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A Library Matter of Genocide: The Library of Congress and the Historiography of the Native American Holocaust

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Abstract

For decades, Indigenous experiences of mass killings, atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and assimilation have been marginalized from genocide studies due to the ways in which knowledge is constructed in the field, specifically in terms of its focus on definitions and prototype-based conceptions. This article argues that these exclusions are not merely owed to discourses internal to genocide studies, but are affirmed by conventional library terminologies for the purposes of knowledge organization and information retrieval in the form of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and classification, as applied to books regarding genocidal colonial encounters with Indigenous Peoples. These headings largely exhibit euphemistic tendencies and omissions that often fail to reflect the contents of the materials they seek to describe, not only impeding retrieval of books on this subject, but also their incorporation into current scholarship.

To determine the extent to which the assignment of LCSH and call numbers corresponded reasonably to the stated intent of the authors, searches in OCLC's global WorldCat catalogue were conducted for books related to the Library of Congress subject "Indians of North America" and some variation of the keywords *genocide*, *holocaust*, or *extermination*, yielding a list of 34 titles. The subject headings and classification designations assigned to these books were then analyzed, with particular attention paid to euphemisms for genocide, colonial narratives, the exercise of double standards when compared to non-Indigenous genocides, or outright erasure of genocide-related content. The article argues that Western epistemologies in both genocide studies and library science have marginalized Indigenous genocides, reproducing barriers to discovery and scholarship, and contributing to a social discourse of Native American Holocaust denial. Instead a pragmatic view in library science is proposed, in which claims of genocide on the part of authors are taken as given and which would recognize the legitimacy of Indigenous perspectives concerning their relationship to land and how processes of assimilation (such as Canada's residential school system) were consistent with Raphael Lemkin's original definition of genocide. It argues that enabling our ability to name and discuss genocide in North America can contribute to a more honest reckoning with our history and hence the basis for reconciliation and social justice.

Keywords

genocide, Indigenous research, library science, historiography, knowledge construction, bias

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The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, he has a remarkable capacity to not even hear about them. (Orwell, 1945, para. 13)

Who control[s] language and its values . . . controls . . . history and its interpretation. (Daniel Moody cited in Wright, Moody, & Petchkovsky, 1987, p. 359)

Introduction: Denying the North American Holocaust

Following six years of often emotionally devastating work, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its summary report on what it called Canada's "cultural genocide" of Indigenous peoples in the form of Indian Residential Schools in June 2015. Coming days after Supreme Court Justice Beverley McLachlan became the highest ranking government official to use this phrase, the report ignited debate not just about Canada's history but about the nature of genocide, with some arguing that the residential school system was not "merely" cultural genocide, while others strongly disapproved of the use of the term at all (Roy, 2015).

A similar national debate also made headlines in the United States that fall. In early September 2015, a Navajo and Maidu university student at Cal State Sacramento University named Chiitaanibah Johnson confronted her history professor over his refusal to concede that Native Americans had been subjected to a genocide; whereupon the professor grew so angry he accused her of "hijacking" his class, and told her he had "disenrolled" her (Schilling, 2015). Later that month Pope Francis—celebrated around the world by liberals and progressives for his stances on climate change and other social causes—canonized Father Junípero Serra (1713-1784) for establishing California's mission system, despite Native American activists and other critics pointing out that the missions were essentially "concentration camps" (Rubenstein, 2015). Within days of Serra's canonization, his statue at the Carmel mission where he is buried was vandalized and "Saint of Genocide" written on the stones (Holson, 2015).

These events served to illustrate the longstanding lack of recognition on the part of North Americans in general—and the intelligentsia in particular—of the reality of genocide in the Americas.

For decades, Indigenous experiences of mass killings, atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and assimilation have been marginalized or excluded from the "border lines" of genocide studies due to the ways in which knowledge is constructed in the field, specifically in terms of its focus on definitions and prototype-based conceptions (Bischooping & Fingerhut, 1996; Rensink, 2011). In his book *A Little Matter of Genocide*, American historian Ward Churchill (1997) confirmed this condition by arguing that many orthodox American historians across the ideological spectrum resist applying the term "genocide" to the catastrophic loss of life Native Americans suffered over the past 500 years, either by denying, minimizing, or even justifying the nature and scale of the killings that took place (see pp. 4 & 7). Noam Chomsky also observes that a widely-shared imperial culture among America's intelligentsia has resulted in a consensus view on genocides rooted in American exceptionalism such that both historic and contemporary atrocities wrought by America or her allies are by definition not genocides, but are viewed

as “merely unfortunate lapses that do not tarnish the essential nobility of America's ‘transcendent purpose’” (Chomsky, 2010, p. 18).

These processes of exclusionary knowledge construction, I will argue, have been reinforced and perpetuated at least in part by an additional layer of Western knowledge construction: that of library-based access to the genocide literature via the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and classification schemes, with material consequences for both Native American historiography and the interested researcher. In its capacity as a “node of governance” (Woolford, 2013) of the United States government, the Library of Congress has contributed to this “ideological matrix” of denial (Churchill, 1997) by minimizing, sanitizing, or erasing historical reality through the assignment of euphemistic, misleading, and colonial subject headings.

This article examines how the Library of Congress describes and classifies books related to Indigenous genocides in the United States and Canada, via its structures of knowledge organization (KO) and information retrieval (IR), and it finds that most are assigned terms and classification numbers that serve to downplay or misrepresent authorial intent. I argue that the library’s ideologically-situated “power to name” (Olson, 2002) has both reflected and reinforced not only neglect by the field of genocide studies but politically convenient yet unjust narratives regarding historical and contemporary genocides in North American culture generally. In contradicting the intent of the authors of these books such headings and call numbers actually comprise a barrier to discovery and a form of holocaust denial (Churchill, 1997). Further, this article suggests that the establishment of dedicated headings (or at the very least a more accurate application of existing subject headings) would facilitate retrieval of and, more importantly, an honest engagement with Indigenous genocide literature.

Contexts and Methods

The purpose of this analysis is to analyze discrepancies between the stated authorial intent in books related to Indigenous genocides in North America and the ways in which they are described and made accessible through the LCSH and call numbers, with a view to identifying structural barriers to conducting research in this field.

Subject headings and call numbers are generated several ways and from a variety of sources. Primarily they are assigned through the Library of Congress’ Cataloging-in-Publication program (CIP) through which publishers submit applications for this information regarding their forthcoming books to the Library of Congress, for inclusion on their copyright pages, while the Library makes available electronic records about the book to libraries and book vendors around the world (Library of Congress, 2015). Similar services are also available from Library and Archives Canada (2017) and the British Library (n.d.). In addition, libraries can obtain records through OCLC’s WorldShare Metadata Services as well as contribute them by generating and uploading records for books not previously listed on WorldCat.

It should be acknowledged that, strictly speaking, sufficient (if generic) Library of Congress terminology already exists to describe Indigenous genocides in North America: the subject heading *Genocide* can be simply subdivided geographically i.e., *Genocide–United States* or *Genocide–Canada*. Since LCSH is premised on “literary warrant” (what is actually published), the extent of publishing in this area as demonstrated by the sample examined below explicitly about genocide in the Americas, combined with

the Library of Congress' own rules (cataloguers are to “avoid assigning headings that label topics or express personal value judgment [and] consider the intent of the author”), might suggest that these headings would be applied liberally (“Assigning and Constructing Subject Headings,” 2016, p. 7). This analysis shows that this is far from the case and is at dramatic variance with books on other genocides, notably the Jewish Holocaust.

