

Problems in Classification of Slavic Books With Library of Congress Classification Schedules

AND SUBJECT HEADINGS

This paper deals with the difficulties which face every librarian cataloging materials on the Slavic peoples. These are caused by inadequate Library of Congress Classification schedules and irrational subject headings. The LC classification schedules on the Slavs have not been brought up to date and therefore do not reflect the real state of affairs. For example, no political changes in Eastern Europe have been taken into account by LC for fifty years. As a result the LC schedules and subject headings for these areas are inconsistent and confused.

The paper attempts to show some of the major inconsistencies of LC Slavic cataloging practice.

THE DEMAND FOR Slavic materials is growing, and more and more North American universities are opening departments of Russian and Slavic studies to satisfy the demand for more and better information about the Slavic nations. The rapid growth of the Soviet Union as a world power on the one hand, and an almost complete ignorance on the part of the Western powers about the Slavs, on the other, are contributing mutually to this expansion. The lack of interest in the Slavs in the past has resulted in universities grabbing anything that has been written about the Soviet Union in Western or Slavic languages, even though the material acquired, sometimes for huge sums of money, is of little value for scholarly research.

Some universities have established special research centers to study the Soviet Union, its political and economic development, as well as the problem of the national minorities of the USSR. Since most universities are using the Library of Congress classification and subject headings, and catalog librarians are obliged to classify that material within the schedules of the LC classification and its subject headings, their importance can hardly be overestimated. Where LC rules are used, they are usually strictly followed. For the sake of consistency deviation from LC practice is seldom permitted by library authorities.

In performing his duties, however, a librarian must also be honest in the treatment of the material on hand. This honesty to his own conscience as well as to the contents of a book can often be very difficult to attain when using LC classification schedules and subject head-

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ings. A few examples may demonstrate this difficulty.

The Soviet Union, as everyone knows, is not a country with a homogeneous population, but a union of fifteen republics and several dozen autonomous republics or regions, which are inhabited by various peoples and nations each with its own past, its own histories, civilizations, and religions. It is true that the Russians are the dominant race—indeed they rule all the minorities within the boundaries of the USSR—but the Soviet Union is not Russia. Yet in the Library of Congress classification and its subject headings the real state of affairs politically and geographically is not reflected. The LC approach to this problem is rather biased in geographical designation and in classification schedules; in addition it is inconsistent. LC converts the official name of the USSR into Russia. By doing so, it in fact creates two Russias, one being the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic which is, in LC, "*Russia (1917- R.S.F.S.R.)*"—which is quite right—and another, "*Russia (1923-U.S.S.R.)*," for the Soviet Union as a political unit—which is quite wrong.

To make this picture clear, it would have been much wiser and more practical to leave (*Russia, 1917- R.S.F.S.R.*) as it is for the designation of the Soviet Russian Republic and to introduce for the whole Soviet Union this very name, or simply to accept the official abbreviation "*USSR*" as a common designation for all the republics, as it is established by Soviet law. The first one would correspond to the name Great Britain, used by LC for the United Kingdom, while the official abbreviation would correspond to the form used for the United States. Consequently with this there should be introduced a classification schedule in all classes, but first of all in the history and the social sciences, doing justice at least to the principal union republics and within them for the corresponding autonomous regions. A

good example from the LC schedules, which is elaborated along these lines, is the schedule tables in history for Great Britain. For the United Kingdom there are tables for a common history as a political unity but at the same time there are separate schedules for England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. As a matter of fact this has been done even for the Soviet Union, but strangely enough, only for the Asiatic Union Republics in Soviet Central Asia like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, and Uzbekistan. Even Siberia has a separate schedule in history, although it is a part of the RSFSR and although its history can hardly be separated from the history of the Russian conquests there, especially since many of the Siberian peoples are even now not well developed.

On the other hand, the Caucasian peoples and republics with their rich and old history, like Georgia or Armenia, do not even have a number but only a so-called "Cutter number." The same could be repeated about the Baltic nations, which only recently—that is before World War II—enjoyed their independence for at least two decades, and like Lithuania, once played an important role in the history of Eastern Europe. It sometimes appears strange that a small republic like San Marino, composed of Italians, should get equal treatment in LC classification schedules with the Baltic states or the Caucasian nations with their ancient and heroic history.

Poland has its own classification schedules for history. However, it is deprived of the very important section where local history and description could be classed. Therefore the Polish history of individual localities or regions is classed within the Austrian, Prussian, or Russian schedules. A history of Warsaw is classed under DK651. W6 along with Russian, Ukrainian, White Russian, and Baltic cities and towns. But the Polish city of Cracow is classed with Austrian history in DB879. K8, and strange as it may be,

a history of the Polish region Podhale in the Carpathian Mountains south of Cracow, is classed next to the Russian Province of Perm in DK511. P58. On the other hand, the history of the Polish Province of Posen is classed with Prussian history in D491. P88.

