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COMPARING LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADINGS TO KEYWORD
SEARCHES INVOLVING LGBT TOPICS: A PILOT STUDY

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

Subject access to homosexuality and other LGBT or otherwise queer topics has a complicated history. Because language used for concepts can change depending on who you ask, controlling this vocabulary is a difficult task, though an admirable one. The aim of this study is to provide a sample of language that patrons use to search for these topics. This sample can then be used to update Library of Congress Subject Headings, or to aid in reference interviews when suggesting keywords.

This study used semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data. This data was then transcribed, coded, and compared to existing Library of Congress Subject Headings and Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms. The results of the study imply that the language used by patrons when searching for LGBT topics is different than the language used by the Library of Congress to control access to that information. However, due to the research experience of the research participants, this discrepancy in language does not keep them from successfully performing research on these topics. More research is needed in order to determine a larger statistical sample, as well as to develop broad generalizations about language used.

Keywords: subject access, controlled vocabulary, library of congress subject headings, LGBT

To Kathleen DeLaurenti and Diane Dudley

Acknowledgements

I knew I wanted to be a librarian between my sophomore and junior years of college, after I had worked in a music library for a year. I have loved libraries my entire life, but I never knew that being a librarian was something that I could do as a career. Like so many others, I thought librarians sort of sprang out of circulation desks, fully formed at age 60. But when I realized that I could be a librarian, I immediately knew it was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

The only problem was I did not have a single clue about what type of librarian I wanted to be! At the Music Library, I did everything: reference, collection management, preservation, digital projects, graphic design, you name it. And I liked all that work, and I think I was good at it. I also did not really know that there were different kinds of librarians until I expressed interest in librarianship to my supervisor. She wanted to help guide me through the path to a career. I would bounce ideas off her, but nothing seemed to stick.

It was not until my senior year that something clicked. As embarrassing as it is to admit, I was taking a class on the socio-cultural roots and impact of Japanese anime, and I was writing a paper analyzing the concept of gender in *Ghost in the Shell* through a post-modern cyborg feminist lens. I wanted to argue that gender was being forced on the main character, but I did not want to force my Western, white ideas of gender onto a character made by a Japanese person. So, I tried looking for examples of gender theory and other things relating to gender within a Japanese context, but I was having trouble finding anything useful. Even librarians at the research desk were having trouble helping me, so I knew something must be up.

I started to wonder, is it more difficult to search for items relating to specific subjects, especially subjects relating to gender and sexuality? I turned to the Facebook group the ALA

Think tank, and I even asked my friends and my boss. It was when I asked my supervisor that I first heard about Sanford Berman.

My supervisor Kathleen told me about Sanford Berman and all the work that he does to challenge the language used by the Library of Congress. She told me about subject headings and how they control access to materials. And that lit a fire in me. From then on, I knew I wanted to be a cataloging librarian so that I could help people have access to any and all information, no matter the subject.

I went into my first semester of library school with this fire and tried to do as many course projects as I could related to my research interests. In one course, I did a research poster on the topic of LGBT information and cataloging where I did a brief review of the history of access to materials about LGBT people. While working on this poster, I noticed that I found no examples of librarians doing research or studies that aimed to locate the language patrons use. I thought this was weird since there is such a rich history of challenging the language of subject access. I kept searching and searching, worried that I was missing something crucial. But it was not there. I found a hole in the research that I now aim to fill with my own research.

When I came to graduate school, I never thought that I would do a thesis. A thesis in my program is not required, so why would I do that extra work? However, I found passion in my research, and that turned into something I want to pursue for the rest of my life. I have had many people help me out along the way, and I would like to thank them here.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

According to the American Library Association, those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or trans (the LGBT community) are part of an underserved population. The information needs and information seeking behaviors of the LGBT community can be complicated by various institutional oppressions such as homophobia, decreased visibility, and lack of information. In fact, studies done on the information seeking behaviors of lesbians show that they tend not to use their public libraries because they either do not think the library will collect the information they need, or because they fear homophobia from either the staff or other patrons. Gay men similarly do not use their libraries for information regarding LGBT topics and instead will seek that information through others in the community (Stenback & Schrader, 1999).

Scholarly articles examining the collections of libraries and the inclusion of LGBT literature in those collections are a new phenomenon. A search for scholarly resources including “LGBT literature” and “collection development” in the Library & Information Science Source database only has 16 results, and those results only date back to 1996. While many academic library collections have a wealth of LGBT literature, both fiction and non-fiction, most of these articles focus on school and public libraries. These articles state that LGBT collections are woefully inadequate due to budget issues and community pushback (Antell, Strothmann, & Downey, 2013; Chapman & Birdi, 2016; Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, & Harris, 2013; Oltmann, 2016).

But if a library *does* have the information, how do people search for information regarding LGBT topics? Do their search terms, such as those used during a keyword search in a library OPAC, match any controlled vocabularies? Of course, these questions are near impossible

to answer. After all, not every person in the LGBT community uses the same language or terminology for how they experience sexual attraction and gender identity, and the language currently *en vogue* can change without warning, suddenly rendering old language at best obsolete and at worst offensive or oppressive. This old language, if solidified in controlled vocabulary, remains in use long after the community deems it harmful or incorrect. Often, librarians add language without consulting the community it represents. Many librarians have been analyzing and critiquing controlled vocabularies, particularly the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), since the 1970s. However, despite the many suggestions of better language, these suggestions, to the best of my knowledge, have little basis or are rarely based in empirical research.

Sanford Berman provided a critique of Library of Congress Subject Headings in his seminal work *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Headings Concerning People* in 1971 and reissued in 1993 (Berman, 1993). In this work, Berman analyzes subject headings within a type of social justice lens and suggests changes and additions to make these headings less offensive and more helpful to patrons. The book is separated into various chapters by topic, the one relevant to this work being “Man/Woman/Sex” which looks at sexist and homophobic headings. Since *Prejudices and Antipathies*, many other librarians (G. Campbell, 2004; Grant Campbell, 2000; Drabinski, 2013; Greenblatt, 1990; McClary & Howard, 2007; Olson, 2002; Roberto, 2011) have written books and articles pointing out bias in subject analysis and classification, especially relating to gender and sexuality. Like Berman’s, these analyses point out how subject headings reflect the oppressive biases of our society and reinforce them. Most of these analyses also go on to suggest additions or updates to the headings.

However, many of the analyses I have read have one thing in common: they suggest new terms or better terms based on their own analysis of subject headings, and not based on studies or previous research. Authors speak broadly about why the headings are bad within context, or might cite why they know the current heading is bad (Berman, 1993), but this type of anecdotal evidence is not empirical (even if it is helpful and valid) nor is it representative of a sample of research participants or data. Catalogers quite literally have the power to determine how their patrons access information (Olson, 2002), and that power is still in place even when suggesting “better” terminology; without researching how patrons are accessing these materials, these suggestions still come from a place of power over the patrons, instead of empowering their information seeking behaviors.

The aim of this study is to provide a comparison of Library of Congress Subject Headings and natural search language involving LGBT topics. I hypothesize that there are differences, especially relating to topics that fall under the less stable “queer” identity. By illustrating any differences or similarities, I provide a better foundation for librarians wanting to update, remove, and/or add new language to controlled vocabularies. I want the findings of this study to empower librarians and patrons alike and to inspire action within our profession.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine how patrons search for materials related to LGBT topics in a library catalog and how those searches compare to Library of Congress Subject Headings. As stated in my literature review, although librarians have pointed out the bias in LCSH and suggested new headings, these suggestions are rarely based on empirical research. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to begin to fill that research gap. The

population of this study is professors and other teaching and research faculty in Gender and Women's Studies and Queer Studies. The setting of this study is the library, whether in person or online. More specifically, the setting is the library catalog where these searches take place.

Research Questions

My two research questions in this study are as follows:

RQ1: How do patrons, both LGBT and otherwise, search for materials relating to LGBT topics? What terms do they use in search strings?

RQ2: How do these search terms compare to controlled vocabularies, such as Library of Congress Subject Headings? How do they address similar concepts?

Research question one covers both information needs and information seeking behaviors. Because I want to relate the information need to how participants search for that need, I use semi-structured interviews to put that language within a context. These questions are designed to ask for wording of concepts, which I discuss further in both my methodology section and my theory section. Research question two is narrowed to only Library of Congress Subject Headings for this study, and covers the analysis for this study. When I compare the participant terminology to that of Library of Congress Subject Headings, I am looking for both the syntactical and semantic differences, as well as connotation. Because of the nature and span of these research questions, this research acts as a pilot study, the first step of many future studies.

