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A Short History of Anthropological Subject Headings at Tozzer Library

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Soviet ethnographic scholarship. In Soviet thought, ethnographers such as Miklukho-Maklaia, while lamenting the loss of traditional cultures, can aid in bringing about progressive changes.

Footnotes

1. These volume numbers as well as the publisher, Akademia Nauk SSR, are necessary pieces of information for locating the series and the historical volumes within it. In some U.S. libraries the series is indexed only under Akademia Nauk, Institut Ethnografii Miklukho-Maklaia.

2. Tokarev has published a history of Russian ethnography which broadly outlines the areas researched in this series. Istoriia Russkoii Ethnografii (Do'ok t yabrskoi period), S. L. Tokarev, Akademia Nauk SSR, Moskva, 1966 [History of Russian Ethnography (The Pre-Revolutionary Period), Academy of Sciences, USSR].

3. Contemporary ethnographer Petrova-Averkieva suggests that the separation of ethnography and ethnology is inconceivable in practical work. "The method of historicism presupposes a thorough study of this or that process or phenomenon of social life in its historical perspective. Empirical knowledge and theoretical generalizations should be combined in such an inquiry. We do not accept the division of the science into two separate disciplines--ethnography as a 'fact-gathering' science and ethnology as a generalising one." (Soviet and Western Anthropology, E. Gellner ed., p. 24.)

II. A SHORT HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL SUBJECT HEADINGS AT TOZZER LIBRARY

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Librarian

Tozzer Library, formerly the Library of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, has a unique card catalogue--a true bibliographic treasure--that includes entries for articles in periodicals and books in addition to entries for books. Materials received since the Library's foundation in 1866 have been analyzed. Since the Library was founded when the discipline of professional anthropology began, and since the scope of the Library's collection has always been international, the Library's catalogue provides the most comprehensive anthropological bibliography available anywhere in the world.

The subject catalog at Tozzer Library is organized by a unique set of headings developed by Roland B. Dixon especially for the Peabody Museum Library. Dixon, the Librarian from 1904 until 1934, was an anthropologist who was more interested in source materials than in anthropological fieldwork.¹ His keen interest in bibliography and cataloguing led to the development of a personal index of anthropological source materials, which provided the basis for the subject headings and indexing system which he developed at the Library.²

Dixon's first list of anthropological subject headings included topics, geographic areas, and major language families. However, only the
topics were written down in list form. Fourteen main topics (such as archaeology, ethnology, religion, and technology) were expanded by subheadings, so that the typed list was fifty-five pages long. The major headings, and the greater number of subheadings for archaeology, somatology, and technology reflected the primary interests of early twentieth century anthropologists. The emphasis on geographic rather than cultural headings reflected also the geographical-historical focus of Dixon's research, and the organization of collections in the Peabody Museum and other anthropology museum collections.

Although records were not kept of the specific procedures used to revise subject headings before 1977, Library records indicate that Harvard University anthropology faculty members were on several occasions formally asked to recommend changes, and, they often voluntarily suggested additions to and revisions of the subject headings. By 1961 the typed list of subject headings included geographic and linguistic headings in addition to topic headings. The geographic headings included continents, countries, states or provinces within some countries such as the United States and Canada, and islands. The linguistic headings were grouped by language families as they were classified by early twentieth century anthropologists. Subheadings were far more detailed for the Americas than for the rest of the world—another reflection of early twentieth century American anthropological interests. Only a few additions had been made to Dixon's list of topic headings, and some cross-references had been added. The typed list covered seventy-nine pages; the increased length was primarily a result of the addition of geographic and linguistic headings to Dixon's list.4

In 1963 the first published list of anthropological subject headings appeared as part of the Library's published catalogue.5 There was only one significant difference between the 1961 and 1963 lists. Cross-references to the appropriate geographic headings had been added for many ethnic groups and some archaeological sites. These cross-references were probably obtained by listing those that appeared in the Library's catalogue.6