For comparative purposes, the LCSH for other recognized genocides are as follows:

- Armenian Massacres
- Collectivization of agriculture -- Ukraine -- History
- Famines – Ukraine
- Genocide Ukraine History 20th Century
- Genocide -- Bosnia and Hercegovina -- History -- 20th century
- Genocide -- Namibia
- Genocide – Timor-Leste
- Holocaust, Jewish -- 1939-1945
- Political atrocities
- Rwanda -- Genocide
- Rwanda -- History -- Civil War, 1994 -- Atrocities
- Yugoslav War, 1991- -- Atrocities

We see unambiguous acknowledgement of historical genocide in the cases of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Ukraine, Rwanda, and against Europe's Jews—all state- or politically-driven genocides with varying levels of non-state support. The Holocaust is named as *Holocaust, Jewish -- 1939-1945*, while the Holodomor in Ukraine is recognized by the Library of Congress as genocide but is designated according to its geographic location, rather than this title (which means “death by hunger” in Ukrainian). However, the geographical orientation of the standard heading construction (*Name of Country – Genocide*) sometimes imposes significant limitations on historical content: For example, the heading *Genocide -- Namibia* would seem to suggest that the government of Namibia was responsible for a genocide, when in fact the heading refers to the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples at the hands of German colonizers in the early years of the 20th century. That this slaughter occurred in response to a “revolt” appears to be the colonizer-friendly subtext of the heading *Namibia--History--Herero Revolt, 1904-1907*.

Yet not all genocides are treated equally by the Library of Congress, some are instead described euphemistically. The Armenian Genocide—widely (though not universally) acknowledged as such—is only considered a “massacre” by the Library of Congress. The horrific population collapse in the Congo Free State under the personal rule of King Leopold the II of Belgium, which may have seen as many as 15 million Congolese perish (as recounted in *King Leopold’s Ghost* [Hochschild, 1998]) is described by the Library of Congress as *Forced Labor—Congo (Democratic Republic)*. Similarly, a search for “ethnic cleansing” (which while not synonymous with genocide is often associated with it [Clark, 2008]) will lead the researcher to a *see reference to Forced migration; Population transfers; and Ethnic conflict*—rather passive terms, the first two of which may also pertain to cases of natural disasters, removing a sense of causative agency.

Headings such as these exhibit a troubling tendency toward what psychologist Robert J. Lifton refers to as *deamplifying* and *derealizing* language, or the use of euphemisms by an institution to intellectually distance those within it from the reality with which they are engaged. In his book 1986 *The Nazi Doctors*, he writes,

Bureaucracy helps render genocide unreal. It further diffuses the impact of murderous events that, to begin with, are difficult to believe. In this sense we may say that the bureaucracy deamplifies genocide: diminishes the emotional and intellectual tones associated with the killing, primarily for perpetrator but also for bystanders and victims. Central to the process is the dampening of language, [including the use of] euphemisms (“resettlement” or “deportation” for killing) . . . with its attendant numbing, denial, and derealisation. (Lifton, 1986, pp. 495-496)

Lifton’s focus is on the use of language by a bureaucracy actively committing genocide, while our concern is somewhat different: an institution of memory integral to a government that was also engaged in its own genocidal enterprise in the elimination of Indigenous Americans as a means to enabling European settlement. Following Woolford (2013), we therefore need to conceptualize the Library of Congress as a colonial *node of governance* within a larger *Outcome Generating System* geared towards that end. Woolford (2013), in describing Canada’s Indian Residential School System as one such node, stated:

Node[s] exhibit[] a specific way of thinking about and set of methods for dealing with a matter of governance, as well as a set of resources and an institutional structure that allow the node to carry out its tasks . . . within a broader network of colonial relations. . . (p. 70)

In this model, we can situate the Library of Congress classification and subject headings in their historical context: established in 1897—7 years after the Wounded Knee Massacre and 4 years after historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared America’s frontier closed—they are a manifestation of its “way of thinking” and “set of methods” of colonial governance and, as they concerned Indigenous Americans, were designed from the beginning to relegate them to history (the *E* class) while at the same time disguising (or *derealizing*) the cause of their presumed passage.

As recounted by such writers as Churchill (1997) and Stannard (1992) the genocides of Indigenous North Americans—and the use of the plural is deliberate, for there were multiple acts—involved a hideous catalogue of atrocities, from massacres and scorched-earth tactics intended to drive Indigenous

Peoples to starvation; to mass incarceration and forced marches; to enslavement, torture and mutilation; biological warfare; dispossession; environmental degradation; and the deliberate destruction of cultures and language through enforced colonial education in residential schools. Yet all of this dedicated, ruthless murderousness has been minimized through skewed population data, glossed over as the tragic but unintended consequences of America's manifest destiny, and imbued by historians with virtue thanks to the all-purpose final cause of American exceptionalism (Churchill, 1997; Stannard, 1992).

Given this horrific history and the potential for it to be deamplified by library terminology, this research was guided by the following questions:

- a. To what extent do the LCSH and classifications *and their assignment* accurately represent authorial intent for books concerning the genocides of Indigenous North Americans?
- b. To what extent do these headings and classification numbers represent a barrier to discovery?
- c. To what extent do these headings and classification numbers contribute to the discourse marginalizing Indigenous genocides within genocide studies?

To determine the extent to which the assignment of LCSH diminish and disguise genocide-related content rather than correspond reasonably to the stated intent of the authors, searches in OCLC's global WorldCat catalogue were conducted for books the records of which featured the Library of Congress' subject "Indians of North America" or "Indians" and variation of the keywords *genocide*, *holocaust*, or *extermination*, yielding an initial list of 45 titles. As would a cataloguer, the researcher confirmed authorial intent (in terms of recognition of or arguments for the historical reality of genocide against Native Americans) by consulting either the book itself or—when that was not possible—publisher blurbs about or reviews of the book. If none of these could be obtained then the book was removed from the sample, resulting in a final pool of 34 English-language monographs.

The English language subject headings and classification designations assigned to these books were then analyzed, with particular attention paid to euphemisms for genocide and to geographic subdivision. Relevant literature from Mexico, Central and South America, and Australia, while extremely germane, was excluded in the interest of maintaining a focus on Anglo-American governance and intellectual contexts. The occurrence of euphemistic and misleading headings was quantified not only for each record, but the repetition and iteration of these terms within each record. For example, a title might have been assigned both "*Indians of North America, Treatment of*" and "*Indians, Treatment of*." The repetition within a given record of a euphemistic term and not just the presence term itself is therefore also considered rhetorically significant. These occurrences are compared to the total sample and according to geographic subdivisions. Titles for which the LCSH represented particularly egregious violations of authorial intent were analyzed in depth as exemplars of the extent to which euphemisms for genocide promote *colonial narratives*, a *double standard* when compared to non-Indigenous genocides, or outright *erasure*. All available Library of Congress classification numbers were identified. Finally, searches were conducted in the WorldCat catalogue using the most precise existing subject headings

(*Genocide–United States* or *Genocide–Canada*) to demonstrate their almost complete absence and therefore negligible utility (for a complete list of sample titles see Appendix¹).

The study was limited to monographs: commercial, small press, and self-published books as well as government documents or those produced by non-governmental organizations. Excluded from the study were archival material, book chapters, journal offprints, student theses or dissertations, and multimedia. The intention was to generate a representative sample and not a comprehensive list. The only criteria was that the book needed to be principally concerned with genocide in North America, not an overview of genocides globally, and that concepts related to genocide needed to appear in the book's title. For this reason, James Daschuk's (2013) book, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*—which details Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's deliberate policy of starving Indigenous Peoples to compel them to sign treaties but does not actually contain the word *genocide* in either its title or its text—is not included, despite its immediate influence on public discourse on genocide in Canada (Mosby, 2015). It should also be stressed that the analysis was confined to those headings specifically addressing or related to the outcomes of violent and assimilationist colonization on Indigenous populations, rather than all the assigned subject headings in the sample: For example, generic topical and geographic headings (i.e., *North America – History; California, Northern*) or occurrences of the standard *Indians of North America* heading are not discussed.

Bearing in mind that subject and class assignments can originate at the Library of Congress (or other CIP programs around the world), OCLC, book vendors, or any of the over 16,000 member libraries accessing WorldCat, the researcher has not scoped the metadata for each record to identify the source of the original cataloguing. The purpose is to critique the nature of and use of the current terminology, not to comment on, compare, or contrast the institutions that make use of them.

The reader should understand that the terms under discussion are not employed in a mutually exclusive way; that they can coexist in a given record with perhaps 20 others. This limits the ability to undertake “either–or” types of analysis and instead requires more nuanced approaches that consider the occurrences of terms and the records in which they appear, both of which can be expressed as percentages or absolute numbers.