Similar cases may be cited from the Ukrainian, White Russian, and Baltic nations which do not have separate classification numbers for their local or regional histories. However, there is one exception: the history of the Ukrainian provinces of Galicia and Bukowina are classed with Austrian history. But even these parts are not exempt from the irregularities cited for Poland. A history of Galicia is classed in DK481-500 with Austria, but the Carpathian region (called Huculszczyzna in the LC schedules) which is a part of Galicia, is classed in the Russian classification number DK511. H8, and the Galician capital Lvov is also classed under the same number as Warsaw, Novgorod, or Kanas. Even the history of Carpatho-Ukraine (formerly Ruthenia) which, after the Second World War was transferred from the Czechoslovak Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as Zakarpatskaya oblast, is also classed in Russian local history DK511, although it belonged for centuries to Austria-Hungary. (Polish provinces which for the last half-century have been separated from Prussia are still classed with Prussian history by the Library of Congress.)

This discrepancy of classing of local history and description of Poland, White Russia, Ukraine, and Baltic states, as well as of the Caucasian nations, together with Russian local history is even more pronounced when we take into consideration that each of the Central Asiatic Soviet Republics as well as Siberia, which is a part of the RSFSR, have a provision for their local histories within their own schedules separate from those for Russia.

In a slightly better position than any of the Baltic states but worse than any of the Central Soviet Asiatic republics, are the two largest non-Russian Soviet republics in Europe, which are now members of the United Nations—that is the Ukrainian SSR and the White Russian SSR. These are honored by the LC classification in East European history with one number each, that is DK508 and DK507 respectively, which, however, are in the section in which their history may be classed. The Ukrainian SSR, which is the second largest country in Europe in territory, with a population close to fifty million, and with centuries of history filled with struggles for their independence, has one number. In practice this is only one-tenth as many numbers as are designated for Kirghizstan or Kazakhstan. To make the discrimination even more pronounced, it is sufficient to point out that forty numbers were given for the one Russian city of Leningrad with another ten numbers in spare for eventual expansion.

It is hard to explain how it happened that the multinational state of Imperial Austria, crownlands like Bohemia, Bukovina, Galicia, Moravia, and others were privileged with at least twenty LC numbers each, while the national minorities of the former European part of the Russian Empire, with the exception of Poland, were completely deprived of the same treatment.

Even more biased are the subject headings used by LC, especially in the designation of geographical places, names of smaller cities, provinces, etc. The composition of the Soviet Union with its fifteen Union republics is completely disregarded, and the whole area is treated as Russia. It cannot be explained in terms of "clarity." It is also strange that all the place names in the United States are followed not by the name of the country but by the name of the state in which they are located, for instance: Berkeley, California, or

Akron, Ohio, and so on. The same principle has been used for the place names of Great Britain: Aberdeen, Scotland, Cork, Ireland, Norwich, England and Swansea, Wales. It would seem logical that such a pattern should be applied to the place names and geographical or political regions of the Soviet Union, especially so since the *Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer of the World* always indicates the republic in which places are located. However, in LC lists a different principle has been applied. They not only disregard the information supplied by the *Gazetteer*, but they are also inconsistent in their application. It seems that there is no principle nor clearcut pattern. A few examples from LC practice may be cited.

The Turkmen city of Ashgabat is designated as "Ashgabat, Russia," as are also the cities Chirchik in Uzbekistan, Komsomolsk-na-Amure in the far east of Siberia, Frunze in Kirghiz SSR, Tuapse which is the coastal city on the Black Sea at the foot of the Caucasus, Yalta on the Crimean peninsula, and Dnepropetrovsk in Ukraine. Even Stanislav and Tarnopol, which only some twenty-five years ago were acquired by the Soviet Union and incorporated into the Ukrainian Republic, are all designated by "Russia."

Again, a city like Alma Ata in Central Asia is designated by the name of the republic, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, and so is the city Kara-Kum, Turkmenistan. Furthermore, while the city of Komsomolsk-na-Amure is designated as in Russia, the cities which are situated halfway between Komsomolsk and the Ural mountains are designated as in Siberia, e.g.: Irkutsk, Siberia; Yeniseisk, Siberia. True, all the cities of Siberia are politically a part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, but in this case all the cities, or rather place names of Siberia should, for the sake of consistency, be designated either by Russia or by Siberia. The same designation

should be used consistently for all the place names of a certain region.

But strange as it may be, the capital of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, Kishinev, is designated neither by the name of the Republic, i.e. Moldavia, nor by Russia. LC established it as Kishinev, Bessarabia.