Rationale

This research is significant in that it studies a specific subset of information retrieval for LGBT topics. It also provides a sample of language that patrons use to retrieve this information,

which librarians can use when doing authority control. Although this study is not meant to act as literary warrant, it gives insight in to how people search for this information; therefore, people doing subject heading work will know what language to focus on and spend time trying to find literary warrant for that language.

To my knowledge, a study of this specific kind has not been done. As I discuss in the literature review, many people criticize LCSH for bias, and much has been published on information retrieval. However, I have been unable to find any studies that have combined the two regarding LGBT topics and concepts. My research begins to fill that gap.

Subject Access Research

Although most patrons search for non-known items using keyword searches, it is imperative for librarians to make those keyword searches more effective (Chercourt & Marshall, 2013). Since catalogers are being forced to spend less and less time making truly rich records, accurate and helpful subject analysis is key. Through subject language, we control the language with which patrons can use to access materials (Olson, 2002). Therefore, I chose subject access research to help librarians educate themselves and empower patrons, keeping their relative positions of power in mind.

Semi-Structured Interviews as a Research Tool

Semi-structured interviews allow for data to be collected within certain contexts, such as demographic information and information need. Semi-structured interviews are a form of qualitative research, which “express the assumptions of a phenomenological paradigm that there are multiple realities that are socially defined” (Firestone, 1987). Language is a construct and must exist with the society that creates and uses it. Therefore, it is imperative that I investigate

that context as well as the language itself. With other research tools, such as search log analyses, the data does not exist within these contexts and therefore risks being analyzed as empirical fact. This research tool also allows for follow up questions and comments to be made by either the research participants or by me to gather more information.

Assumptions

I assume that my research participants have done research on LGBT topics. I also assume that they use a library catalog for this research. Finally, I assume that they remember the language they use to search and that they remember the results of these searches.

Subjectivity Statement

Because this is interpretive research, I am including an interpretive statement about myself, as my interpretations and analyses exist in the context of my own experiences. First, I am a butch lesbian. What this means is that I am a woman-aligned person who is only attracted to and prioritize other people who are woman-aligned. I specifically say woman-aligned instead of woman, as it includes people who fall outside the gender binary or traditional gender roles (such as myself) but who align themselves with the experience of other women. By butch, I mean that I am masculine-of-center and reject the gender roles that were coercively assigned to me at birth. I reject patriarchal standards of beauty, and I reject the notion that I cannot be a woman if I do not conform to the gender roles associated with being a woman.

I am also a white woman, and I am therefore afforded all the privileges of being white, despite my efforts to support anti-racist action. Although I do my best to center non-white and non-Western people in my research and analysis, I probably make mistakes.

I am an educated person (despite being lower working class) who has a background in the humanities. I have a Bachelor of Arts in English, where I focused on literary and textual analysis of media. This type of analysis relies heavily on critical theories but in a way that views these theories as tools for analysis instead of empirical ways of knowing the world. I tend to favor postmodern theories, such as Derrida's deconstruction and various socialist interpretations of other theories, but modern and classical theories have a place in my analysis as well.

When I analyze my data, I have the biases of somebody who follows the gender and sexuality theories and experiences of people such as Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, and Leslie Feinberg. I view gender and sexuality as things that exist within socially constructed views of them. (While I believe that these ways of being have always existed, our way of understanding and naming them are fluid). I also tend to favor material reality and lived experience over simply claiming identity. This does not mean that I think identity is not valid, but where oppression is concerned, oppression largely exists based on how a person is perceived within society. I have changed how I identify my sexuality and gender throughout my life, but it has not really changed how others treat me.

Finally, I come into this research assuming that the Library of Congress does not have the best interests of the LGBT community in mind when creating these headings. I already have a bias against the Library of Congress and LCSH based on my own experiences.

My relationship to the research participants is that I do not know them, but they exist in a place of power over me in that they are all professors with higher terminal degrees. Although they have no say in my education, the simple fact that they have more experience in research than me is incredibly intimidating. I do not have the extensive research and education

backgrounds that these professors have, and that knowledge caused me to be nervous and self-doubting in interviews.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is its sample size. Because the sample size is so small, this study does not hold any valid statistical weight, and therefore the results do not hold weight within the larger conversation. One reason that the sample size is so small is due to the methodology used. Using some form of quantitative method would guarantee a larger statistical base in this study, but that would come at the cost of losing social context, as I discuss below.

Definitions

Because I realize that not all who read this will be members of the LGBTQ community or will know the terminology, I provide the following definitions of the terms in this paper:

- Lesbian: a woman-aligned person who only forms romantic and/or sexual relationships with other women-aligned people
- Gay: a man-aligned person who only forms romantic and/or sexual relationships with other men-aligned people
- Bisexual: a person of any gender identity who forms romantic and/or sexual relationships with two or more genders
 - Pansexual is included in this definition
- Trans: an umbrella term that covers those who do not identify as the gender they were coercively assigned at birth

- Although transsexual and transgender are technically different, many people still use them interchangeably
- Queer: Both an umbrella term for the community as well as a term people can use to identify their gender or sexuality, especially if it does not fit into any binary definition
- LGBTQ: The acronym I use for the community

Although many people use queer interchangeably with LGBTQ, in this paper I choose not to for several reasons, but mainly that it is still considered a slur by many, and therefore I do not want to force it on anyone against their will.

Some might notice the lack of letters within the acronym I use. Currently, the standard acronym is officially LGBTQ, as the community was formed based on how the members relate to gender in a white-supremacist heteronormative society, as well as how they have been oppressed similarly by existing systems. Some include intersex in this definition, but not all people who are intersex agree with that labelling, so I choose to exclude it. I also exclude two-spirit, as I am hesitant to label indigenous ways of experiencing gender and sexuality with a Western colonial viewpoint. This acronym and the definitions above are largely based from the terminology from National Gay and Lesbian Journalists Association Stylebook, as well as my own personal experience as a butch lesbian (“Terminology | Stylebook on LGBT issues,” n.d.).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This review covers two major areas: history of LGBT subject access and information retrieval from mid-20th century until present. With this literature review, I hope to show how subject access to LGBT materials has changed and how librarians have faced this issue. I also hope to show how this relates to the topic of information retrieval, particularly how questions are formed and formulated into search strings. Combined, these two areas affect how people access LGBT materials.

Literature About the History of LGBT Subject Access

In 1971, librarian Sanford Berman publishes his seminal work *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Headings Concerning People*. Berman lists 225 subject headings with guidelines for how to fix them. In this work, Berman analyzes subject headings within a type of social justice lens and suggests changes and additions to make these headings less offensive and more helpful to patrons. The book is separated into various chapters by topic, the one relevant to this work being “Man/Woman/Sex” which looks at sexist and homophobic headings. Berman criticizes the cross-referencing of *Homosexuality* and *Lesbianism* to the heading *Sexual perversion* and the “See also” entries of *Homosexuality* and *Lesbianism* from the heading *Sexual perversion*.

After Berman, other librarians continue to try to improve LGBT subject access. For this literature review the main text I focus on is Ellen Greenblatt’s book *Gay & Lesbian Library Service*, particularly her chapter titled “Homosexuality: the evolution of a concept in the Library of Congress subject headings” (1990). In this chapter, Greenblatt analyzes Library of Congress

Subject Headings that are specific to the concept of homosexuality, as well as detailing the history of certain terms. At the end of the chapter, she suggests new headings and changes to current headings. For instance, Greenblatt suggests that *Aged lesbians* be changed to *Senior lesbians*. She also suggests that terms such as *Coming out* be added. While Greenblatt's analysis differs from Berman's in that she provides a history and literary warrant for terms, her suggested terms *only* come from literary warrant and not from empirical research.

In 2002, James V. Carmichael focused on the growth of gay literature in the U.S. by searching for the headings "Homosexuality," "Gay men," and "Gays," in the OCLC WorldCat. His search covers three time periods: before Stonewall, pre-AIDS, and contemporary. He notes the inconsistency in how these terms are assigned, as well as differences concerning time periods. For instance, there are no strict rules for assigning "Gay men" versus "Gays," and that they seemed to be used interchangeably, although "Gays" can technically cover lesbians as well. For the new researcher, or even a librarian unfamiliar with these headings, these inconsistencies can make keyword and subject searches incredibly difficult.

Hilary Potts (2003) builds on Carmichael's article by comparing the Amazon Online Catalogue with the Library of Congress Catalogue and the British Library Catalogue. The comparisons involve simple demographic terms related to the LGBTQ community, such as "lesbian" and "gay." Potts also uses this comparison to investigate the usage of "gay" as an umbrella term to include lesbian topics; she also compares the ratio of books with the heading of "Homophobia" to the heading of "Child sex abuse," which in the United States unfortunately relates to "Christianity and homosexuality." Potts found that Amazon is much more likely to have up-to-date terminology and is also more likely to have correct "aboutness," especially when books that might only barely mention homosexuality are involved. Unfortunately, both the

Library of Congress and the British Library are slower to change than Amazon, and the language and “aboutness” of subject analysis reflect that.