The identification of Library of Congress call numbers was undertaken using a combination of WorldCat and OCLC Classify to determine the extent to which the identified titles might be potentially co-located, facilitating browsing and thereby constituting a “discursive formation” within an academic library setting (Radford, 2003).

It should be noted that the researcher has not read or even physically accessed every book in the sample, and therefore makes no claim as to the quality, scholarship, or accuracy of the books in question. This means that works of certain authors who may be the subject of some controversy are included in the sample without comment or qualification, including four by Ward Churchill (an historian of contested Indian ancestry who infamously referred to the World Trade Center workers killed in the 9/11 attacks as

¹ Available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10680/1289> and <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=0&article=1335&context=iipj&type=additional>

“little Eichmanns”) and one by independent Canadian genocide researcher Kevin Annett (whom some have called a fraud [International Tribunal into Crimes of Church and State, n.d.]). All that is of interest here is the ability to discover relevant monographs in the WorldCat catalogue.

The other limitation concerning the sample is that the author did not seek to determine the extent of the potential pool of titles of which the sample represents—that is, all monographs ever published concerning the subject of genocide in North America. The intention behind the sample was to demonstrate “literary warrant” for topical treatment of these histories, rather than represent a percentage of a known, quantifiable total.

Because the scope of the study was limited to existing Library of Congress terminology and classification for monographs in WorldCat, no effort was made to investigate headings and results for the journal literature in online databases, nor was the investigation pursued in terms of representations of genocide in Indigenized alternative taxonomies, such as the Brian Deere Classification, which is in use at the University of British Columbia’s (n.d.) *Xwi7xwa* Library.

This research interrogates dominant Western paradigms of knowledge construction in two distinct disciplines, but emphasizes their transactional interrelationships: that the knowledge organization structures developed and used by the Library of Congress—by which historians, students, and researchers are able to access scholarship related to genocide in North America—are both informed by and reflect historiographic tensions and omissions in the genocide literature itself. Situating this analysis therefore requires a consideration of two literatures concerning description and classification: that of bias in library science, as well as the struggle on the part of the international community and genocide studies to define and classify genocide.

Literature Review

Bias in Library Terminology

Library knowledge organization (KO) and information retrieval (IR) in the form of classification and subject headings terminology are powerful—and problematic—forms of representation. As Tatiana de la Tierra (2008) in her chapter in *Radical Cataloging* puts it:

Subject headings carry a lot of weight. The right ones help a researcher find books on the topic he or she is looking for; the wrong ones, or none at all, can cut off all access to them . . . To name, to categorize and classify, to label and brand, to make linguistic determination, to signal, to define, to say, “this is the word, these are the words that will represent you”—this is a powerful thing. (p. 95)

The Library of Congress classification system, which physically organizes books in the library, dates to 1897 and is intended to represent the universe of knowledge regardless of what is published; the Subject headings, by contrast, are premised on “literary warrant” (i.e., what’s being written and published). That these schemes are rife with Euro-, Christian-, hetero-, and ethnocentric biases and sexism is well established in a significant body of library literature dating back to the early 1970s. Critics argue that this supposed “neutrality” disguises and facilitates the neglect, misrepresentation, and omission of topics

falling outside the “mainstream” (e.g., Berman, 1971, Olson, 2002). Sanford Berman (1971), in his groundbreaking *Prejudices and Antipathies* pointed out the regressive and pejorative terms applied to non-White, non-Christian, and non-heterosexual peoples. As he famously put it:

In the realm of headings that deal with people and cultures—in short, with humanity—the LC [Library of Congress] list can only “satisfy” parochial, jingoistic Europeans and North Americans, white-hued, at least nominally Christian (and preferably Protestant) in faith, comfortably situated in the middle-and higher-income brackets, largely domiciled in suburbia, fundamentally loyal to the Established Order, and heavily imbued with the transcendent, incomparable glory of Western civilization. (p. xi)

Under an assumption of “neutrality,” subject headings and classification numbers are applied in a positivistic fashion that assumes that they are (and should be) passive reflections of an external reality, rather than subjective and prone to preconceived interpretation (Hjorland, 2004). In reality, critics argue, these schemes are overwhelmingly Euro- and Christian-centric in nature, and exhibit many examples of sexism, heterosexism, racism, and American exceptionalism, as well as pejorative language to describe, exclude, or misrepresent marginalized knowledge domains (Berman, 1971; Olson, 2002). As Ann Doyle (2013) noted, “dominant classification and subject representation systems entrench what is ‘taken for granted’ as legitimate knowledge, and how socially marginalized groups and their knowledge domains are excluded” (p. 3).

Olson and Schlegl (2001), in their systematic analysis of the literature on bias in Library of Congress description, observe that certain topics can become marginalized because the schemes treat them as an exception to the presumed norm; physically ghettoize them away from the materials with which they should be associated; depict them with an inappropriate structure that misrepresents the field; assign them biased terminology, often with pejorative overtones; or omit them altogether. Topics related to Indigenous history in America are particularly affected. They note:

Ghettoization is the problem of gathering and then isolating a topic rather than integrating it. A classic instance is the treatment of Aboriginal North Americans in classification [which is] separated from mainstream North American culture and . . . largely relegated to history as though there were no contemporary Aboriginal cultures. This circumstance might be viewed as effective gathering, but it might also be indicative of the practice of considering disturbing ideas as *other* to be set aside, outside of the mainstream. (pp. 67-69)

This assumption on the part of the Library of Congress of a “singular public” or “majority” (i.e., straight, White, and male) user is troubling, de la Tierra (2008) said, because erasure and misrepresentation through classification and subject assignment are not limited to existing inappropriate headings, but the outright lack of headings as well:

In these cases, if titles don’t contain magical keywords, the books are effectively erased from the catalogs. To not name is to eradicate, to make invisible. It is like banning a book that no one ever knew existed to begin with. (p. 100)

As problematic and prone to bias as controlled vocabulary such as LCSH may be, the alternative—their elimination and relying solely on web-based keyword searching drawn from publication titles, abstracts, or chapter headings—is equally fraught with the potential for erasure and “bibliocide.” In their research, Gross and Taylor (2005; see also Gross, Taylor, & Joudrey, 2015) determined that more than a third of potential results will be missed if searches rely solely on keywords, rather than controlled vocabulary. Similarly, Mann (2003) argued that an absence of subject headings and reliance instead on keyword searching depends on the searcher knowing what terms to use, meaning “the mere fact that the terms may exist on the catalog records does not by itself give us any formal and predictable means of discovering their existence” (p. 53). In a later article, Mann (2008) also sharply criticized the reliance on ranked keywords on the part of Google Print on the grounds that it:

Does not accomplish any of the tasks necessary for scholarly control of book literature: standardization of search terms (authority control), systematic linkage of related concepts, creation of overview browse displays in OPACs, and creation of categories of full texts related by concept (no matter what their keywords) in limited and manageably browsable groupings. It utterly destroys the recognition access required by scholarship in exchange for a very low level of prior-specification access appropriate only to quick information-seeking, devoid of context, connection, focus, or comprehensiveness. (p. 166)

Berman (2013) concurred, noting that without an intuitive subject heading, unless the desired term actually appears in the title, it may not be discoverable at all.

