes that have befallen their nation.

Basing its classification scheme on the Universal Decimal Classification System, widely used in European libraries, Biblioteka Narodowa has devised the following number for Emanuel Ringelblum's *Kronika getta warszawskiego: Wrzesien 1939-styczen 1941*. (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1988).<sup>2</sup>

943.8.082.2A/Z: 933"19". 940.531.8: 929(438:=924) "19"A/Z

As is the case with all bibliographic classification, the project is to situate the work in question by subject and author. Within Universal Decimal Classification, various categories of meaning are represented numerically and are strung together in sets to form a composite detailed image of the subject and author of the work at hand. It must be emphasized that the relation of these units to one another is deliberate and is as important as the category of meaning that each and every one of them represents. From within the logic that organizes this schema, not only is the classification performed in the name of a particular collectivity, but a successful classification always recites that name. How then does the classification of Ringelblum's work recite the name of "Poland"?

Two major classification numbers have been assigned for this document: **943.8.082.2** and **940.531.8**. The first set can be analyzed in the following way:

1. Lucy Dawidowicz. *The Holocaust and the Historians*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981: 89-90.
2. This edition is a translation of *Notitsn fun Varshever geto* known to us as the "Ringelblum Chronicles" or *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto: the Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum*. Dawidowicz outlines the many revisions the original had to undergo in order to be published in Poland. *Op.cit.*, *The Holocaust and the Historians*: 100-106.

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<b>943.8</b>	<b>History of Poland</b>
<b>.082</b>	<b>World War II, 1939-44/45</b>
<b>.2</b>	<b>Occupation, Resistance</b>
<b>943.8.082.2</b>	<b>Polish Martyrology</b>
<b>943.8.082.2: 933</b>	<b>Polish-Jewish Martyrology</b>

According to the classification schedules used by cataloguing librarians at Biblioteka Narodowa, the class number **943.8.082.2** represents the subject "Polish Martyrology". From the schedules, we learn that the addition of **:933** serves to represent "Jewish Martyrology". Keeping in mind the way that this classification is produced, specifically that the subject "Jewish Martyrology" is made contingent on its status as a secondary feature of "Polish Martyrology", it may be more adequate to describe the subject as "Polish-Jewish Martyrology". The significance of this may be amplified by the analysis of the second class set:

<b>940</b>	<b>European History</b>
<b>.531</b>	<b>World War II, 1939-1944/45</b>
<b>.8</b>	<b>Crimes related to World War II: Concentration camps, mass executions, pacifications, etc.</b>

In cataloguing practice, this second class set is intelligible only in relation to the first class set. Whereas the first class set suggests "Jewish Martyrology" as the subject of the Ringelblum Chronicles, the second set situates this instance of "Jewish Martyrology" within the context of European History, as a "crime related to World War II". While the addition of this category succeeds in expressing the ultimate fate of the Jews of Warsaw, by considering it a "crime related to World War II", the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto reappears like any other attack by agents of the Third Reich against a civilian population. To the degree that whatever happened to the Jews happened to others as well, this classification suggests that Jews were not selected for any special treatment. Such cataloguing of events acknowledges the fact of the destruction of citizens of the Warsaw Ghetto, through "mass executions, pacifications, etc.", but only insofar as they were citizens of Poland, not Jews.

The difference is important, for in limiting the events that transpired to the years 1939-1944/45, this formulation reaffirms the national context. It begins with the invasion and ends with the liberation of Poland. Whatever happened to the civilian population during the occupation is understood as a "crime" against occupied Poland and its citizens. From this point of view, "Auschwitz" and "Oscwiecim" are not the same: the latter names a small Polish town, whereas the former names a concentration camp in occupied Poland. "Auschwitz" exists therefore only insofar as it is understood as a feature of the Third Reich.

Such a perspective on Auschwitz, and all that it implies, as foreign to Poland, as having occurred on Polish soil only as a result of German occupation, is in direct contrast with the view of history embedded in Library of Congress subject headings, which label the concentration camps geographically such as:

### Auschwitz (Poland: Concentration camp)

When the subject bibliographer at Biblioteka Narodowa was shown a photocopy of this LC heading, she was shocked and dismayed. For the indifference which this category displays toward the distinction between Poland and Occupied Poland is regarded not simply as an error, but as an insult. From within the Polish worldview, Auschwitz is first and foremost foreign, an import forced on the nation and resulting in the victimization of its citizens. In relation to this violation, the difference between Jews and non-Jews is inconsequential. Of consequence is Poland and the conservation of its sensibility. Heeding Buber's insight regarding the pre-eminence of the collective conscience, it may be said that anyone who resists the call to assimilate and thereby recognize himself as Polish, may in fact dwell within the nation, but cannot be said to be a member of it.

Although the debate regarding the status of the bona fide member continues to fuel the political arena of many European nations, in Poland it has extended beyond the political arena.<sup>1</sup> For it is also reflected in those facets of bibliographic classification which signify the status of the author. With respect to *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, the third class set, 929(438:=924), denotes a biographical work published in Poland by an individual of the Jewish race. According to the Biblioteka Narodowa class schedules, (438) is the qualifier signifying "Poland", just as (436) is "Austria", (437) "Czechoslovakia" and (439) "Hungary". As a matter of practice, works published in Poland are often identified by the qualifier (438). There exists, however, a subtle but significant difference in bibliographic treatment of works published in Poland and works by writers of Polish extraction who live elsewhere. Biblioteka Narodowa identifies works by Poles living abroad by the ethnic qualifier (=84), which replaces (438).

