



# Deconstructing Neutrality: Hope Olson, Classification Bias, and the Library of Congress Fine Arts (N) Range

Stefanie Hilles  
Arts & Humanities Librarian  
Wertz Art & Architecture Library  
Miami University  
[hillessa@miamioh.edu](mailto:hillessa@miamioh.edu)



# Libraries are NOT Neutral

Library of Congress Reading Room



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library\\_of\\_Congress#/media/File:LOC\\_Main\\_Reading\\_Room\\_Highsmith.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Library_of_Congress#/media/File:LOC_Main_Reading_Room_Highsmith.jpg)

Library of Congress Classification

## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION OUTLINE

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| A -- GENERAL WORKS                             | L -- EDUCATION                   |
| B -- PHILOSOPHY,<br>PSYCHOLOGY, RELIGION       | M -- MUSIC AND BOOKS ON<br>MUSIC |
| C -- AUXILIARY SCIENCES OF<br>HISTORY          | N -- FINE ARTS                   |
| D -- HISTORY: GENERAL AND<br>OLD WORLD         | P -- LANGUAGE AND<br>LITERATURE  |
| E -- HISTORY: AMERICA                          | Q -- SCIENCE                     |
| F -- HISTORY: AMERICA                          | R -- MEDICINE                    |
| G -- GEOGRAPHY,<br>ANTHROPOLOGY,<br>RECREATION | S -- AGRICULTURE                 |
| H -- SOCIAL SCIENCES                           | T -- TECHNOLOGY                  |
| J -- POLITICAL SCIENCE                         | U -- MILITARY SCIENCE            |
| K -- LAW                                       | V -- NAVAL SCIENCE               |
|  | Z -- LIBRARY SCIENCE             |

<https://libanswers.middlesex.mass.edu/faq/85519>



# Dr. Hope A. Olson



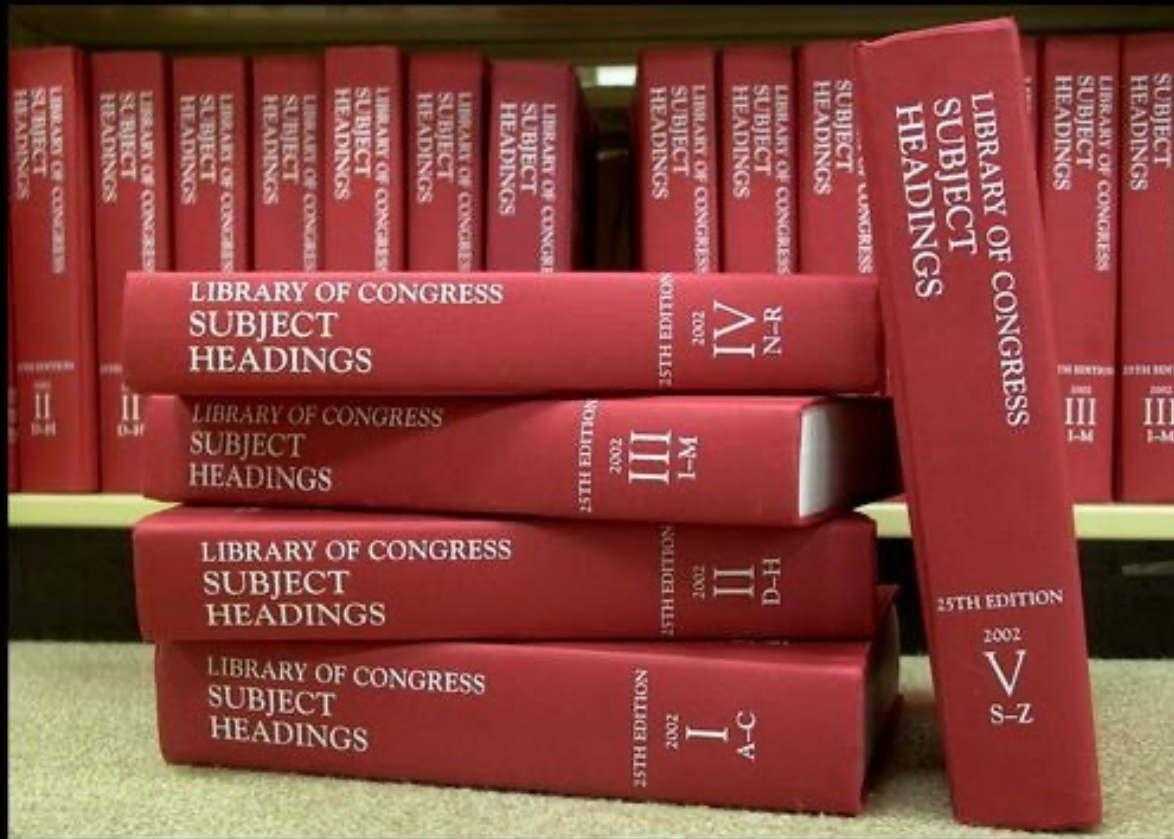
<https://uwm.edu/news/hope-olson-awarded-2017-margaret-mann-citation/>