Before proceeding with our investigation of subject headings and classification of books related to Indigenous genocides in North America, it should be stressed that the literature has long recognized that Indigenous people are, in general, poorly served by the Library of Congress. Littletree and Metoyer (2015) summarized it this way:

Existing subject headings have not been designed with the perspectives of Indigenous people in mind . . . the cataloging language silences Native American history. It disregards the sovereignty of Native nations, as well as historicizes and stereotypes Native people and cultures. Additionally, researchers have found that LCSH and other mainstream knowledge organization systems severely limit the retrieval of Native language materials and Native American topics. For example, the Library of Congress authority files for North American Indian personal names are often inaccurate, and it has only been since 2005 that the Library of Congress began using a standard authority list for the names of tribal governments. (p. 642)

The library literature has also noted that this neglect and bias of Native American topics extends to the matter of genocide, but only in the contexts of discussing other genocides. In his article “Whose Holocaust is it Anyway,” Sanford Berman (1998) proposed new headings to recognize the genocides committed against a number of groups (such as gays and the Romani at the hand of the Nazis during World War II) and set out 18 alternative headings that he proposed for use at the Hennepin County Library in Minnesota (pp. 223-224), including:

- Native American Holocaust (1492-1900)

- American Indian Genocide (1492-1900)
- American Indian Holocaust (1492-1900)
- Amerindian Holocaust (1492-1900)
- First Nations Holocaust (1492-1900)
- Genocide, American Indian (1492-1900)
- Genocide, Indian (1492-1900)
- Genocide, Native American (1492-1900)
- Holocaust, American Indian (1492-1900)
- Holocaust, Indian (1492-1900)
- Holocaust, Native American (1492-1900)
- Indian Holocaust (1492-1900)
- Indians of North America -- Holocaust (1492-1900)
- Native American Genocide (1492-1900)

Since these were offered as part of a more inclusive and general discussion about genocide and LCSH, Berman does not go into any detail describing the extent of the issue as it concerns Native Americans. As well intentioned as these are, however, one could also easily critique Berman's decision to put an end date of 1900 on genocides in the Americas—especially in regards American Indian boarding schools (which continue to exist in the 21st Century [Bear, 2008]) and the Canadian Indian Residential School System, the last school of which closed in 1996 (CBC News, 2008). The reason that these headings were never adopted by the Library of Congress (and are in fact no longer available on the Hennepin County Public Library catalogue) may be related at least in part to the historic and ongoing absence, neglect, and exclusion of Indigenous genocide in the field of genocide studies.

Defining and Classifying Genocide

Like library science, genocide studies is itself intimately concerned with naming concepts and with schemes of classification and, as is the case with any such act, these can direct and constrain our thinking. It must be stressed at the outset however that the very use of the term *genocide* is freighted with problematic political and legal controversies that contributes to a general reluctance to apply it to historic and contemporary acts of mass violence (Glanville, 2009; Minow, 2007; Scheffer, 2006).

The ideological contexts and situatedness of knowledge construction concerning genocide must, therefore, be front of mind as we consider the manifestation of these definitions in library catalogues. Like cataloguing and classification conventions themselves, all “definitions [of genocide] are social conventions, not empirical truths about the world” (Moshman, 2001, p. 445). Efforts to define “genocide” begin during World War II when Polish-American lawyer Raphael Lemkin, reporting on the industrialized slaughter being perpetrated by Nazi Germany in occupied countries, first proposed that:

[Genocide is] a coordinated plan aimed *at destruction of the essential foundations* of the life of national groups so that these groups wither and die like plants that have suffered a blight. The end may be accomplished by the forced *disintegration of political and social institutions*, of the *culture* of the people, of their *language*, their *national feelings* and their *religion*. It may be accomplished by wiping out all basis of *personal security, liberty, health and dignity*. When these means fail the machine gun can always be utilized as a last resort. (Lemkin, 1945, para. 5)

Note that his definition is premised on the destruction of the foundations of group identity, in the form of social institutions and culture, with outright mass killing entering as a “last resort.” Such a definition, had it been internationally recognized, would have clearly encompassed the historical and ongoing treatment of Indigenous Peoples around the world, and certainly the experience of the First Peoples of North America. As it is, the United Nations, in its Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), which was approved on December 9th, 1948, excluded cultural and social consideration, and it limited the definition to physical aspects only:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 1948, Article II).

Dissatisfaction over the limitations in this focus on killing and biological continuity has led to many alternative definitions of genocide over the decades. These efforts have been guided by a range of fundamental questions: Should groups encompassed by definitions of genocide be limited to national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups or should political, economic, and other groups be included as well? Should such targeted groups be self-defined or as perceived by the perpetrator? Does genocide only refer to mass killing or does it include some non-lethal acts including cultural extermination? Can genocide only be perpetrated by governments or are non-state actors also culpable? Finally, what is the role and

importance of intention—must it be part of a deliberate plan or can it involve “degrees of intentionality” by different parties (Moshman, 2001)?

Unfortunately, much of the discourse surrounding these questions tends to preclude the inclusion of Indigenous victims (Moses, 2002; Moshman, 2001; Rensink, 2011). Many definitions—including the United Nation’s official statement issued in 1948—exclude ethnocide, or the deliberate destruction of culture, making “cultural genocide” a distinct phenomenon (United Nations, 1948). Definitions of genocide that look solely at massacres and dismiss or reject Indigenous worldviews concerning the fundamental nature of access to land and language will also fail to recognize the reality of Indigenous genocides (Bischoping & Fingerhut, 1996).

Unfortunately, the diverse causes, forces, agents, possible intentions, and mechanisms involved in colonial encounters in North America—played out across vast geographies over 500 years with thousands of cultures and eight Euro-American governments—have often mediated against inclusion in conventional classifications and definitions. Chief among these criteria is documented evidence of political *intent* to commit genocide, which was met in only a few circumstances (e.g., the Sand Creek Massacre) and jurisdictions, such as California (Rensink, 2011).

Debate over the place of Indigenous genocide in the literature is made more controversial still by the reliance on prototype-based definitions, considering all historical and contemporary genocide through the lens of a single genocide—namely, the Jewish Holocaust. Churchill (1997) classes the orthodox interpretations as ranging from “exclusivist” and minimalizing explanations, to efforts at contextualizing the mass killings as typical of civilizational clashes and conventions of warfare in a more violent past. He criticizes historian and philosopher Steven Katz, for example, for his assertion that what occurred was not a genocide but a “demographic collapse” caused overwhelmingly by disease, and that deaths owing to the violence of the so-called “Indian Wars” only amounted to some tens of thousands—that is, that the extermination of the Indians was “unintended,” mostly as a result of “unwittingly” spreading pathogens (p. 138). Some of the so-called “exclusivists” (such as Yehuda Bauer) carry their argument so far, Churchill observed, that they accuse “comparativists” of antisemitism. Churchill in particular criticizes historian Deborah Lipstadt for her conflating historians seeking to compare genocides with outright Holocaust deniers, such as David Duke.

Moshman (2001) argued that since every genocide is unique, using the Holocaust as definitional distorts our thinking and allows nations and peoples to (naturally) distinguish themselves from the Nazis and therefore exonerate themselves from the crime of genocide. He wrote:

The European conquest of the Americas has involved deliberate mass killings of countless millions of individuals and has eliminated hundreds of cultures on two continents over more than five centuries, [yet] the absence of death camps enables the nations of the Americas to deny that they were founded on genocide and that, in many cases, these genocides are still in progress. (p. 436)

Moses (2002) added that “uniqueness” is not a useful category for historical research; it is a philosophical and metaphysical consideration. Instead, he proposes classifying the theories themselves as either *liberal* or *post-liberal*, by which he means the extent to which they privilege the primacy of the

state over non-state actors and account for larger cultural contexts and structures. Liberal theories, he argues, exclude social forces and culture from consideration, such that Indigenous Peoples were killed owing to the “unintended consequences” of colonization as settlers sought lands and resources—through so-called “developmental” and “utilitarian” genocides. Moses pointed out that this view, in focusing on the decisions and actions of states, deliberately avoids saying anything about colonial societies themselves.

In sharp contrast, post-liberal theories do examine the social and cultural structures that make genocidal actions on the part of colonists more likely and, according to Moses (2002), equate colonialism with genocide. The cultural dimensions of genocide are so fundamental to the post-liberal view that there is “no qualitative difference between mass murder and cultural genocide, because the latter destroys the indigenous systems of meaning and ultimately the survivors’ will to live, resulting ultimately in widespread death” (p. 23).

The cultural dimensions of genocide are the predominant theme in the literature concerning genocide in Canada, which was characterized by assimilation and the destruction of languages, cultures, traditions and attachment to the land through oppressive legislation (the *Indian Act* and the reserve system) and residential schools, constituting a “matrix of destructive forces” emerging from a “genocidal ethos” rather than a centrally-organized campaign of deliberate, intentional killing (Woolford & Thomas, 2010, pp. 71, 73-74).