Because of the increase in work similar to Berman’s being done by more and more librarians, Steven A. Knowlton (2005) tracks the changes made since Berman's publication in 1971. Of the headings that have not been changed, most of them concern or focus on the religion headings, which have a Christian bias. There are also still many headings that isolate and set aside women and LGBT people (for instance, no “Straight X” heading where there exists a “Gay X” heading). This shows that those who have control over LCSH have listened and do take changes into account, though there is of course always work to be done.

A few years later, Carrie McClary and Vivian Howard (2007) analyze how LGBT headings were assigned in Canadian public libraries. This article argues the point that, because LGBT users are less likely to seek help when locating materials, LGBT materials need to have thorough records to ensure findability in a library's OPAC. As stated in the abstract, "This study examines whether gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender-specific subject headings are being assigned to young adult and adult fiction in five urban Canadian public libraries, what these subject headings are, and how consistently they are applied." The study finds that more work needs to be done when cataloging these items, and that there is a discrepancy between YA titles and adult titles. This study also shows the influence and prevalence of LCSH, as they are also used outside the United States.

While subject headings influence how patrons interact with items when searching, the classification of items is still prevalent and affects the retrieval of items during browsing. Ben Christensen (2008) looked at the changes that have been implemented since Ellen Greenblatt published a study about subject terms related to gay and lesbian topics in 1990. Where this article

excels is Greenblatt's proposed changes, what the subject heading is now in LC, and the corresponding classification in LC. Although the terms used in LCC are not as evident to a patron, they still reveal bias and show how our society views the world. For instance, at the time of this article, there was no subject heading for Lesbian Separatism, nor was there a way to classify it, even though it's an important part of lesbian culture. (Luckily, this has been fixed, and now both a subject heading and classification.)

In the mid-2000s, authors start to focus more on identities that could be defined as queer, or that were not previously analyzed in depth as much as homosexuality and gayness. For example, trans identities take the forefront in how they are discussed and classified. Melissa Adler (2009) in particular compares the classification of trans identities in LCSH to folksonomies. To quote the author, “perhaps the greatest power of folksonomies, especially when set against controlled vocabularies like the Library of Congress Subject Headings, lies in their capacity to empower user communities to name their own resources in their own terms.” She notes both the strengths and weaknesses of these folksonomies, such as the tagging system in LibraryThing. Their strengths lie in the fact that they are quick to change and update, and they can be more flexible since they are not controlled; for identities that do not fit into a binary and refuse to be defined, this is key. However, that lack of control leads to inconsistencies and can encourage poor quality.

Matt Johnson (2010) provides a more in depth history of transgender subject access. His article details that LGBT collections used to use their own subject headings to avoid the harmful, biased ones from LC. But as the subject headings get better, they are moving away from that. An interesting point the article makes is that MARC records allow for multiple types of subject headings, which is a way to combine LCSH and institution-specific subject headings.

Jo Bates and Jennifer Rowley (2011) produce similar work to Adler by comparing LCSH to LibraryThing folksonomy. While they do not focus only on queer identities, their findings do note the differences between how queer people label themselves and how controlled vocabularies label them. This difference is particularly apparent semantically: identity words tend to be used as singular adjectives by people, such as “he is a gay man,” whereas in controlled vocabularies they tend to be plural nouns. This semantic difference can affect keyword and subject searching in library catalogs, especially when OPACs do not allow for wording that does not exactly fit what is in a record. Therefore, the semantics of controlled vocabularies matter just as much as the language used.

K.R. Roberto (2011) examines how, because of inaccurate and biased subject headings, catalogers unwillingly participate in the oppression of fluid identities, such as queer sexualities and genders. By trying to classify identities that are fluid and nature, the catalogers enforce strict rules about those identities. Catalogers also might not be aware of the nuance of queer identities, even if controlled language exists for them.

Finally, Emily Drabinski (2013) argues against controlling queer identities and putting the responsibility solely on catalogers. Although updating biased and harmful Library of Congress Subject Headings has been a powerful part of librarian activism, Drabinski argues that an approach informed by Queer Theory is more appropriate and constructive. Because subject headings relating to identity are always already biased and outdated, a Queer Theory perspective that acknowledges that identities are contextual and shifting is more apt. She also encourages reference librarian and other public service librarians to become more familiar with these headings and how they reinforce oppressive systems; this way they can better teach patrons how to interact with these headings. Campbell (2000) came to a similar conclusion. He examines

different types of queer texts and theories and applies them to subject analysis. He brings up the "aboutness" of texts, but also acknowledges that the identities discussed in these texts might be constructed or viewed in different ways, therefore making the "aboutness" difficult and more fluid.

Literature About Information Seeking and Retrieval

Information seeking and retrieval is an enormous field with many facets. For my research, I focus on how an information need is formulated into a question, how that question is formulated into a search string, and how that search string interacts with the information system (library catalog). When patrons have to translate their information need into a question and then search in a library catalog, much gets lost in translation. In interactions with a librarian, this loss of information is mitigated through an extensive reference interview. However, library catalogs are nowhere near sophisticated enough to perform such a reference interaction.

Robert S. Taylor was a pioneer in information retrieval particularly the question asking process. In his 1962 article "The Process of Asking Questions" (Taylor, 1962), he discusses the area of the question--its generation, its relation to the retrieval system, and its effect on the inquirer. Taylor outlines four levels of question formation: the actual, but unexpressed, need for information; the conscious within-brain description of the need; the formal statement of the question; and the question as presented to the information system. Although all four levels are related and important, the latter two are particularly of interest to this study. Taylor goes on to analyze how an inquirer's state of readiness affects how they interact with the information system and the available answers.

Taylor then analyzes this process and how it applies to libraries in his article “Question-Negotiation and Information Seeking in Libraries” (1968). Taylor mainly focuses on the interaction between the inquirer (library patron) and the intermediary (reference librarian). When developing a question in a library setting, not only does the patron have to formulate their information need into a question, but if they seek help from the reference librarian, they must develop their questions through four levels of need, referred to here as the visceral, conscious, formalized, and compromised needs. In their pre-search interview with an information-seeker the reference librarian attempts to help them arrive at an understanding of their “compromised” need by determining: (1) the subject of their interest; (2) their motivation; (3) their personal characteristics; (4) the relationship of the inquiry to file organization; and (5) anticipated answers. Taylor concludes that research is needed into the techniques of conducting this negotiation between the user and the reference librarian. I argue that the information-seekers of LGBT topics have the added problem of formulating that need to a librarian who might not understand the related terminology.

Jerry R. Byrne (1975) investigates the merits of searching titles, subject headings, abstracts, keywords, and combinations of these elements in a bibliographic database. In general, the results obtained from the experiments indicate that, as expected, titles alone are not satisfactory for efficient retrieval. For optimal retrieval, Byrne finds that a combination of title and abstract is most effective. In a standard library catalog, this would translate to title and then a keyword search that picks up information from summary and note fields. However, as stated by Mina Chercourt and Lauren Marshall in their article “Making Keywords Work: Connecting Patrons to Resources Through Enhanced Bibliographic Records” (2013) most cataloging librarians are not normally given the time or resources to make records rich enough for keyword

searches to be effective enough to replace subject access. Until it can be guaranteed that all records have the same quality and richness, subject access is a necessity.

Esther E. Horne (1983) develops a methodological study which investigates how research questions are formed from information needs. Horne uses library and information science students as her research participants and has them read murder mysteries. As they read, they are supposed to generate questions to help them solve the murder mystery. Her hypothesis states that the number of generated questions varies inversely as the data input varies. To quote the author, “the results of the statistical analysis support the indicated trend to decreasing questioning activity as the data input rose.” Although this information does not relate directly to my research, it is important to see how questions are generated from research needs, and how that question formation varies depending on the information need and data inputs. The information need and research question of a professor who specializes in queer theory might differ greatly from those of an undergraduate student taking her first course in feminist theory, for instance. Information need affects the question generation, which in turn affects the search string.

Ingrid Hsieh-Yee highlights this exact point in her article “Effects of search experience and subject knowledge on the search tactics of novice and experienced searchers” (1993). This study investigates the effects of subject knowledge and search experience on novices' and experienced searchers' use of search tactics in online searches. Results show that subject knowledge interacted with search experience, and both variables affected searchers' behavior. Particularly, subject knowledge only becomes a dividing factor after other types of search experience are gained, such as ability to monitor the search and use related terms. These findings lead me to conclude that a high school student who has deep knowledge of LGBTQ topics might have more trouble searching for these topics than a college professor who is not a member of the

community and does not research these topics, simply because the college professor has more search experience in general.

