

THE POWER OF THE CATALOG: INCLUSION AND ADVOCACY IN KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION

ALCTS Symposium

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emily.drabinski@liu.edu

@edrabinski

Conundrum #1

- In order to help users effectively access information held in our collections, we must use and build systems that we might also want to teach them to contest.
 - *How can we do this?*

Conundrum #2

Cataloging and classification are necessary tools for knowledge production, but they enable some kinds of knowledge production while foreclosing others.

Library of Congress Subject Headings are

“parochial, jingoistic Europeans and North Americans, white-hued, at least nominally Christian and preferably Protestant in faith, comfortably situated in the middle- and higher-income brackets, largely domiciled in suburbia, fundamentally loyal to the Established Order, and heavily imbued with the transcendent, incomparable glory of Western civilization.”

- *Sandy Berman, Prejudices and Antipathies, 1971*

1. Women are not defined by marriage
2. Only some of us are marked by cataloging language
3. Identity terms define people by what they are not rather than what they are

Quick and Dirty Queer Theory

- Identity is socially constructed and experienced
- Identity is contingent
- Identity is contested

Queer theory changes the way we think about and teach information retrieval.

But what about Googling?

- Google's rules for information retrieval are opaque and privatized
- Google results reflect systemic bias (Safiya Noble)

What can queer theory tell us about using Google?