However, the liberal view of intentional, targeted mass killings of identifiable groups dominates international law in the form of the U.N. Convention, a politically expedient decision made “for the benefit of nation-states, a limitation they instituted because they regularly utilize technologies of governance that post-liberals would define as genocidal” (Moses, 2002, p. 23). This is particularly the case for the political culture in the United States, where as Moses (2002) observed “public leaders and intellectuals are happy to pontificate about genocide in every country but their own” (p. 16). As Chomsky (2010) observed:

[These] practices are deeply rooted in prevailing intellectual culture, so much so that they will not be easy to eradicate. We can see this by considering the most unambiguous cases of genocide and its debasement, those in which the crime is acknowledged by the perpetrators, and passed over as insignificant or even denied in retrospect by the beneficiaries, right to the present. (p. 16)

What concerns us now is the extent to which the historiographic functions of the academic library in the form of knowledge organization and information retrieval terminology may have contributed to this discourse.

Findings

A critical examination of the Library of Congress headings in a sample of 34 monographs concerning Indigenous genocides in North America reveals a number of highly problematic approaches to subject description and classification that present potential barriers to both the researcher and to historical understanding.

The heading *Genocide* is represented in the sample, appearing 25 times as a subject heading in 14 records, or 41% of the sample—meaning of course that 59% of the titles bear no such heading (Figure 1). The use of *genocide* as a heading shall be considered below in terms of the total sample (Figure 2), its geopolitical application (Figure 3 & Figure 4), its absence (Figure 5), and its association with related terms (Figure 6).

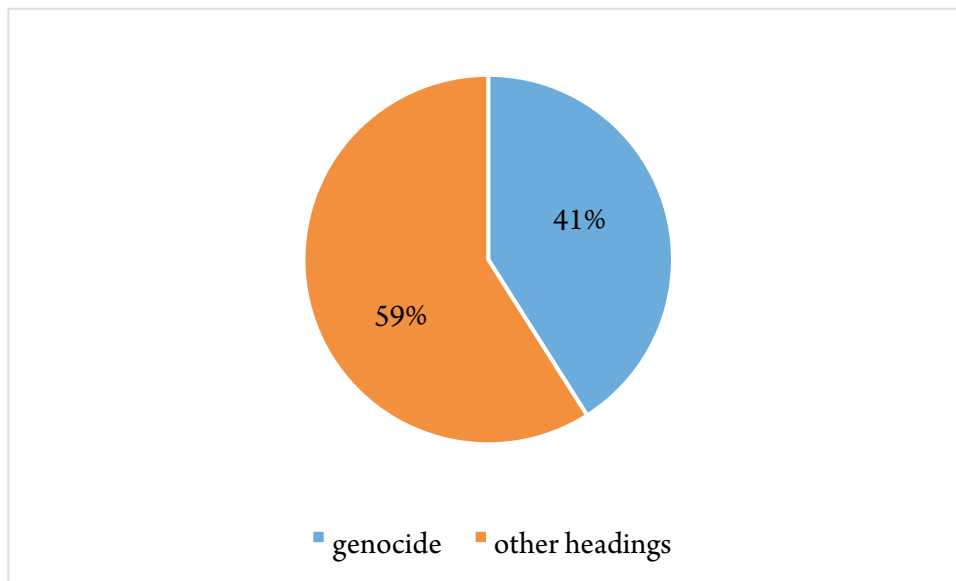


Figure 1. Records containing LCSH “Genocide” (%).

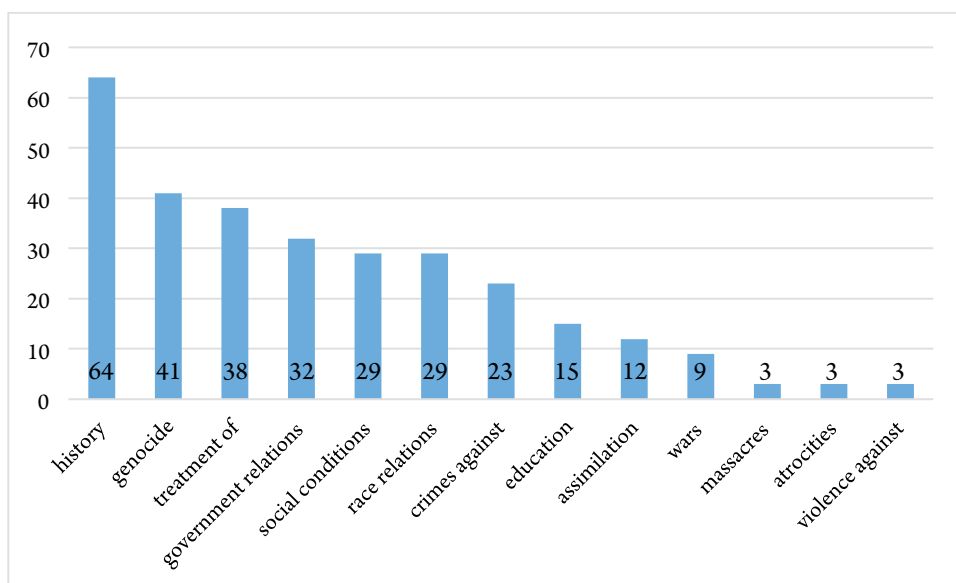


Figure 2. Instances of key LCSH terms in sample, expressed as % (n = 34).

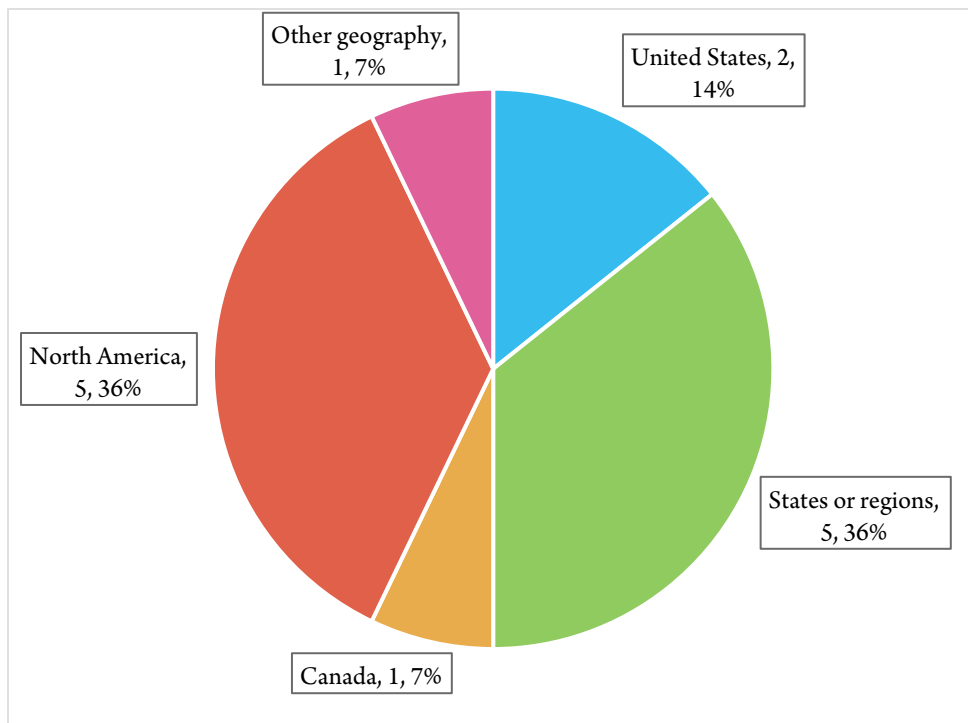


Figure 3. LCSH for "Genocide -- [Geography]" ($n = 14$). Data are labelled: Region, n , %.