Eduard Hoenkamp and Peter Bruza (2015) bring up the importance of considering everyday language for information retrieval. They mention that with mobile and wearable technology, the ability and practicality of users typing long search strings is decreasing. They therefore devise an IR algorithm that accepts everyday language. For librarians and those doing authority control, the consideration of everyday language can greatly increase findability and even circulation of materials. We should also consider OPACs that have similar algorithms and functionality to accept everyday language for library searches. For searches for LGBT materials, this functionality would allow a broader range of vocabulary, allowing for the easier access to materials about queer identities which do not fit into our notion of controlled vocabularies. These everyday language algorithms would also allow for typos and different semantic configurations (of which I have already addressed the importance).

Conclusion

To summarize, in this literature review I have shown a broad overview of the writing and analysis on the subjects of LGBT subject access and information retrieval. Although there exists a rich history of writings on subject access, and LGBT subject access in particular, I have shown that writings attached to a study in order to determine better language are not abundant. I have also related LGBT subject access to the subject of information retrieval in that question formation from an information need affects how patrons interact with information systems (such as catalogs or even reference librarians). Together, these areas demonstrate that the concept or question a patron has in mind relating to LGBT topics affects how they search for those topics,

and therefore librarians must investigate how that question formation happens. For reference librarians, this means investigating that language within the context of a reference interview. For cataloging librarians, this means the language of subject access should take into account the language our patrons use.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

For subjects as sensitive and loaded as this, it is crucial to analyze epistemology, theories, and methodologies. My research aims to empower; therefore, I keep in mind my position as a white, mostly-able bodied, cis woman when considering my theoretical framework and methodology. In particular, I try not to replicate colonial and white supremacist ways of knowledge, and choose instead to privilege the ways of knowing of those oppressed (Paris & Winn, 2014).

I frame my research and my ways of knowing through several modern and postmodern critical theories. These theories mainly exist in a linguistic context, as my research involves the language used to describe concepts. By allowing several critical theories and praxes to coincide in my theoretical framework, I allow a conversation and tension between them, but I also allow them to build on one another. For instance, queer theory exists in the context of post-structuralism, a continuation and replacement of structuralism.

My methodology is an extension of my theoretical framework. Because of the nature of my research questions, I chose a qualitative approach for this study, as I want to put my data in context. I conducted four semi-structured interviews, and then transcribed and coded those interviews. Finally, I took the data from coding and compared it to existing Library of Congress Subject Headings.

Theoretical Framework

Several critical theories and methods inform how I analyze my results, as well as guide the types of questions I ask and how I ask them. Because this study intersects largely with

linguistics, linguistic theories of how our language represents concepts are crucial to this study. Structuralism informs how I ask my questions. However, several post-structuralism theories and methods guide more how I analyze my results and my call for further action.

Structuralism

Structuralism was an intellectual movement which argued that many aspects of culture are defined by their relation to other things, thus their structure. This way of relating aspects of culture comes from structural linguistics. Structural linguistics was generally started by Ferdinand de Saussure through a compilation of his notes and lectures titled *Course on General Linguistics* (Saussure, 1959). In this work, de Saussure gives an overview of how we relate to and use language. Of his theories, the most relevant to my research is the arbitrariness of language, as well as signs (semiology). In structural linguistics, a sign is the joining of two elements, called the signifier and the signified. The signified is what is represented by an oral sound, called the signifier. For instance, when I say “cat,” that utterance signifies the animal that we in English call a cat. However, there is nothing inherent about this animal that makes it a “cat.” It is a cat because we say it is a cat; this concept refers to the arbitrariness of language. That is, the sounds we choose as signifiers are arbitrary.

This theory applies to my research in that my focus is on the difference between how the signifiers in controlled vocabularies differ from those that patrons use when searching. Although the signified in a search might be the same, the signifier is different. This difference makes searches not as efficient or even makes them return no relevant results.

Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism, as its name denotes, is the term applied to a variety of theories and methods which came after the structuralism of the early to mid-20th century. These theories are in themselves direct relation to structuralism in that they challenge the notions put forth by structuralism. Although these theories are loosely related, a common theme is that they challenge how structure defines culture and language, and they challenge the notion of binary oppositions and hierarchies in that structure.

Deconstruction

One of the main and defining movements of post-structuralism is philosopher Jacques Derrida's method of deconstruction (Derrida, 1976). While not a theory, deconstruction works with and against previous critical theories, and many theories after incorporate it. A major thing to keep in mind when performing deconstruction is the etymology and meaning of words; deconstruction encourages very close reading, and allows the reader to unpack meaning endlessly from a text. One of the key points in deconstruction that allows for this close reading is Derrida's concept of *différance*, which plays on the French words for "to differ" and "to defer;" the word also sounds the same as another French word, but looks different when spelled out.

This difference between the written word and spoken word is key to the concept of *différance*, and is also important to this study. de Saussure's structural linguistics only focuses on spoken utterances of signs, while Derrida rejects that hierarchy and privileges the written word. For my study, this applies to the fact that searches happen in a written or typed context, even if they begin orally with a librarian. For instance, a patron can approach a reference desk with a reference question, and then that research question is dissected and turned into a search string.

This instance brings up the “to defer” portion of *différance*. The meaning, the concept, that the patron is trying to find is constantly deferred and postponed through search strings, key words, and controlled vocabularies. Also, the structural sign (the spoken word) must be made into a written word before it can be searched. Therefore, the binary of signifier and signified is further complicated. *Différance* also denies binary oppositions and hierarchies in general, allowing the reader to privilege something that is usually Othered.

A final key aspect of deconstruction that is relevant to my research is the concept that there is no final meaning or final way of analysis, and therefore there is no stability of meaning. A controlled vocabulary attempts to make stable that which through deconstruction is always already unstable. Derrida talks about this phenomenon with two fundamental concepts, that of *supplément* and *dissémination*. The first refers to how the written word always has excess and always says more than it says. The latter refers to the multiplicity of meaning in language, and how there is never a final result.

Queer Theory

The denial of any stability of meaning is a key aspect in queer theory. Queer theory is a post-structuralist theory which applies deconstruction to gender and sexuality, and how they act through history (Jagose, 1996). Although queer theory is a rich and varied set of theories, the aspect most important to my research is how it applies the deconstructionist denial of the stability of meaning to identity. In queer theory, identity is socially constructed and rooted in a historical time and place. Identity is also not stable and can be fluid. What we call a “lesbian” has not always been as it is now in 2016, and to apply it to somebody before the 20th century is inaccurate. And by trying to control the language we use for queer sexualities and genders, we

force a false stability of meaning which is simply not there. Although I understand the importance of controlled vocabularies, it is important to understand how they interact with queer identities (Drabinski, 2013; Johnson, 2010).

Methodology

A qualitative methods approach is employed for this research. I collected data through a series of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. This research was approved by the IRB at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These interviews contain at least 10 questions and last approximately 30 to 60 minutes each; because the interviews are semi-structured, I ask further questions based on the responses given by participants. These questions can be found at the end of this paper. Interviews were transcribed and coded to pull out specific language and reasons for comparison.

I chose a qualitative approach for this study because this research deals with concepts and wording rather than numerical data. It also allows for this data to be framed within a context, rather than privileging the data as empirical fact regardless of context.

Criteria for Selection of Research Participants

All faculty/professors in Gender and Women's Studies were contacted for selection. I chose faculty and professors in this department because they have experience searching for topics relating to sexuality and gender. I sent emails to all professors instead of just select professors so that I could get as large a sample size as possible. All who agreed to be interviewed were selected. No subjects disagreed to be recorded. All subjects were decided by me, based on agreement to be interviewed and ability to work with my schedule.

Data Privacy Concerns

The privacy of the data collected and those from whom it is collected is of the upmost importance to me. The data collected about participants is always volatile, but regarding identities which can serve to be the object of oppression by society and employers is even more so. I keep everything on my personal laptop encrypted, and I take several measures to keep my browsing habits and other online activity anonymous or otherwise private/secure. For my regular browser (Firefox), I force secure connections and disable all third-party tracking and ads.

I keep much of my documents and data in my University of Illinois Box account, which is only accessible through my netID and Active Directory Password, which only I know the latter. I also keep all my passwords in a locked password management software, to which only I know the password and the key. This system does not connect to the internet. When requested, an extra layer of encryption was added to email correspondence.

