

# Announcement: Cancellation of LCSH headings for Slurs

**From:** Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division, Library of Congress

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*Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH) contains headings for specific words in various languages. For example: **And (The English word)**; **Chez (The French word)**; **Noch (The German word)**, etc. Headings constructed following this pattern have a Broader Term (BT) reference in the form of the language subdivided by **--Etymology**. For example:

And (The English word)

BT      English language--Etymology

It has come to our attention that some LCSH headings following this pattern have been established for words considered to be slurs (i.e., derogatory terms used to insult, disparage, or denigrate people according to their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexuality, occupation, etc.). Given the hurtful nature of these words, the Library of Congress has decided to cancel these headings and not establish any new such headings in the future. Resources written about words considered to be slurs should instead be assigned the heading for the language subdivided by **--Slurs**. For example: **English language--Slurs**. Such heading strings will need to be editorially established, as the subdivision **--Slurs** will not be established as a free-floating subdivision. Additional headings may be assigned to bring out other aspects of the resource.

The Library has begun a project to identify and cancel existing LCSH headings for slur words established following this pattern, starting with English-language words. LCSH Tentative Monthly List 2407 contains cancellation proposals for five such headings, as well as a proposal to establish the new heading **English language--Slurs**. Future tentative lists will address slur words in other languages. As part of the project, Library of Congress Classification (LCC) numbers associated with the cancelled headings will also be cancelled. The cancelled numbers will be parenthesized, as usual, and the captions containing the offensive words will be replaced by “[Caption removed]”. List 2407 contains cancellation proposals for three LCC numbers as well as a proposal to establish the new replacement number: **PE3724.S58**.

Note: There will be no attempt to cancel headings constructed according to this pattern for other words that may be considered offensive to some users (e.g., swear words), only those considered to be slurs. When determining whether a word represents a slur, we have considered the current usage of the word as defined in standard dictionaries for the language as well as relevant specialized reference sources. We note that current usage of a word may differ from historical usage – what was once considered a slur, etc., may no longer be (and vice versa). We also recognize that general usage for a word may differ from internal usage among members of the group. When in doubt, we have given preference to evidence that the group considers the word to be a slur when used by persons outside the group.

Comments about the proposals on List 2407 may be sent to [listcomments@loc.gov](mailto:listcomments@loc.gov). Comments and questions about the project may be sent to [policy@loc.gov](mailto:policy@loc.gov).