# Three Reasons DDC and LCC are Biased

- Universality
- Hierarchy
- Binary Relationships

# Universality



“The white, male, Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied, bourgeois presence is labelled the mainstream and, hence, universal from which all else is a deviation.”<sup>1</sup>

<https://sites.dartmouth.edu/library/2016/03/25/library-of-congress-to-remove-the-subject-heading-illegal-aliens/>

1. Hope A. Olson, “The Feminist and the Emperor’s New Clothes: Feminist Deconstruction as a Critical Methodology for Library and Information Studies,” *Library and Information Science Research* 19 no. 2 (1997): 183, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188\(97\)90042-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188(97)90042-6).





How Does This Apply the  
the Fine Arts Range of LCC?

# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range: Primitive

1. Africa : land of spirits / curators: Ezio Bassani, Lorenz Homberger, Gigi Pezzoli, and Claudia Zevi ; edited by Claudia Zevi ; with the contribution of Gigi Pezzoli ; texts by Ezio Bassani [and seven others]



Book

Milano : 24 ORE Cultura S.r.l., 2015 349 pages : illustrations (some color), map ; 32 cm Language: English

**Subjects:** Art, African -- Exhibitions; **Sculpture**, African -- Exhibitions; **Sculpture**, Black -- Exhibitions; Wood sculpture -- Exhibitions; Wood-carving -- Africa -- Exhibitions; Masks -- Africa -- Exhibitions; Art, Black -- Africa, Sub-Saharan -- Exhibitions; Art and society -- Africa, Sub-Saharan -- Exhibitions; **Sculpture, Primitive**; Museo delle culture (Milan, Italy) -- Exhibitions

## Request Item

Location	Call No.	Status
ArtArch Folio	N7391.65 .A362 2015	AVAILABLE

# Hierarchy

Fine Arts (N)



Architecture (NA)



Special classes of buildings (NA4100-8480)



Classed by use (NA4170-8480)



Public buildings (NA4170-7020)



Religious architecture (NA4590-5621)





How Does This Apply the  
the Fine Arts Range of LCC?

# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION OUTLINE



## CLASS N - FINE ARTS



*(Click each subclass for details)*

<b>Subclass N</b>	<b>Visual arts</b>
<b>Subclass NA</b>	<b>Architecture</b>
<b>Subclass NB</b>	<b>Sculpture</b>
<b>Subclass NC</b>	<b>Drawing. Design. Illustration</b>
<b>Subclass ND</b>	<b>Painting</b>
<b>Subclass NE</b>	<b>Print media</b>
<b>Subclass NK</b>	<b>Decorative arts</b>
<b>Subclass NX</b>	<b>Arts in general</b>



# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range

## Subclass NK

NK1-(9990)	Decorative arts
NK1-570	General
NK600-806	History
NK1135-1149.5	Arts and crafts movement
NK1160-1590	Decoration and ornament. Design
NK1160-1174	General
NK1175-(1498)	History
NK1505-1535	General works
NK1548-1590	Special subjects for design
NK1648-1678	Religious art
NK1700-2195	Interior decoration. House decoration
NK1700-2138	General. History, etc. Including special rooms
NK2140-2180	Decorative painting
NK2190-2192	Church decoration
NK2200-2750	Furniture
NK2775-2898	Rugs and carpets
NK2975-3049	Tapestries
NK3175-3296.3	Upholstery. Drapery
NK3375-3496.3	Wallpapers
NK3600-(9990)	Other arts and art industries
NK3700-4695	Ceramics
NK4700-4890	Costume
NK5100-5440	Glass
NK5500-6060	Glyptic arts
NK6400-8459	Metalwork
NK8800-9505.5	Textiles
NK9600-9955	Woodwork