Data was collected through audio recordings using digital recorders. This data is confidential, in that all identifying information (except for University and Department) is removed or generalized. Interviews are coded with a participant number, and there is no name-to-number key. Transcripts and audio files were kept on my personal computer, with physical copies kept in a locked cabinet on campus in the office of the adviser of this research. Consent forms were signed digitally, then printed and kept a locked file box in the office of the adviser.

Data Gathering and Analysis Procedures

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, recorded on a digital audio recorder or my laptop when a recorder was not available. As stated, questions were designed to

examine the language that participants used to search for concepts. I then analyzed (discussed in more detail below) the answers of the research participants to find the specific terms used for searching. Data was analyzed through transcription and coding, and that coding was compared to existing Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) through both a subject heading search and a keyword search and Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT) through a keyword search; the reason for not also doing a subject heading search for LCDGT was that hundreds of unrelated terms would come up. These searches were done in Classification Web.

Research Population

Research participants were chosen from the Gender and Women's Studies department at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. They had to be some type of research faculty, including graduate students who teach, affiliated with the department. I chose scholars who do research on LGBT topics because I want to highlight how even the language that scholars use often differs from LCSH. This begs the question: if their language does not match, how can we be sure that LCSH will serve the needs of students?

Determination of Sample Size

Since this is a pilot study, I chose a small sample size of between 5 and 10 participants. This size was chosen mainly because of the difficulty in finding research participants and the time needed to transcribe and code interviews.

Coding of Interview Transcriptions

Transcript codes highlight four areas of answers to questions in relation to search terms and search habits: strategy, reason, type, and term. These codes, such as SearchStrategy, are applied to specific terms within the transcribed interviews or to phrases. Most transcript codes are indicated by specific questions that require terminology as an answer.

The type of coding used in my research is referred to as in vivo coding. This type of coding is the “practice of assigning a label to a section of data, such as an interview transcript, using a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data” (Given, 2008b). In vivo coding helps to privilege and analyze language and terminology used by research participants. It also helps to ensure that the data stays as close as possible to the language used by research participants. In vivo coding is related to grounded theory methodology in that the coding does not come from wider literature or interpretation but instead from the research participants (Given, 2008a).

Chapter 4: Research Results and Comparison of Terms

Introduction

Through four semi-structured interviews, I gathered data about the demographics, searching habits, search terms, and relevancy of search results from Gender and Women's Studies professors at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These interviews were recorded, then transcribed and coded. However, the audio of the interview conducted with research participant 2 was not loud enough to transcribe and code, and any reference to that interview comes from my own memory. Research participants are labeled using P for participant and a number indicating the order I in which I interviewed them.

The data gathered from these interviews show the variety of language used when doing research on LGBT topics, as well as the variety of searching habits of research participants. As the results show, these professors rarely use the online public access catalog of our library and instead begin their research in other venues.

And despite the discrepancy I show between their language and the language used by the Library of Congress, research participants stated that they rarely do not find what they are looking for. Although they might not find information during their first search, their skills and experience as researchers allows them to alter their search strategies to eventually find resources. However, novice researchers might not yet have this skill set, and therefore it is still important to investigate the language used in controlled vocabularies.

Demographics

I asked each research participant their sexuality, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. These demographics can influence not only the language participants use to search but also their

search habits and experience. Of the four research participants, only one identified as straight, with the other three identifying as some sort of woman-loving-women identity such as lesbian. All four participants identified as women. Two participants identified as white, with one identifying with her Latina ethnicity and one identifying as Asian American. All four identified their socioeconomic status somewhere within the middle class, with one saying that she felt she belonged somewhere between working class and middle class due to her upbringing and the fact that she must work more than one job, despite having a PhD.

All four participants are researchers and professors at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, either in Gender and Women's Studies or in adjacent fields. They all have extensive research experience in their fields and can conduct searches with enough skill to find what they need.

Search Habits

After asking demographic questions, I asked each research participant how she identifies an LGBT topic. Although each research participant gave different answers based on how they situate themselves within the discourse, they all agreed that LGBT topics might not need to necessarily be about the experiences and lives of LGBT people. LGBT topics, according to the research participants, can in fact be adjacent topics. P3 gave the example of hate crime statistics. While hate crimes happen to other demographic groups, members of the LGBT community could also be interested in those broad statistics because hate crimes also happen to the LGBT community.

I then asked the research participants where they begin their searches when searching for what they consider an LGBT topic. None of the research participants start by going to the

University of Illinois' VuFind library catalog. Some participants start their searches by doing background research, either through consulting bibliographies or works about the topic (P1, P4); they might even consult works broadly related to the topic they need to search, such as looking at works about Oscar Wilde (P1). Research participants will also consult others in their field or in the field they are searching to get an idea of who is writing in that field. P4 cited that she relies heavily on the women's studies librarian and the University's other subject specialist libraries to help get her started when researching a new topic. P3 also preferred databases such as Google Scholar and PubMed for her research and that she only went into the actual catalog to get documents from searches done in those other databases.

In fact, all research participants only approached the library catalog when they either had the title, author, or recommended subject term for the search. The participant who cited using the librarians for help felt very comfortable using the catalog (P4), but she preferred going into the stacks physically when looking for print monographs and journals. She prefers this experience because she likes the serendipity of discovery than can come with browsing:

So I do think there's also something with, you go to look for a book, you know the title, you know the author, you go up, and you look around, you see what's around you. and then you can pull stuff too. So that fact that it's organized in a way that things are going to be next to each other, I also think that's really helpful, and I always encourage students to not just stay in the database, actually get to the library and experience touching the book and looking at what's around it. I think that's important too. So you'll find stuff, you're like I didn't even know that was a book! (P4)

With this quotation, the participant brings up the relationship between subject access and classification and how subject access also affects browsing. Because she knows that books are

categorized in such a way that similar books are near one another, she knows that browsing is another viable search strategy that might get around any awkwardness and difficulty when searching in a database or online catalog.

I also asked research participants what their preferred search type was, and whether they tended to do keyword or subject searches more often. Most said keyword, but for those who said subject, I am not sure if they knew that subject searches require knowledge of a controlled vocabulary. When research participants did not use a keyword search, they would use a known author or title search. This illustrates that participants again do not approach the catalog unless they know what they are looking for, and that in fact they do the bulk of their research before going into the library catalog itself.

Search Terms

After the search habit questions, I asked questions designed to discover what terms research participants associate with specific topics when searching. I asked questions for six concepts that align with various demographic groups in the LGBT community: men who are only attracted to men, women who are only attracted to women, people who are attracted to two or more genders, people who are attracted to any gender, people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, and a community of people who fit into any of these categories.

Table of All Terms Used by Research Participants

	Men who are only attracted to men	Women who are only attracted to women	People who are attracted to two or more genders	People who are attracted to any gender	People who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth	A community of people who fit into any of these categories
P1	Homosexual Queer Gay Fairy Fag	Lesbian <i>Tribade</i> <i>Femme à femme</i>	Bisexual Pansexual	Bisexual Pansexual	Transgender Transsexual	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Queer The Queer Community LGBTQ LGBT
P2						
P3	Gay Queer LGBT	Lesbian LGBT	Bisexual Bi LGBT	Pansexual	Transgender	LGBT LGBTQIA
P4	Men who are only attracted to men MLM Gay men	Women who are only attracted to women Lesbian Lesbian AND Queer	People who are attracted to two or more genders Bisexual Gender identity Multiple genders	People who are attracted to two or more genders Trans Trans* Transgender	People who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth Transgender	LGBT “Community” with lesbian, gay, etc. Queer Community Same-sex Femme Butch Alternative sexualities Latinx

Table 1

For men who are only attracted to men, all participants use some sort of variation on the term gay, whether gay by itself or gay men. Most participants viewed the term gay as an umbrella term (even if they did not agree with that) and thought that starting broader is usually better. Unless participants were doing medical or otherwise historic research, they did not use the term homosexual as they knew its negative and violent past in the community, as it was used to

medicalize and harm gay men and women. One research participant also cited that she would probably try the phrase “men who love men” and its variations (such as the acronym mlm) as a keyword search, just to see what happens.

For women who are only attracted to women, all participants use lesbian and might use other terms depending on their discipline. One participant cited that she also uses foreign language terms like *femme à femme* due to the nature of her research. Research participants noted that lesbian is somehow more specific than gay or gay men because of the umbrella effect of the term gay. One research participant also noted that she feels that more works exist on the subject of lesbianism and the lesbian experience:

Maybe because I think about it more. Maybe because I think that women are making more of an effort to write about that? And also, I just did a lecture last week on the social construction of sexuality, and so this idea of how in a sex and gender system, of course compulsory heterosexuality is a part of that system, that men and women are socialized differently and so the idea of, the way we develop emotional intimacy is very different, and so I think getting to know oneself through writing... And so I do think that plays a role in what we write and how we write about ourselves, and I think because of the archive of lesbian activism and scholarship, I would make a positive assumption and guess some money that there'd be more writings about that because women I think have been more apt to write about it as a way of resistance and as a way of knowing oneself, rather than men are doing that in public and they're not writing about it because they're doing it. (P1)

As the comparison of terms will show, while this assumption might be correct, more subject and demographic terms exist for gay and gay men, probably because those terms seem to act as an umbrella while also referring to a specific form of homosexual attraction.