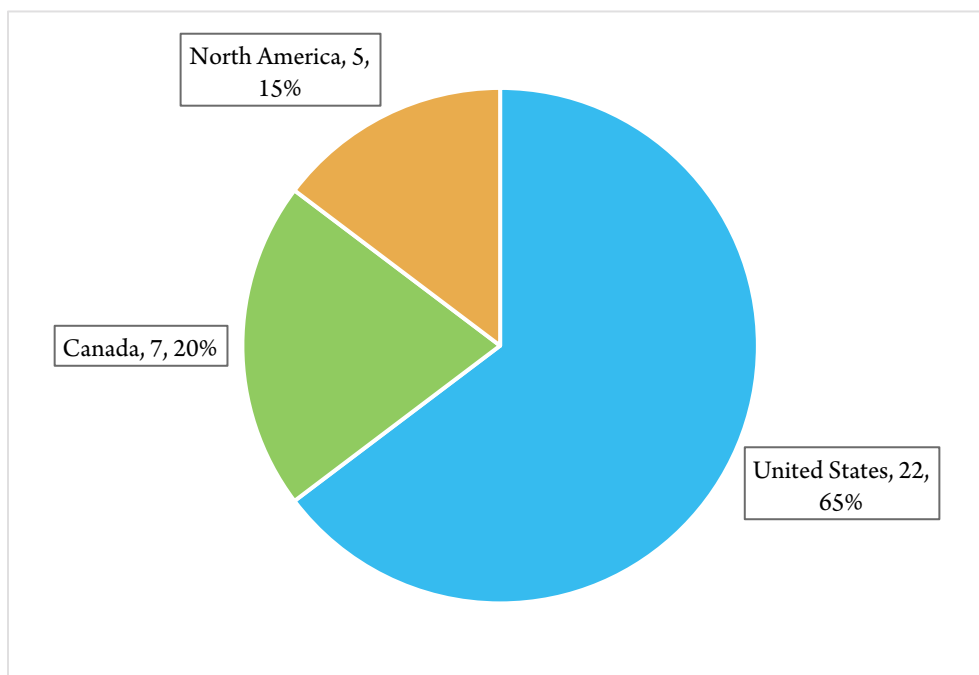


Figure 4. Geographies actually represented in sample books ($n = 34$). Data are labelled: Region, n , %.

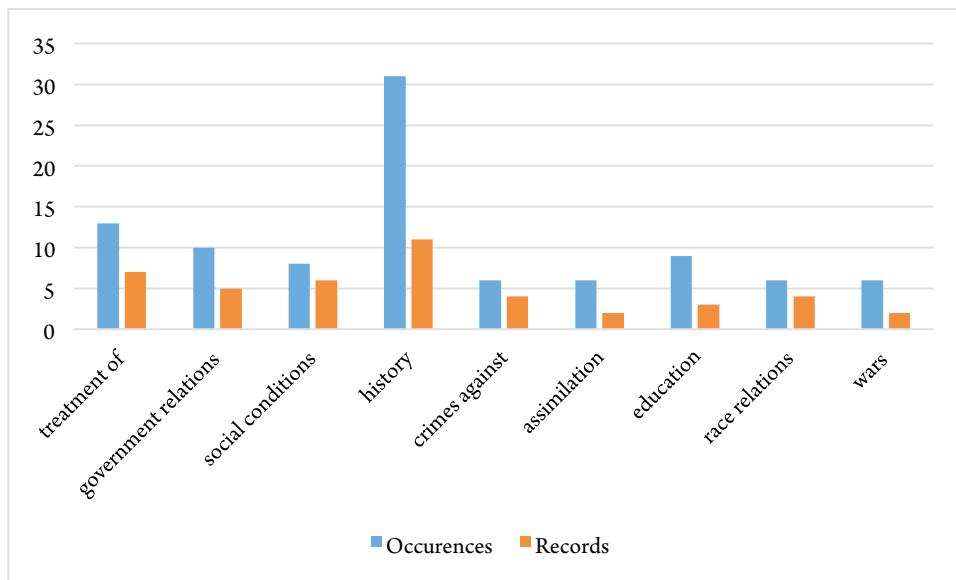


Figure 5. Euphemisms in records excluding heading for *Genocide* (Records $n = 20$).

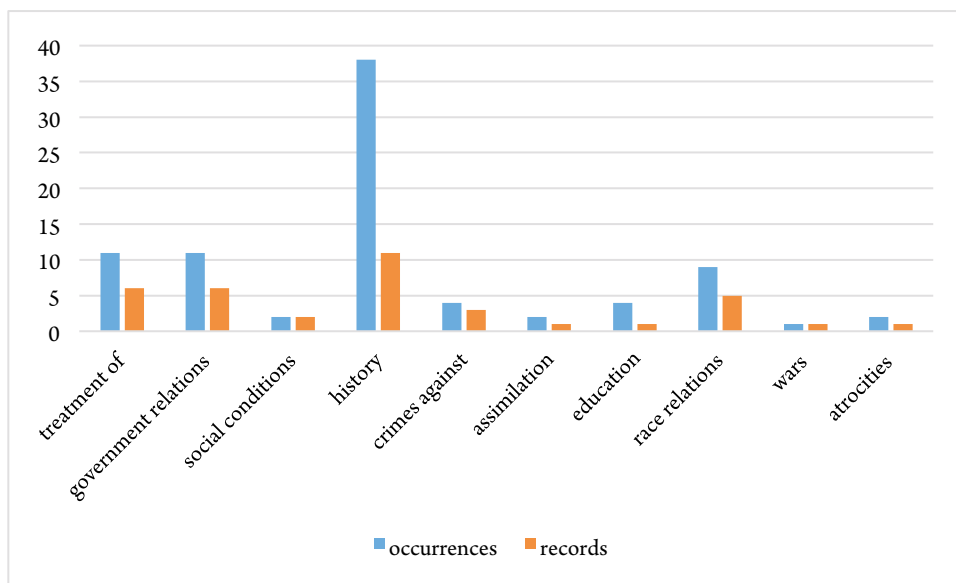


Figure 6. Headings associated with the Library of Congress heading *Genocide* (Records $n = 14$).

We see here a number of approaches to describing this violent and contested history, ranging from the vague (*social conditions*) to the neutral (*government relations*) to the apparently beneficial (*education*). While it would appear at first glance that the term *genocide* is well represented, appearing in 41% of the sample, on closer examination a number of inadequacies emerge—several of which concern geographies. In 11 of these instances, the use of *genocide* is generic and attached to no geography, while others are geographically vague, indicating *North America* when the United States is the actual focus (3 times) or overly specific (5 headings attached to individual states). In one instance, Kakel (2013), the use applies to the book's partial focus on Eastern Europe and not North America at all. However, where the United States is concerned, geographic subdivisions are rarely applied: even though 22 out of 34 titles in the sample pertain to genocide in the United States (65%), there are only 2 explicit instances (9%) of the heading *Genocide -- United States*. By contrast, of the 7 titles relating specifically to Canada, all of them recognize relevant geographies, although 2 include the term *Genocide* in their records, and only 1 makes explicit *Genocide – Canada* (Figures 3 & 4).

Conversely, 20 books (59% of the sample) bore no genocide-related heading anywhere in their catalogue records (Figure 5). Instead, cataloguers employ a wide range of descriptions for other aspects of the books while depending on several euphemisms, notably geographic variants of *Indians of North America -- Treatment of* (13 iterations in 7 titles), *social conditions* (8 occurrences in 6 records) or *government relations* (10 in 5 records) in association with the relevant geography. Generally, however, the books are described as some aspect of *history* (31 instances in 11 records). The strongest euphemism, occurring 6 times in the sample exclusive of genocide is the heading [*Indians or variant*] – *crimes against*, while less frequent ones include *assimilation* (6 times in 2 records), *race relations* (6 in 4), and *wars* (6 in 2). Especially noteworthy is the frequency of the benign term *education* (9 occurrences for 3 books) to describe residential schools, when most critics would challenge the notion that what these institutions actually provided was an education (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2016).

In those records that do include *genocide* as a subject heading ($n = 14$), other issues arise (Figure 6). Aspects of *history* dominate, used repeatedly 38 times in only 11 records, largely in generic or geographic contexts (i.e., *California – History*). *Massacres* is used to describe Carroll Kakel's *The American West and the Nazi East*, but could easily be seen to pertain to the portions of the book related to Eastern Europe. The association of the Library of Congress heading *Genocide* with such euphemistic headings is no less problematic. The *Government relations* and . . . *Treatment of* concepts appear 11 times each alongside *Genocide*, with *race relations* showing up 9 times, presenting a particularly ghastly rhetorical positioning: Genocide—when committed in the Americas—is not a crime against humanity but merely a form of *treatment*, or an aspect of *government relations* or *race relations*. These headings also suggest some sort of power parity—that the books deal with forms of governance or how races get along with one another, not deliberate campaigns of extermination.