This practice does not facilitate identification of the place nor its location on the map, because the city of Stanislav at the foot of the Carpathian mountains in the Ukrainian Republic is almost a half-world apart from the city of Komsomolsk-na-Amure near Korea. Perhaps this practice could be explained in political terms; namely, that once the Soviet Union is identified by LC as Russia, then Russia is the proper designation for each place name within the boundaries of the USSR. But as has been explained above, LC practice is not consistent and one does not know whether the term Russia is used here in a political or a geographical meaning.

If it is political, then how can the facts be explained that, for instance, the cities of Irkutsk and Yeniseisk, to mention just two, are not designated as being in Russia but rather in Siberia (Irkutsk, Siberia; Yeniseisk, Siberia)? It is worthwhile furthermore to point out that these two mentioned cities, geographically speaking, are much closer to Russia proper than the far eastern city in Siberia, Komsomolsk-na-Amure, which is designated as in Russia. Using the political designation "Russia" would be the proper term to apply to all three of these cities since all of them are within the boundaries of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. Following such a principle would be more proper just if the place name Ashgabat were followed by the name of the Union republic, i.e., Turkmenistan, and Stanislav by the name of the republic, Ukraine, and so on.

When the terms "Russia" and "Siberia" are used in a geographical sense, it

would be only just and consistent to use "Askhabad, Central Asia"; "Yalta, Crimea"; and "Tuapse, Caucasus," and the reader would be able to locate them on the map without much difficulty, since it is much easier to search a region such as the Caucasian mountains than the entire Soviet Union.

The apparent curiosities and inconsistency of LC practice, although it is supposed to be the world leader in librarianship, do not end here. The names of the Union republics are being used, but in what meaning? Whether they are political or geographical cannot always be explained. There are, for instance, subject headings *Lithuania—Politics and government*; *Ukraine—Economic conditions*; *White Russia—History*; *Labor and laboring classes—Armenia* or *Cities and towns—Azerbaijan*, etc. On this basis it seems that we have to deal with each of the Union republics as a political and geographical unit.

This, however, is not so. A book on the Ukrainian literature of the Carpathian region of Western Ukraine is classified by LC in the Ukrainian literature schedule but with the subject heading: *Ukrainian Literature—Stanislav, Russia (Province)*. A book on the labor movement in the White Russian city of Gomel is under the subject heading *Labor and Laboring Classes—Gomel, Russia*. There is a subject heading *Cities and towns* with the name of the Union republic, but a book on a certain city in that republic must be classified under Russia since there is no provision to do otherwise. For instance, a book on the Ukrainian cities or towns of Zakarpatskaya oblast will be listed under the subject heading as follows: *Cities and towns—Russia—Zakarpatskaya oblast*.

If one happens to get a book on the local government of any of the Soviet republics, there is no possibility to class it with the republic because the J Class, which is Political Science, has no provision for it. In all other countries of

Europe, of course, there is such provision for every province. Consequently, a librarian is never sure how to deal with a book on hand. Being subjected to an iron rule of consistency, he is forced to proceed in his work, against his best knowledge of the subject and against his own conscience.

The examples of LC inconsistency and the apparent lack of a desire to settle these problems connected with the Soviet republics do not contribute to a high standard of Slavic librarianship. There is a table on page 535 in the classification schedules of H class, Economics, entitled "Notation for subdivision under countries subdivided by their provinces," but even in the latest 1965 edition of the schedule the USSR with its fifteen Union republics did not find its way onto it. Furthermore, in the following "Table of countries in one alphabet" none of the Soviet republics are listed, including the once independent Baltic states. The lack of a clear policy as to the classification of national materials creates confusion even in LC practice. One librarian, for example, classifies material on White Russia under Russia as for any other Russian province, and another librarian may catalog the material on any of the Union republics under the classification number with a notation "All other countries A-Z."

None of the Union republics is listed in any class as a political entity, a unit in itself with its own provinces, cities, industries, etc. Consequently, material on the Union republics is classified and shelved side by side with material on any of its own provinces or the provinces of any other republic if its name happens to begin with the same letter, especially in class H. For example, material on Georgia will be close to material on Gorkovskaya oblast (Russia) on Zabalkalya (Siberia), close to Zakarpatskaya oblast (Ukraine), while material on Ukraine as a whole will be side by side with material on Ufimskaya oblast. While

in all other countries the LC classification follows the principle of descending from the largest unit gradually to the smallest, the classification for Slavic and Soviet countries are exempt from this logical policy.