While most participants could expand on the reason for their search terms for the first two concepts and felt confident in those terms, the rest of the terms produced very straightforward answers, even if those answers were uncertain. I think one reason for this is the fact that I forced participants to think of terms they would use to search for both the attraction to multiple genders and the attraction to any gender; in current community discourse, I have seen people argue that there is no distinction between those two and that the assumption that the first way of attraction is transphobic is itself misunderstanding the attraction. However, as I do not fall in those categories of attraction (as stated, I am a lesbian and do not experience multi-gender attraction) I cannot speak on that discourse. All participants cited the limitations of the term bisexual and how they feel it upholds our Western gender binary and that they would also use the term pansexual for searching. Most participants would use both terms for both types of multi-gender attraction to make sure they do the most comprehensive search possible.

Participants also shared the same search term for people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth but expressed concern that they knew it would probably be the only term that would garner any results. For this concept, participants use the term transgender and only use transsexual if they are looking for materials on the specific act of medical transition. However, participants worried that transgender would not cover all ways of not conforming to gender and sometimes would also use terms like trans and trans* and terms like femme, butch, and boi. One participant also stated that she might search the term Latinx which is specific to the Latino/Latina community and studies.

Finally, I asked how people would search for a community of people who fall into these categories. Many participants would actually repeat language from other searches but with “community” attached in addition to searching for common community terms like LGBT, LGBTQ, and queer. As the comparison will show, none of these common community terms exist in the Library of Congress controlled vocabularies.

Very rarely did research participants cite only one term they would use for these concepts, and if they did, they would cite how frustrating that was. Participants also cited that the language they would use to search for any of these concepts would change depending on the nature of their research and disciplines. This way of searching poses a problem where controlled vocabularies are concerned, as there should only be one controlled term for all ways of referring to a subject. However, most participants were using multiple terms when doing keyword searches, especially in databases, and these can be successful if that language appears in the item records. By using multiple terms when doing keyword searches, it is more likely that terminology used by research participants is also used by the Library of Congress. In the next section, I will discuss this comparison between research participant terminology and Library of Congress terminology.

Comparison of Terms to Library of Congress Subject Headings

After interviews were completed, I transcribed each interview and coded that interview. As stated in my methodology, I used in vivo coding, which privileges the language used by research participants and allows the researcher to analyze that language. Through coding the interviews, I pulled out the most common terms used for each of my language questions and did searches within the Classification Web system; I use this system as opposed to

authorities.loc.gov because it allows more ways of searching and allows the user to search specifically for demographic group terms. I did not search each term used by each participant because some terms, such as the foreign language terms used by research Participant 1, are discipline-specific. Although my small sample size cannot represent a general population, I want to highlight terms that I think are most common within the LGBT community and those that would be used by those not within the community. For example, when I performed searches using variants of the acronym, the same results were returned.

First, I took the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, and LGBT and searched the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Classification Web allows the user to search for subject headings (a left-aligned search) and keywords, as well as other types of subject headings. I searched each term as a subject heading, and then I searched each term as a keyword. The subject heading results are left-aligned and alphabetical and only include headings with the search term at the beginning of the heading. Subject heading searches also include cross listings and Use Fors, which are not headings in and of themselves. Keyword heading results are expanded to show Use For headings and other cross listings and show headings that include headings that have the search term elsewhere in the heading, even if it is not the first word of the heading. Keyword searches also include cross listings and Use Fors, like subject heading searches.

The search term gay gives 381 results as a subject heading search and 456 results as a keyword search. These headings include the demographic terms (discussed below) but also include headings such as Gay accommodations and Gay detectives. It also includes the heading Gays as well as Gay men. The search term lesbian gives 175 results as a subject heading search

and 180 results as a keyword search. These headings include the demographic terms (discussed below) but also include headings such as Lesbian librarians and Lesbian separatism.

The search term bisexual gives 48 results as a subject heading search and 47 results as a keyword search. The search term pansexual gives 0 results for both kinds of searches. The results for bisexual include demographic terms (discussed below) but also terms like Bisexual college students. The Library of Congress does not include any terms for the word pansexual, nor do any headings redirect from it as a Use For. The search term transgender gives 46 results as a subject heading search and 48 results as a keyword search. The search term transsexual gives 30 results as a subject heading search and 28 results as a keyword search. The results include demographic terms (discussed below) as well as other terms.

The search term queer gives 3 results as a subject heading search and 5 results as a keyword search. These results do not include demographic group terms but do include the heading Queer theory. The search term LGBT gives 7 results as a subject heading search and 6 results as a keyword search. These results include demographic group terms and other headings, but most of these are cross listings.

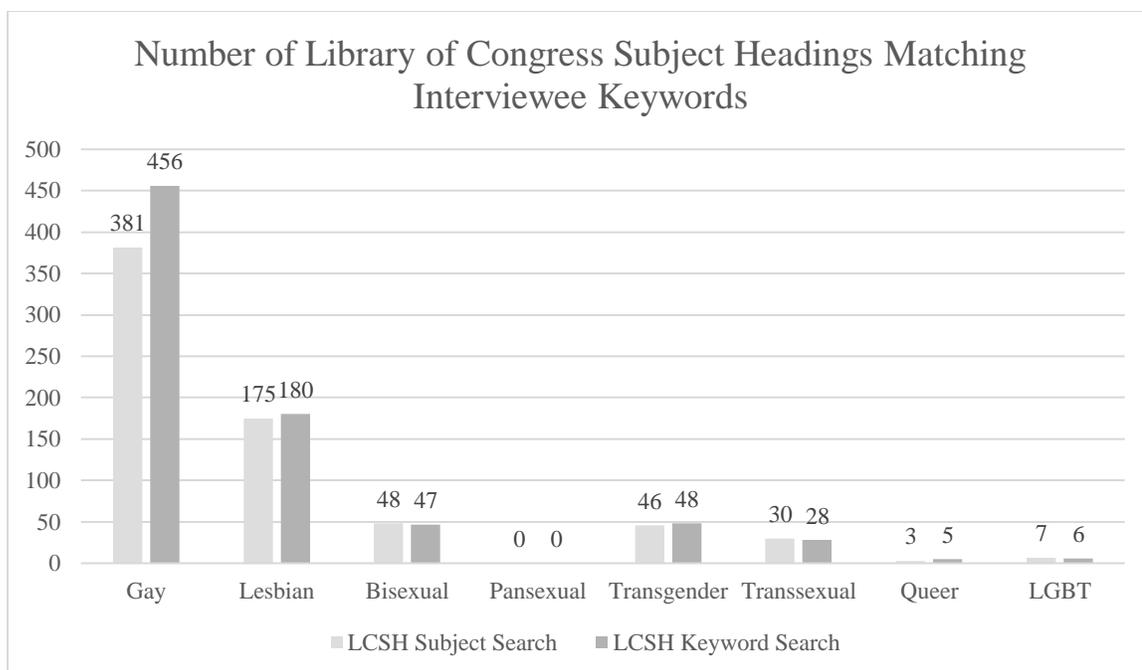


Figure 1

The second search type I did was a demographic group term search. Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT) are subject headings, but Classification Web allows users to search from them separately. Demographic group terms act as broad terms for an entire demographic of people. For the search, I only did a keyword search; this is because a subject heading search includes hundreds of unrelated headings for each term.

The search term gay gives 6 results. These results include the terms Gays and Gay men, as well as other terms like Conversion therapy patients. There are no scope notes for the headings Gays and Gay men to dictate how they are different or how they should be assigned. The search term lesbian only gives 1 result, the subject heading Lesbians. The search term bisexual also only gives 1 result, the subject heading Bisexuals. Pansexual gives 0 results. The search term transgender gives 2 results, and the search term transsexual gives 1 result. Like with Gays and Gay men, there are no scope notes for these headings to dictate how they are different or how they should be assigned. The search term queer gives 0 results, while the search term LGBT

gives 2 results. The results for LGBT do not include LGBT in the actual heading but instead are the cross listed headings Gender minorities and Sexual minorities.

These comparisons illustrate not only the difference between common language for these terms but also the lack of authority control and equity between terms. Headings about gay men vastly outnumber headings about any other demographic, even though research participants gave several terms for each question asked. There exists just as much variety and nuance when speaking about issues of gender identity as when speaking about the issues of gay men.