Because the small size of the Library staff and inadequate financing made systematic revision impossible, the 1963 published list of subject headings was not up-to-date for either geographic or topic headings. Harvard anthropology faculty members were aware of the inadequacies, as was evident in their responses to a memorandum circulated on September 18, 1962 by J. O. Brew, the Director of Peabody Museum. They agreed unanimously that the subject headings should reflect current usage in anthropological periodicals, be scientifically sound, and be revised with a view to being as valid as possible over the coming decades.8

In 1971 a revised list of anthropological subject headings was published at the same time as the second supplement to the Library's published catalogue.9 The published list had grown from 117 pages in 1963 to 237 pages. The real growth in the list was accounted for by new cross-references for ethnic groups and geographic locations. Only a small number of headings were added for the many countries that had become independent in the preceding decades, and only a few new topic headings were added for the many new subject interests of anthropologists that had proliferated since 1960. The subject headings had not been substantially revised because the Librarian felt that it was a "monumental" task.10
In 1977 when a substantial revision of the subject headings was started, the attitude of Harvard anthropology faculty toward the subject headings was essentially the same as in 1962: they were woefully inadequate. The Librarian agreed, and felt that a process of continuous revision had to be implemented not only to bring the headings into line with late twentieth century anthropology, but also to keep them attuned to future changes.

By 1977 the basic geographic-linguistic organization of Dixon’s system of subject headings was no longer valid, and the major topics were no longer of primary importance to anthropologists. Therefore, the basic organization of the subject headings was changed to give primacy to ethnic groups, linguistic groups (where not synonymous with ethnic groups), archaeological sites, and primate species; and geography became a secondary point of access. A decision was also made to update all geographic headings to reflect contemporary nomenclature and political realities. Many new topic headings were added for contemporary subfields of anthropology such as economic anthropology, medical anthropology, and psychological anthropology. Whole sections of obsolete headings were deleted and appropriate new topic headings were added. For example, the "somatology" headings were replaced by headings on biological anthropology, evolution, fossil man, and primates. Subject headings also were added for interdisciplinary topics of interest to anthropologists, such as the mass media and semiotics.

Since 1977 the process of revising subject headings has been accomplished through weekly meetings of indexing and cataloguing staff members, the consultation of standard anthropological sources, such as the Outline of World Cultures for ethnic headings, and consultation with subject experts in Harvard University’s Anthropology Department. With the exception of adding headings for new subfields of anthropology or thoroughly revising sets of obsolete headings, the process of revision has been gradual, following subjects in current anthropological literature as indexed and catalogued at Tozzer Library.

By mid-1980 the Library’s copies of the 1971 subject heading book were nearly illegible because of numerous changes and the process of revising subject headings had reached a point where the publication of a new list seemed warranted. The revised list of subject headings was published in July 1981 as the Tozzer Library Index to Anthropological Subject Headings, Second Revised Edition.

The topical expansion of the Library’s subject headings and the growth of anthropology since the beginning of the century are reflected in eighteen major subfields of anthropology for which there are specific subheadings, plus forty-six general subheadings that can be applied to all subfields of anthropology—a very substantial increase from Dixon’s fourteen main topic headings and related subheadings. Since the content and limitations of the 1981 published list are discussed in detail in its introduction, there is no need to enumerate them here. However, it should be emphasized that the 1981 published list represents only some of the changes that were made in the Library’s catalogue, where cross-references were made for every subject heading that was changed.

Tozzer Library’s subject headings are still being revised. Since mid-1980 when the list was edited for publication, over 700 new subject
headings and cross-references have been added. With continuous revisions the subject headings should accurately reflect the development of anthropology and the primary concerns of anthropologists that are expressed in anthropological literature.

Footnotes


7. Index to Subject Headings, p. iv.

8. Staff Comments on Subject Catalogue, Manuscript, 1962.


10. Ibid., p. 3.


III. RECENT DISSERTATIONS