There also appear to be inconsistencies in LC policy toward the Slavs within the Soviet Union, that is for Slavic minorities under Russian domination. It is a well known fact that the Slavs are geographically divided into three groups: the most numerous are the Eastern Slavs, followed numerically by the Western and Southern Slavs. In the Library of Congress practice this subdivision does not exist. The LC practice and policy recognizes in its use of subject headings only the general name *Slavs* with two more groups, that is *Slavs, Western* and *Slavs, Southern*, and with appropriate references to individual peoples, even to such small groups like the Sorbish and Lusatians situated in eastern Germany. But there is no subject heading for the Eastern group of Slavs. It seems that the Library of Congress does not recognize the Ukrainians and White Russians as separate ethnic groups, or as separate nations. There are many recent titles dealing with the history and civilization of the ancient Eastern Slavs, but there is no classification number for these individual groups especially in class D—History. The librarian handling such material faces a rather perplexing dilemma: what subject heading and classification number should be given to cover the contents of such a book? The subject *Slavs* is too broad and misleading, but there is no proper subject *Slavs, Eastern*. There remains of course another alternative; to classify it under Russia and thus be unfair and dishonest toward the two other nations belonging to the Eastern Slavs.

Thus far this paper has discussed the problems connected with the Union republics of the USSR which do not get proper treatment in Library of Congress

classification practice. But this practice does not end on the frontiers of the USSR. Poland, which has enjoyed her independence for the last half a century, with only a short interruption, is still treated by the Library of Congress as a part of Russia. Her provinces are distributed in the classification schedules among her neighbors, notably Russia and Germany, especially in the H—Social Sciences class. This is confusing not only for a librarian but also for a student of Polish economics and social sciences. The LC classification schedule treats Poland like any other Soviet Republic or oblast, and Finland is treated the same way. Thus under economic conditions Poland is listed under the number HC337. which is the number for Russian provinces, with a Cutter number P7. In short, all the numerous books on Polish economics are not being classified but rather, it would be more appropriate to say, are being dumped under one fraction of a number, HC337. P7. Also under the same number in this class and even with the same Cutter is Poltavaska oblast of Ukraine HC337. P76. But because fifty years ago it was under Germany the Polish province of Poznan is separated even now from Poland and is classed with Germany in the same way Poland is classed under Russia. Consequently, the material on Polish economics is divided and separated into several parts, just as it is practiced with the same material for any of the Soviet republics. Instead of shelving together all the material on a certain subject for a certain country of East-Central Europe, *i.e.*, for Poland and all the Soviet republics, it is spread in many different places. Polish materials are under Austrian, German and, most of all, under Russian numbers. Ukraine materials are under Russian and Austrian numbers. A similar situation exists with regard to Yugoslavia, where materials dealing with its constituent republics are classed under Austria, Hungary, Serbia, and Turkey.

To sum up: Library of Congress practice which the librarian is often obliged to follow strictly is far from satisfactory. An example is the DK subclass which covers the history of all the Soviet Union, Poland, and Finland; and yet it may be the best of all thirty-one volumes of the LC schedules with the exception of Q, R, and T classes which cover science, medicine and technology. Class H, which covers the economics, and class J for political science are much less satisfactory. The LC subject headings, as has been indicated, are very unsatisfactory. Such inconsistent and inaccurate practice disturbs not only librarians but it also confuses the reader who wants material on a certain country, especially when he is using the stacks. Books covering one country are being dispersed on different shelves, quite often widely separated, when they should be together.

The librarian in his work, instead of being consistent, commits the error of inconsistency to comply with LC practice. A correction of these discrepancies is necessary to improve library services especially for research libraries. Since most of the libraries on the North American continent have only recently begun or are now planning to start the organization of Slavic collections, it would appear desirable for LC to introduce improvements at least as an alternative choice for the new Slavic collections, as it has done in some other cases. The suggested changes could be easily done, as for instance, in the class DK, by developing new schedules for the Union republics on the same pattern as the schedules for Finland. If there were too much material to reclassify, the old single number

or a Cutter number could be closed with a reference to the new schedule and from the new schedule to the single number or Cutter number previously used for all older material. There is enough room in the DK subclass, as well as in any other, for eventual expansion. Besides there are many numbers, in the schedules which for all practical purposes, are dead numbers, because there is no material to class in them. This would appear to be the easiest way to bring subject headings up to the present requirements. The sooner it is done, the cheaper will be the cost to the Library of Congress and various university libraries.

Changes and novelties are not easily accepted. The Library of Congress being large is inclined to be conservative, especially in the social sciences, but other changes have been made under the pressure of public opinion. Therefore it would appear that the professional organizations interested in the Slavic world, such as the Canadian Association of Slavists, the Slavic subsection in ACRL, as well as organizations of Slavic scholars, should consider presenting a brief to the Library of Congress with a request that it amend obvious inconsistencies in its subject heading practice and provide logical and consistent classification in its schedules. A way to do it would be to appoint a special joint committee from learned societies which would elaborate the discussed section of the LC classification and present it to the authorities of the Library of Congress for their approval and eventual inclusion in their schedules for general use.

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