Within the classification scheme, the qualifier for "Poland" as country and "Polish" as ethnicity are never found together in class combinations. For although the combination (438:=84) is theoretically correct, the ordinary juxtaposition of these elements within the everyday life of the nation makes the presence of both redundant. As a matter of convention (438) is a sufficient qualifier for works published in Poland. Whereas the incorporation of (=84) into (438) allows "Poland" and "Polish" to mean one and the same thing, such is not the case in the bibliographic treatment of Emanuel Ringelblum.

The author notation assigned to his work reads (438:=924). Together with (438) the ethnic qualifier (=924) identifies the writer as a member of the Jewish people whose work is published in Poland. Matters of ethnicity are important to the nation that Biblioteka Narodowa represents and this is clear in the cataloguing practises being followed. Members of this nation tend to understand themselves, if not as *Gemeinschaft* of blood, than surely as *Gemeinschaft* of faith.<sup>2</sup> And within this worldview, the name Polish Jew and the reality that it represents, remain a contradiction.

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1. See A. Polansky, ed. *My Brother's Keeper: Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, Oxford: Routledge, 1990; W.T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent at Auschwitz*, N.Y.: G. Braziller, 1990; K. Gebert, "Anti-Semitism in the 1990 Polish Presidential Election", *Social Research* 58:4 (Winter 1991): 724-755

2. Ferdinand Tonnies. *Community & Society [Gemeinschaft und Gessellschaft]*. Trans. by Charles P. Loomis. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, c1957, 1964.

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Whereas the bibliographic classification of Ringelblum's work by the Polish National Library exemplifies, among other things, the problematic status of the Jew in Poland, Library of Congress classification does not make use of ethnic qualifiers to describe authors. L.C. catalogues the Ringelblum Chronicles as DS 135 .P6W3316 which cites the following:

Subject	DS 135	= Jewish History
Country	.P6	= Poland
City	2W	= Warsaw
Author	3316	= Ringelblum

While this L.C. classification number does not identify anything specific about the author's background, it also reveals little about the subject matter of the work. One must look to the L.C. subject headings for further information. The strategic vagueness that envelops the classification of Ringelblum's work is itself a feature of the distinction which L.C. draws between issues of direct relevance to Americans and those limited to specific constituencies within the American ethnic mosaic. The *Ringelblum Chronicles* along with other titles collected under "Holocaust, Jewish", belong to that order of things which happen outside of America and whose relevance to the way that Americans understand themselves is ambivalent. Although such works are indeed collected, the sense of ethnocentrism that authorizes such collection is designed to express not only the history which separates "us" from "them", but the moral supremacy of "us" over "them".

Through the application of American or Polish categories of meaning, the librarian succeeds in locating Ringelblum in a distinct cultural continuum and comes to understand his work in a uniquely national way. In fact, given the shared nature of the knowledge that allows the librarian to classify the work and its author, the problem is not to neutralize or exorcize the cultural weight that is brought to bear on it, but to recognize the application of culturally informed terms as elements of a technology designed to reduce difference into versions of the same. And what is the same throughout the practice of classification, is the nation and the librarian's concern with its preservation. Clearly, this technology is not limited to Poland or the United States, but is inherent to the very way that nations go about appropriating the past. For while the National Library of Poland classifies Ringelblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* as "Jewish Martyrology", and the Library of Congress catalogues the same work as an example of "Holocaust, Jewish", both are concerned with the domestication of the event, rather than with what the event may have to teach us about the limitations to this bibliographic practice.

## CONCLUSION

What idea of "nation" do we honour when in the course of bibliographic classification we submit to the national warrant? For, while categories of everyday life operating within the nation are approved as categories for subject classification, critical examination of such categories in light of the events represented by them are not encouraged. Such a posture of "reverence" to the national warrant places the librarian in much the same position as the 'bystander' who witnesses the events of the Nazi genocide, but does nothing to prevent it. Is such a posture the best way to honour one's nation? Can we not through our craft become more aware of the limitations to the national warrant and seek to sensitize ourselves and our users to the subject matter at hand?



Unresolved is the question of how to create classification schemes which would allow library users of different languages, nations and cultures to communicate the same subject to each other. We would like to suggest that while this problem of unintelligibility is a natural outcome of the national warrant, it could be overcome by creating classification tools which point out the variety of headings used at each national library for the same subject. In this way we could develop a greater awareness of the cultural bias to which we are so faithful, and as a result, develop the critical relation necessary to honour both the warrant and the subject. Failure to develop such a critical relation repeats Walter Benjamin's dark vision according to which "there is never a document of culture that is not at the same time one of barbarism".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Walter Benjamin. "On the Concept of History" [Über den Begriff der Geschichte, VII] in *Gesammelte Schriften*. Band I-2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980: 693-703.

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