When taken together as a sample in this way, the general rhetorical effect of these Library of Congress headings is that what occurred was either not actually genocide or if it did occur in certain places is (a) a general topic divorced of causation or attributable agency; (b) occurred continent-wide and can't be associated with a particular national government; or (c) localized and confined in one state, devoid of

broader, structural implications for the nation. That these positions are mutually incompatible only adds to the problematic positioning of these histories.

This de-amplification is reinforced further when we consider how euphemistic headings are applied to specific titles, and how they illustrate patterns of colonial narratives, double standards, and erasure.

Colonial narratives figure prominently in the case of David Stannard's (1992) damning book *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*, which is assigned the following astonishing headings:

- Columbus, Christopher -- Influence
- Indians, Treatment of
- Indians -- First contact with Europeans
- America -- Discovery and exploration -- Spanish

The Library of Congress would seem in this case to be situating genocide as a form of “influence,” and a natural outcome of America’s “discovery and exploration.” One would hardly guess from these headings that the book’s author asserts his work is in fact about “the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world” (Stannard, 1992, p. x).

Such deliberateness attains a kind of perfection in the double standard applied to *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* by Carol P. Kakel (2013), which meticulously compares and contrasts Hitler’s genocide campaigns in Eastern Europe with the United States’ slaughter of Native Americans. As Kakel (2013) states in the book’s introduction:

This study aims to illuminate both the specific national histories of the ‘American West’ and the ‘Nazi East,’ as well as the intimate relations between the larger historical phenomena of imperialism, colonialism and genocide. Like all comparative history, it is concerned with similarities and differences between the two cases (giving equal attention to each). (p. 7)

The cataloguers who analyzed this book systematically analyzed the content and balanced the initial headings accordingly:

- United States -- Territorial expansion -- History -- 19th century
- Germany -- Territorial expansion -- History -- 20th century

We see that both countries carried out campaigns of “territorial expansion” and with ideological justifications:

- Manifest Destiny
- Lebensraum

So far, so equivalent. However, when subject populations are directly affected, a remarkable divergence occurs:

- Indians, Treatment of -- United States
- Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) -- Europe, Eastern
- Massacres -- West (U.S.) -- History -- 19th century
- Genocide -- Europe, Eastern -- History -- 20th century
- Indians of North America -- Wars
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Atrocities -- Europe, Eastern

Indians experience *treatment* while Jews are exterminated in the *Holocaust*; *massacres* happen in the U.S., but not *genocide*, which only occurred in Eastern Europe. Finally, the Indians fought a series of *wars* as (presumably equal) combatants, while those in Nazi-occupied countries suffered *atrocities*. The cognitive dissonance on display is impressive: For here is a book that sets out in the starkest possible terms the reality of America's genocides and compares them frankly to those of the Nazis. Yet, even this was, apparently, not enough to dislodge the cataloguers' apparently bottomless enculturation in American exceptionalism.

Finally, the sample also illustrates outright erasure through subject headings: Titles for which no attempt whatsoever has been made to account for a book's actual contents and instead an entirely new narrative is imposed. This is the case for *The Genocide Machine in Canada: The Pacification of the North* by Robert Davis and Mark Zannis. According to the authors, their book examines "... the Arctic area—the Native peoples, and the Southern institutions which have invaded the North—[as a] principal example of modern genocide" (Davis & Zannis, 1973, p. 13). Shelved at HC 117 (Economic development), this book is, surprisingly, about:

- Environmental policy -- Canada, Northern
- Canada, Northern -- Economic policy
- Economic policy
- Environmental policy
- Canada, Northern

In this example there is a vertiginous gulf between the book's thesis and its subject analysis. All authorial intent has been erased, and no interested researcher could expect to discover this title through a subject search or by browsing the shelves.

Which brings us to our final point of analysis: Classification and the ability to browse the shelves within a physical discursive formation (Radford, 2003). For most topics, bias or absence in subject access can at least be overcome to some extent by co-location. Not in the case of Indigenous genocides in North America: An examination of the call numbers in our sample confirms that the Library of Congress Classification places books on this topic in a bewildering variety of locations:

- E 59 – Pre-Columbian American, special topics
- E 76 – Indians of North America
- E 77 – Comprehensive works
- E 78 – By state, province or region (7)
- E 83 – “Indian Wars” (2)
- E 91 – General works (2)
- E 92 – General works, Canada (2)
- E 93 – General works, United States (4)
- E 96 – Education (2)
- E 97 – Education, United States, general works
- E 98 – Other topics, A-Z (4)
- E 99 – By Tribe
- E112 – “Discovery of America” – Christopher Columbus
- E 179.5 – United States History “General special”
- F 868 – California, regions
- HC 117 – Economic history, Canada
- HQ 767.7 – Sterilization as birth control
- KE 7709 – Native peoples, Treaties

Even for those classes at which multiple titles are located, the colonial structure of the Library of Congress (e.g., organizing tribes and cultures by alien political borders imposed upon them in E 78) combined with the rather complex construction of Cutter numbers regarding theme and author’s

surname ensures that none of these will likely be near each other. For example, Ward Churchill's (1993) *Indians are us? Culture and genocide in Native North America* is shelved at E 98 P99—with books regarding public opinion or attitudes about Indians of North America—while *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Smith, 2015) is housed shelves away at E 98 W8—with books on Indigenous women's issues.

Between inaccurate and disingenuous subject access and scattered shelf locations, we can see how the Library of Congress schemes both reflect and reinforce the problematic place of the history of Indigenous North Americans in genocide studies literature: that what transpired on this continent falls outside mainstream genocide discourse, and, when it is considered at all, it is only within very narrow circumstances or geographies with no generalizable implications.

Discussion and Recommendations

The KO and IR structures of the Library of Congress treat the history of Indigenous genocides in North America quite differently from any other historical or contemporary genocides, making it challenging for the researcher to not only gather comprehensive results, but to identify literature adopting Indigenous and critical perspectives that challenge self-aggrandizing notions of Western exceptionalism. Recall the research pointing to the significant risk of losing access to relevant results in the absence of controlled vocabulary (Gross & Taylor, 2005; Gross et al. 2015): This possibility was borne out in the current study, which revealed that nearly 60% of the sampled books were not assigned subject access to the concept *genocide* and were only discovered because their authors included it or a related term in the title—begging the question, what books on the subject were missed because their titles were not explicit?

Furthermore, the lack of appropriate headings combined with the inability to browse subject headings in WorldCat removes the possibility of serendipitous discovery. To use terms such as *genocide*, *holocaust*, or *extermination* in a search, the researcher would first need to be intellectually predisposed to accept a Native American Holocaust had occurred. If, on the other hand, one rejects these terms as applied to North America, they will not be entered and this literature would remain largely undiscovered. Because WorldCat searches are based on identifying keywords anywhere in the record, entering the terms “genocide United States” or “genocide Canada” yields thousands of mostly irrelevant hits, the terms simply showing up somewhere in the catalogue record, including place of publication. Despite the presence and validity of the term *Genocide-United States* and *Genocide-Canada*, it is actually impossible to retrieve any monographs in WorldCat by entering these terms as subject headings.²

Utilizing Olson and Schlegl's (2001) taxonomy, we see that this literature is:

² Search format: *su:"Genocide [country]"*. The U.S. search yields one article, the Canada search a dissertation. When asked by the author as to why this should be the case, OCLC staff could offer no explanation (personal communication).

- *Treated as an exception to the presumed norm:* Books related to other genocides are indicated with dedicated subject headings (e.g., *Holocaust, Jewish*) and classification numbers (e.g., D 810 J4 . . .); Indigenous American genocides have neither.
- *Physically ghettoized away from the materials with which they should be associated:* Titles are assigned a wide variety of Library of Congress numbers, dispersing them throughout the collection.
- *Depicted with an inappropriate structure that misrepresents the field:* The lack of any topical treatment for Indigenous genocide dissolves its ability to form a discursive formation.
- *Assigned biased terminology, often with pejorative overtones:* Subject headings are euphemistic, colonial, passive, and misleading.
- *Omitted altogether:* The omission of the subject heading *genocide* for nearly 60% the sample titles results in this concept being potentially lost to researchers.