## NK3600-(9990)

NK3700-4695

NK4700-4890

NK5100-5440

NK5500-6060

NK6400-8459

NK8800-9505.5

NK9600-9955

## Other arts and art industries

Ceramics

Costume

Glass

Glyptic arts

Metalwork

Textiles

Woodwork

# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range

## Subclass TT

TT1-999	Handicrafts. Arts and crafts
TT161-170.7	Manual training. School shops
TT174-176	Articles for children
TT180-200	Woodworking. Furniture making. Upholstering
TT201-203	Lathework. Turning
TT205-267	Metalworking
TT300-382.8	Painting. Wood finishing
TT387-410	Soft home furnishings
TT490-695	Clothing manufacture. Dressmaking. Tailoring
TT697-927	Home arts. Homecrafts Including sewing, embroidery, decorative crafts
TT950-979	Hairdressing. Beauty culture. Barbers' work
TT980-999	Laundry work



# Binary Relationships

## Privileged Binary

- Man
- White
- Western
- Colonizer
- Universality
- Fine Art

## Non-Privileged Binary

- Woman
- BIPOC
- Non-Western
- Colonized
- Diversity
- Craft



How Does This Apply the  
the Fine Arts Range of LCC?



# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range: Fine Art vs. Craft Art

<b>BASIS FOR COMPARISON</b>	<b>ART</b>	<b>CRAFT</b>
Meaning	An unstructured and boundless form of work, that expresses emotions, feelings and vision is called art.	Craft refers to an activity, which involves creation of tangible objects with the use of hands and brain.
Based on	Creative merit	Learned skills and technique
Serves	Aesthetic purpose	Decorative or functional purpose
Emphasizes	Ideas, feelings and visual qualities.	Right use of tools and materials.
Quantification	Difficult	Easy
Reproducible	No	Yes
Emergence	Heart and soul	Mind
Result of	Innate talent	Skill and experience

# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range: Fine Art vs. Craft Art



Leonardo da Vinci  
*Self-Portrait*  
Red chalk on paper  
c. 1512

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait\\_of\\_a\\_Man\\_in\\_Red\\_Chalk#/media/File:Leonardo\\_da\\_Vinci\\_-\\_presumed\\_self-portrait\\_-\\_WGA12798.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_a_Man_in_Red_Chalk#/media/File:Leonardo_da_Vinci_-_presumed_self-portrait_-_WGA12798.jpg)



Covered red jar  
with dragon and sea design  
Jiajing period  
1521–1567  
Ming dynasty

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_ceramics#/media/File:Yellow\\_dragon\\_jar\\_\(cropped\).JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_ceramics#/media/File:Yellow_dragon_jar_(cropped).JPG)



# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range: Fine Art vs. Craft Art



El Anatsui  
*Rain Has No Father?*  
Found bottle caps and copper wire  
2008



Judy Chicago  
*The Dinner Party*  
Ceramic, porcelain,  
textile  
1974-79



[https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/dinner\\_party/](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/dinner_party/)  
<https://smarthistory.org/judy-chicago-the-dinner-party/>

<https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/edu/object/rain-has-no-father>

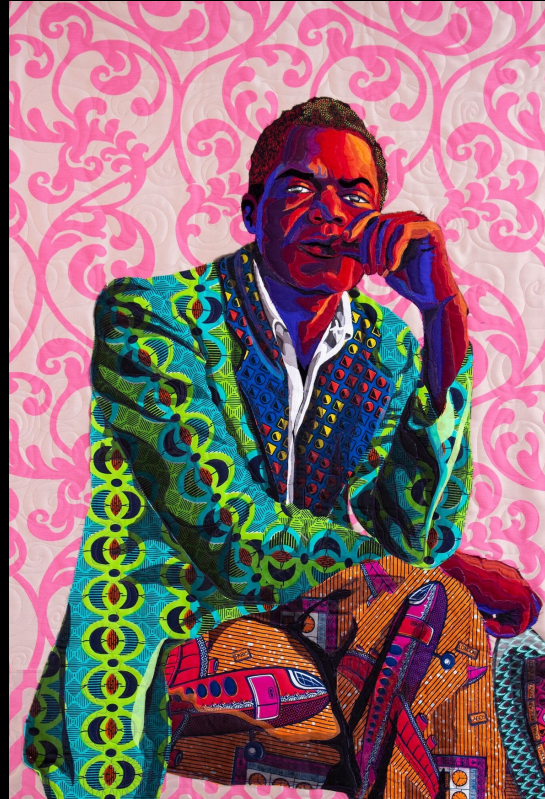


# Bias in the LCC Fine Arts (N) Range: Fine Art vs. Craft Art



Faith Ringgold  
*Woman on a Bridge #1 of 5: Tar Beach*  
Acrylic paint, canvas, printed fabric, ink, and thread  
1988

<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/3719>



Bisa Butler  
*"I am Not Your Negro"*  
quilted and appliquéd cotton, wool and chiffon  
2019