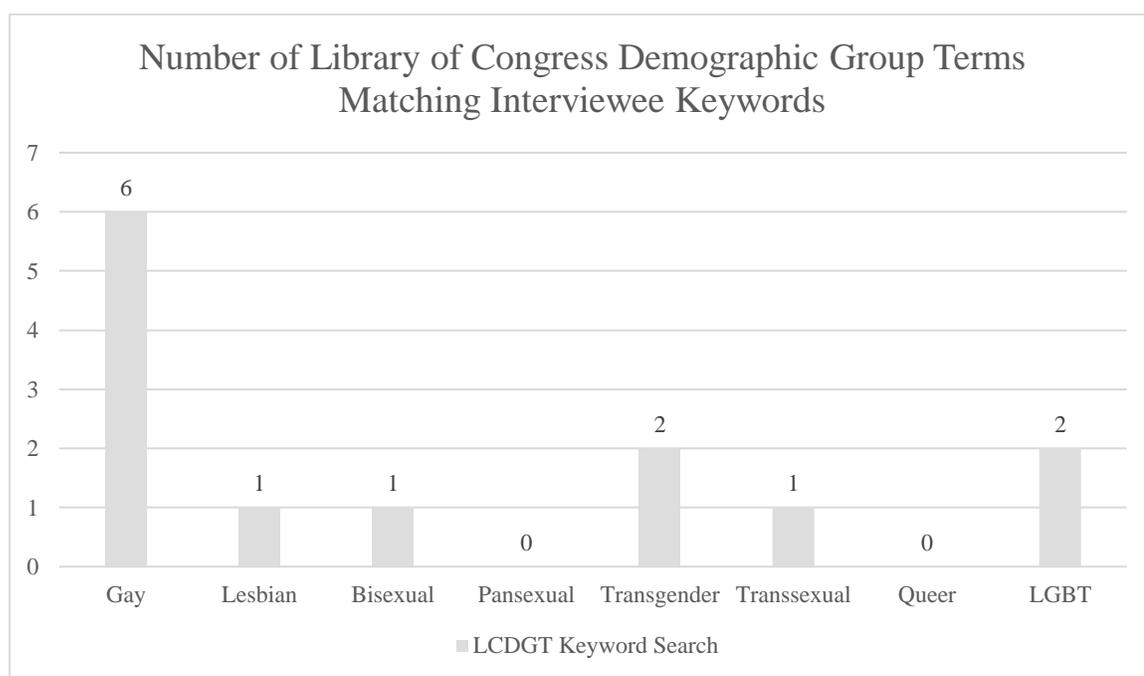


Figure 2

Relevancy of Searches and Subject Headings

After asking for the search terms that participants use for these concepts, my final questions were about the relevancy of search results and the familiarity the participants had with subject headings. Despite the discrepancy of some search terms to subject headings, participants

generally felt satisfied with the results of their searches. If participants were unsatisfied, it was largely due to research and writings on LGBT topics not existing in their disciplines, or the search terms they used were too discipline specific when doing a subject search (but not a keyword search). Rarely did participants not find anything or get zero search results; if this did happen, it was again largely due to trends within their disciplines and not the search terms. Research participants also cited not being frustrated because they are experienced-enough researchers to know that you do not find what you need right away and that searching is a deeply involved process that includes consulting materials outside of catalog and database searches.

Conclusion

Further research into this area should take research experience into account, as the results of this research study show that even though this discrepancy in language exists, research participants do not cite feeling frustrated when searching as they have enough experience to know how to alter their search strategy. Novice researchers might not yet have this skill set or knowledge. If these novice researchers know to ask their librarians, that could help cancel out any lack of knowledge or skill set, but as I have previously stated, many patrons who belong to the LGBT community might feel more library anxiety as they also face the threat of homophobia from librarians and library patrons.

These conclusions show that, despite the privilege of my research participants, my research has implications for various library services and policies, and this research should be complemented by further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

My results and the implications of those results very much depend on how I analyze the data, and the implicit biases I have. The following results are not meant to be empirical, nor are they meant to represent every patron at every library. With these results and their implications, I simply mean to show that my research demonstrates a discrepancy between language and how that affects other areas of resource discovery.

The results show that a discrepancy exists, which implies that librarians need to do more work to combat the power imbalance inherent in the act of cataloging and subject access. However, a problem occurs when the language used by communities refuses to be controlled. How must librarians improve subject access when by definition some language cannot be used in our vocabulary? A problem also occurs when certain language is used differently depending on who you ask. A problem that librarians have created is the lack of disambiguation of certain terms, which causes confusion when assigning subject headings.

Finally, I show how the results affect other areas of librarianship outside of cataloging. First, I stress the importance of reference librarians and other public services librarians becoming involved with this complicated issue as they are the ones who work most intimately with patrons through instruction and reference interviews. I then go on to show how these results affect the design of our integrated library systems and public catalogs.

I encourage the continuation of this research, either by myself or by others, and I encourage different and mixed methods and demographic groups.

Results of Research and What They Mean

The results of my research answer my second research question: a discrepancy exists between the language people use when searching for various LGBT topics and the language used by the Library of Congress to control subject access to these topics. As discussed in Hope A. Olson's seminal work *The Power to Name* (2002), cataloging librarians quite literally control how patrons access materials through the language we use to control subject access. Not only does this limit subject access by forcing patrons to use certain language in order to find materials, but it also reflects how the Library of Congress and librarians view these subjects. If there are no headings or cross listed headings for the identity pansexual, however contested the identity and language may be, then what does that say about how the Library of Congress views works created about this identity? Is this body of research not important or valid enough for literary warrant?

The results also show that, while many headings exist for most of these terms and identities, scope notes are not in place to dictate how they should be assigned. This poses a problem for subject access because not every cataloging librarian is going to know the many intricacies and nuances of terms like transgender and transsexual and how they differ. A bigger problem exists with the headings and demographic terms Gays and Gay men, as these also do not include scope notes for usage. Are librarians supposed to know that Gays is an umbrella term? Does the Library of Congress even consider it an umbrella term? What exactly is it an umbrella term for? Is it only for homosexual identities such as lesbian and gay? When there is no instruction for usage or definition, redundancies in subject access occur, as well as inaccurate subject analysis. One purpose of subject analysis is collocation of similar materials for shelf browsing as well as subject access in online catalogs. With the confusion between these

somewhat similar terms, materials may not be in the correct place on the shelf, which limits access and item-level findability.

Another discrepancy found in the data is the difference in terms for the community. All participants would use some variation of the LGBT acronym as a search term for the community; however, no demographic group term exists using any variation of that acronym. The only terms that do use a variation of the acronym are terms such as LGBT History Month. Not even LGBT pride events are controlled using that language. Instead, there is a heading for Gay pride and similar events. The acronym has been in use for years and is generally well-known in the United States. There should be no reason that it is not used as a demographic group term for the community. Instead, the main community terms are Sexual minorities and Gender minorities.

These terms are problematic for a few reasons. The first reason is that these terms are not in the common parlance as terms for the LGBT community. Some attempts in recent years to change the community term have included these terms (such as the acronym GSM for Gender/Sexual Minorities), but those are only barely known within the LGBT community. Sexual minorities and Gender minorities are not well-known terms, nor are they used by even scholars in the discipline to search for items. The other reason these terms are problematic is that they make assumptions about having a sexual or gender identity not considered “normative.” By using “minority” as a qualifier in these headings, the Library of Congress is assuming that people who identify in these ways are a statistical minority, or the Library of Congress is conflating “minority” with “marginalized.” Although conflating minority with marginalized is common in political discourse, it is not always accurate. For instance, women are a marginalized and oppressed group but make up the majority of the population. Statistical minorities can and do

hold power over statistical majorities, and therefore it does not quite get at the heart of why the identities of the LGBT community are together in the community.

The Problem with Queer

The final discrepancy between the language used by research participants and the language used by the Library of Congress is the use of the term queer. Queer is a tricky word even within the LGBT community. Originally a slur, queer was reclaimed by the community as a word of power and as a way to protest assimilation politics of mainstream gay rights organizations. Queer also goes against and challenges binary ways of understanding gender and sexuality. Queer refuses to be pinned down, refuses to be controlled, refuses to be defined. Even if one experiences their gender and sexuality in a “straightforward” way, one can still use queer to signal that that is socially constructed, to recognize that sexuality is fluid in a queer theory sense. Queer can refer to sexual attraction and/or gender identity. No two people will use the term in the same way, and that is precisely the beauty of it.