When dozens of books are written featuring terms like “genocide” and “holocaust” in their titles, thereby establishing a substantial and reputable literature on Indigenous genocides in North America, then clearly there is sufficient “literary warrant” for establishing an appropriate subject heading, one that names the genocide in terms of the population affected and situating it geographically.

While these biases, omissions, narratives, and erasures may have persisted in our libraries for over a century, I believe the library profession must now revisit them in light of new moral obligations and mandates in the form of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC, 2015) and the United Nations’ 2005 adoption of *Joinet-Orentlicher Principles*, which sets out the obligations of states to investigate, prosecute and thereby prevent the recurrence of human rights violations. In Call to Action 69, the TRC calls on Libraries and Archives Canada to:

1. Fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Joinet-Orentlicher Principles, as related to Aboriginal peoples’ inalienable *right to know* [emphasis added] the truth about what happened and why, with regard to human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools [through history books].
2. Ensure that its record holdings related to residential schools are *accessible to the public*. (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2015, p. 8)

The Joinet-Orentlicher Principles referred to by the TRC is a non-binding normative framework that any country having experienced crimes against humanity or genocide can use to move from conflict to reconciliation. In the upper left corner of this diagram (Figure 7), we see the element of the “Right to Know,” which includes access to history books (Sisson, 2010, p. 15).



Figure 7. The Jointet-Orentlicher Principles (Sisson, 2010, p. 15).

This article has demonstrated that the presence of 34 books available on library shelves and indexed in a global library catalogue was not the same thing as making them “accessible” as intended by these recommendations; instead, what is apparent in the treatment of Indigenous genocide literature is a seemingly deliberate and studied obfuscation that both reflects and reinforces the exclusion of this history from what Bischofing and Fingerhut (1996) called the “border lines” of genocide studies.

The assignment of subject headings to the literature on this topic frequently erects significant barriers to discovery on the part of the interested researcher, and therefore they fail even on a practical level. More broadly, such headings are part of the status quo-enforcing power—well-recognized in the literature—of the library’s “power to name” (Olson, 2002). As Daniel Martínez-Ávila and José Guimarães (2013) in their article in the journal *Scire*:

Library schemes both reflect and create opinion at the same time . . . It is well known that a very effective way to eradicate a certain group or a people from History is by in no way naming it. An effective way to defame a thing and put an end to its aspirations is to change its meaning to the worst possible one or place it in the wrong context . . . All these biases were introduced with the unconscious or intentional purpose of reinforcing the power discourses and the status quo. (p. 22)

Inasmuch as historiography concerns the methodologies used by historians, and the work of the historian involves the identification, interpretation, and synthesis of sources, then historiography must include a discussion of how these sources are collected, organized, and made available to the historian.

Libraries—physical collections of books, manuscripts, and periodicals as well as their online resources—afford the historian opportunities for discovery, serendipity, linkages, analysis, and synthesis. Yet these opportunities may be constrained or negated by the language used by libraries to structure and index these materials—language, rooted in Western ideological assumptions or political conventions, which can render some material invisible. In so doing, the library, in effect, passes judgment on the very validity of that subject matter, which in turn contributes to the reproduction of these biases and invisibilities in subsequent scholarship.

According to terrorism studies scholar Richard Jackson (2012), the dominant discourses of a given discipline are constructed by its practitioners in such a way as to exclude and close off alternative meanings, with the result that some ideas while technically “known” to the “experts” of that field are considered off-limits and hence “unknowable” because of the exclusive manner in which discourse is constructed (Jackson, 2012). Structures of knowledge organization and information retrieval are both informed by these constructions and reinforce them.

To rectify these transactional barriers to alternative epistemologies, information science scholar Birger Hjørland (2004) argued that knowledge organization should be undertaken as a means to describe and evaluate various knowledge *claims* in such a way as to be meaningful for users, rather than employing positivist assumptions about monolithic *knowledge* per se and KO schemes representing a single, external reality. The difference between these paradigms, he argued, is that the pragmatic view allows to flourish “the most important function of libraries and information systems [which] is to enable critical users to question established knowledge and investigate alternative views” (p. 500). The 18 headings devised by Sanford Berman (1998, listed above) (*Native American Holocaust [1492-1900]*, etc.), for example, would do this by accepting the claims of genocide made by the authors as a given. Another promising existing opportunity lies in the social tagging feature of WorldCat, in which users can, using their personal WorldCat accounts, create and add their own headings to records if they feel the existing headings are inadequate.³ However, such tagging would lack the control, consistency, and legitimacy of formal subject headings.

As things currently stand however, Indigenous genocide scholarship has—contrary to the Library Congress’ own guidelines—been disguised by biased, normative, and ideologically loaded terminologies and assumptions, which have served to delegitimize and destabilize this body of knowledge. Thus the nature and extent of Indigenous genocides are rendered essentially unknowable not only by the construction of knowledge in the literature of genocide studies, but by extension the knowledge organization structures layered onto this literature in the form of LCSH and classification.

Conclusion

The imperative to devise and institute more honest subject and classificatory access is not only a matter of historiography but of social justice: the ability of Indigenous students and researchers to name and access the truth about their own history can contribute to breaking the silence surrounding genocide within the academy, as well as in Indigenous communities, where for decades many survivors of the residential school system kept their painful experiences to themselves (Staniforth, 2015). Denying or

³ See <https://www.oclc.org/worldcat-org/features.en.html>

preventing this access is another form and layer of oppression. The language used by libraries to obfuscate authorial intent in the relevant literature has helped perpetuate and exacerbate the general ignorance about Indigenous genocides in the United States and Canada.

It may accord with the interests of power on both sides of the 49th parallel (i.e., the Canada–U.S. border) to avoid facing the reality of the genocide of Indigenous North Americans; unfortunately for those interested in researching this history, it is necessary to navigate the codified, formalized language of this avoidance. The Western structures of the Library of Congress impede research and pedagogical development in one of the darkest and most significant aspects of North American history. More troublingly, they have contributed to the “disappearance” of the history of North American genocide more generally such that it can be so easily forgotten, dismissed, and denied even by otherwise educated people. Marisa Duarte (Pasqua Yaqui) and Miranda Belarde-Lewis (Tlingit and Zuni) (2015) added:

Colonialism is subtle, insidious, and nearly invisible to privileged citizens of a Settler state. It is most visible to those who suffer the worst of its inner workings. While knowledge organization researchers and practitioners may not be able to overhaul generations of social inequalities, adopting and including terms that reflect the experiences and perspectives of the marginalized is a step toward the redress of colonial power. (p. 682)

Adopting a pragmatic view on KO and the genocide of Indigenous North Americans would involve both recognizing the legitimacy of Indigenous perspectives, particularly concerning their relationship to land and how processes of assimilation (such as the residential school system) were consistent with Lemkin’s original definition of genocide. It makes a difference both ontologically and epistemologically whether we call something *genocide* or a *crime* or *treatment*. It also changes the conversation: If for example Chiitaanibah Johnson had been able to open her laptop and go to the Cal Tech library catalogue to show her professor all the dozens of books with the subject heading “Genocide -- United States,” it would have undermined his confident genocide denial. Furthermore, the Library of Congress needs to honour its own principles of “literary warrant” and the intent of authors writing in this area by establishing appropriate subject headings to describe this quite substantial literature. This would not only contribute to changing and opening up the discourse around genocide in the Americas but would also facilitate the ability to compare genocides, the study of which can help us prevent them from happening again.

If genocide is only conceived in terms of prototypes—namely the Holocaust against the Jews of Europe—it grants the historian license to mischaracterize many other historical atrocities and campaigns of extermination, most notably those that took place in North America. It is, in short, a form of holocaust denial that fails to recognize that genocide can happen anywhere, at any time, and any one of us could potentially become participants in it, given sufficient enculturation. Enabling our ability to name and discuss genocide in North America can contribute to a more honest reckoning with our history and hence the basis for reconciliation and social justice.

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