<https://mymodernmet.com/bisa-butler-contemporary-quilting/>



Dawn Williams Boyd  
*"I am Not Your Negro"*  
Assorted fabrics. Beads, sequins, cowrie shells,  
metal filigree, buttons  
2013 <https://www.dawnwilliamsboyd.com/ladies-night-series>



# Where do we go from here?

- Additional thesauri, vocabularies, and indexes
- Ensure patrons know they are dealing with a biased system
  - Written statements
  - Instructional activities

# Bibliography

American Library Association. "Report of the Subject Analysis Committee (SAC) Ad-Hoc Subcommittee on Concepts Denoted by the Term "Primitive." *Technical Services Quarterly* 2, no. ½ (Fall/Winter, 1984): 121-153. [https://doi.org/10.1300/j124v02n01\\_09](https://doi.org/10.1300/j124v02n01_09).

Amin, Samir. *Eurocentrism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989.

Berman, Sanford. *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*. 1993 ed. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1993.

Foskett, A.C. "Misogynists All; A Study in Critical Classification." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 15, no. 2 (January 1971): 117-121.

Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Phaidon, 1966.

Higgins, Colin. "Library of Congress Classification: Teddy Roosevelt's World in Numbers." *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (2012): 249-262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2012.658989>.

Hilles, Stefanie "The *Prejudices and Antipathies* of Art: Teaching Students about Bias in the Library of Congress Fine Arts Classification During One-Shot Instruction." Humanities Commons. Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), 2022. <https://doi.org/10.17613/4jdz-n252>.

Library of Congress. "Library of Congress Classification Outline, Class N - Fine Arts." Accessed February 26, 2022. [https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/classification/lcco/lcco\\_n.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/classification/lcco/lcco_n.pdf).

Library of Congress, "Library of Congress Subject Headings Approved Monthly List 03 LCSH (March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022)." Classweb.org, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://classweb.org/approved-subjects/2203.html>.

Library of Congress. "Summary of Decisions, Editorial Meeting Number 2203." March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/cpsod/psd-220318.html>.

Olson, Hope A. "The Feminist and the Emperor's New Clothes: Feminist Deconstruction as a Critical Methodology for Library and Information Studies." *Library and Information Science Research* 19 no. 2 (1997): 181-198. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188\(97\)90042-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188(97)90042-6).



# Bibliography

Olson, Hope A. "How We Construct Subjects: A Feminist Analysis." *Library Trends* 56, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 509-541.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2008.0007>.

Olson, Hope A. "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access and Subversive Techniques for Change." *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 26, no. 2/3 (June-September, 2001), 1-29.

Olson, Hope A. "The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 3 (2001): 639-668.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/495624>.

Olson, Hope A. "Sameness and Difference: A Cultural Foundation of Classification." *Library Resources and Technical Services* 45 no. 3 (July 2001): 115-122. <https://doi.org/10.5860/lrts.45n3.115>.

Olson, Hope A. "Universal Models: A History of the Organization of Knowledge." *Advances in Knowledge Organization* 4 (1994): 72-80.

Olson, Hope A. and Susan Gold Smith. "Transgressive Tools: The Liberating Power of Classification." *Women and Environments International Magazine*, no. 72/73 (Fall, 2006): 38-40.

Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: The Woman's Press Limited, 1984.

Shiner, Larry. *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Shipe, Timothy. "Cataloging Problems." *Art Documentation* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 65.

Thomas J. Watson Library. "Index of Asian American and Pacific Islander Artists." The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed June 20, 2022,  
[https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2022/5/~/link.aspx?\\_id=A7859C76087F4B5E894A471D47B4FB7B&\\_z=z#:~:text=The%20Index%20of%20Asian%20American,in%20North%20America%2C%20primarily%20the](https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2022/5/~/link.aspx?_id=A7859C76087F4B5E894A471D47B4FB7B&_z=z#:~:text=The%20Index%20of%20Asian%20American,in%20North%20America%2C%20primarily%20the).

The background of the image is a close-up, slightly blurred view of a library bookshelf. The shelves are filled with books of various sizes and colors, primarily in shades of brown and black. A prominent blue rectangular box is centered over the image, containing white text. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical manner, starting with a large 'Thank You!' followed by 'Questions?' and then contact information for Stefanie Hilles.

Thank You!

Questions?

Stefanie Hilles  
Arts & Humanities Librarian  
Wertz Art & Architecture Library  
Miami University  
[hillessa@miamioh.edu](mailto:hillessa@miamioh.edu)