However, this refusal to be controlled is exactly what poses a problem for subject access. If queer cannot be defined in a specific way, then by definition it is impossible for it to be part of a controlled vocabulary. If the Library of Congress were to create a subject heading for a queer identity, to what would it refer? Would we need two headings, one for a queer gender identity and one for a queer sexual preference? But again, no two people who identify as queer in either their gender or sexuality experience that in the same way. Of course, no two people ever experience sexuality or gender in exactly the same way, but identity labels such as lesbian and transgender describe broadly a shared experience by people in a community.

But people *are* searching using queer and are expecting to find materials that describe a queer experience. So what are librarians to do? Queer goes against our entire way of thinking about controlled vocabularies and subject access (see Drabinski, 2013). If we are to create subject access for queer, then we necessarily must rethink and reframe *all* subject access. Queer in a queer theory way of thinking is fluid in that it is socially constructed and is fluid in history because of that social construction. Queer will not mean the same thing in a decade. If we have it as a heading, will we then need to change its scope note and usage as the language changes? Is this something we should be doing with headings already?

Implications of Research

The results of this study have implications for various aspects of librarianship, both technical services and public services. When working with LGBT patrons or collections, librarians should be aware of how subject headings, online catalogs, and reference interviews function with other systems in the library. My research shows that these systems need to take the information needs and information seeking behavior of all patron types into account when creating them.

Implications for the Creation of Subject Headings

The results of my research illustrate the discrepancy between the language used by patrons and the language used by the Library of Congress. What this means for the creation and maintenance of subject headings is that this process should take patron language into account. Subject access should not solely be in the domain of cataloging librarians. Public service staff,

particularly reference librarians, need to be communicating with technical service staff to update them on how patrons use the library and search for information.

Perhaps a new form of subject heading creation could be developed that is driven by patrons. Indeed, patron-driven acquisition is a new form of collection development that has gained wide popularity in both public and academic libraries (Downey, Zhang, Urbano, & Klinger, 2014; Shen et al., 2011; Vermeer, 2015). One way of slowly incorporating patron-driven subject access is through tagging systems within catalogs. However, this poses several issues regarding free labor of patrons, the devaluing of the labor of cataloging and metadata librarians, and the decreasing quality of the tagging taxonomy.

In order to create a thesaurus of language used by patrons, libraries might consider running transaction-log analyses on certain subject headings or subject areas. A transaction-log analysis allows for a larger sample size and would be more useful than interviews when your patron base is larger, like the patron base of large research institutions. If a transaction-log analysis is not possible, communication with reference and instruction staff will give technical services staff insights into how patrons are using certain systems.

Implications for Subject Analysis

Another implication of my research is for subject analysis done by cataloging librarians. Although many of my research participants used similar language for the questions I asked, their reasons for using that language would differ in context, discipline, meaning, and nuance. When a cataloging librarian has a resource and must assign headings to it, how must she approach that analysis when language does not exist in the way it is controlled by the Library of Congress?

Subject analysis also becomes an issue when terms like Gays and Gay men do not have scope notes. Some cataloging librarians might know a difference between these terms, or they might research the difference, but that does not mean that they are assigning the terms the way the Library of Congress intends, or that every librarian will use those terms in the same way. Not only must cataloging librarians do research on terms when performing subject access, but they must submit scope notes when submitting proposals for new headings.

Implications for the Design of Online Library Catalogs

As stated in the results of my research, research participants rarely use only one term when searching for these concepts, and they rarely begin with a subject search. Therefore, online public access catalogs (OPACs) must be able to accommodate how people attempt to access information. One way of ensuring that keyword searches are effective, even if they do not use the language of subject access, is by creating rich catalog records (Chercourt & Marshall, 2013). Librarians can do this by including summary and table of content notes in records, as well as creating localized subject headings.

OPACs should also allow for syntactic and semantic variation when performing keyword searches. In a comparison of public library catalog subject headings to the folksonomy of LibraryThing, researchers found that tags relating to identities are normally singular adjectives, whereas subject headings are structured as plural nouns. Although this shows that librarians think of these terms in a different framework than those who actually use them, it should not actually prevent subject access. However, as the study shows, some OPACs are stricter with their algorithms than others and do not allow for spelling variations, including the simple addition of an “s” to make a word plural (Bates & Rowley, 2011). Librarians should conduct test searches in

their own OPACs to see how strict the search algorithms are. If the system does not allow for variation, perhaps advocate for a different system.

Finally, if tagging is to be a way to bridge differences and tensions between patron language and controlled language, tagging must be an option within an OPAC, and those tags must be searchable. More and more integrated library systems (ILSs) are allowing patrons to tag resources and making these tags searchable either through a keyword search or through a specific tag search.

Implications for Library Instruction and Reference Services

As Emily Drabinski points out in her article (2013), subject access and analysis should not be something that only cataloging librarians care about. Reference librarians should be familiar with subject language and how it is assigned in order to instruct patrons how to best search for items. Reference librarians should also encourage patrons to be aware of this language and to be critical of it. By being aware and critical, patrons can then put more thought into the language they use when searching and why they use that language. Finally, reference librarians should be aware of these terms and concepts in order to be better allies for patrons that identify in these ways and are searching for these topics. According to various studies on the information needs of lesbians (Stenback & Schrader, 1999), many lesbians will not use the public library for their lesbian information needs not because the items are not in the library, but because they fear homophobia and judgement from librarians and other patrons. Librarians must be allies to our patrons and must be educated about their information needs.

Reference librarians must also teach subject access and keyword search access when instructing patrons how to search the online public access catalog. Since the removal of card catalogs in libraries, patrons need not be familiar with Library of Congress Subject Headings in

order to do subject searching. Patrons are not aware that you cannot search catalogs and databases like you would search in Google. By instructing our patrons how to search for these subjects on their own, we empower them in case they do not feel comfortable asking for our help for whatever reason.

Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis is meant to serve as a pilot study for possible future research done by me or by others who are inspired by it. Further research on this topic can be done in a variety of ways. The first way is by changing the methodology. This research could easily be repeated and expanded through transaction log analyses, surveys, and other methods. It could also be done using mixed methods or even quantitative research. The next way is through a different participant demographic. Professors at my university in the GWS department are not the only people who search for these concepts. All people of different backgrounds, disciplines, ages, and identities are affected by this research, and therefore can be valid research participants. This research could also be done with different theoretical and epistemological frameworks. I approach this research through a linguistic and postmodern way of knowing, but there are countless critical theories and epistemologies that are valid ways to frame research. Finally, this research can and should be repeated by researchers who identify and exist in this world in a different way than I do. Each research brings their own knowledge and background to research, and those backgrounds enrich that research.

This way of investigating and comparing subject headings can and should also be repeated for different topics. I focus on the entire LGBT community (and only the broad demographics), but research could be repeated on each individual part of the community.

Researchers could also focus on other marginalized and oppressed groups, such as various racial and ethnic categories.

Conclusions

To conclude, more research into this area is required to get a better idea of how the language used by patrons differs from Library of Congress Subject Headings, and how that language difference affects search results. As my results show, even my small sample of research participants have differing language for the same concepts, but that differing language does not affect their search effectiveness. Even with their research success, librarians should be centering the experience of patrons when doing subject authority work, as not every patron has the research experience to know how and when to alter their search strategies.

One complication of my research is that the language used by the LGBT community to describe itself changes and often refuses to hold one solid definition. For example, the term queer by definition cannot be controlled and exists in a tense conflict with controlled vocabulary. Subject access should therefore not just include Library of Congress Subject Headings but should also consider other forms of access, such as local headings or tagging systems.

Further research done by me or other researchers could include different methods and demographic groups to get a broader sample of language. It could also focus on other areas of librarianship and subjects, such as collection development and how it affects communities of color.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Questions
<p>Demographics</p> <p>I ask these questions to see how people of different demographics search for the same topic.</p>	<p>How do you identify your sexuality? How do you identify your gender? How do you identify your race? How do you identify your socioeconomic status?</p>
<p><i>RQ1: How do patrons, both LGBT and allied, search for materials relating to LGBT topics? What terms do they use in search strings?</i></p>	<p>To you, what makes something an LGBT topic? When searching in a library catalog or database for materials relating to LGBT topics, where do you start? What other ways do you search? How do you search the library catalog or database? What language would you use to search for information relating in any way to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men who are only attracted to men • Women who are only attracted to women • People who are attracted to two or more genders • People who are attracted to any gender • People who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth • A community of people who fit into any of these categories
<p><i>RQ2: How do these search terms compare to controlled vocabularies, such as Library of Congress Subject Headings? How do they address similar concepts?</i></p>	<p>When searching, how accurate or relevant do you find results? Are you familiar with subject headings? If so, how do you think they compare to the language you use?</p>