

Prejudice but no pride: The Portuguese Universal Decimal Classification's labelling of sexual orientation

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Abstract

Critical cataloguing aims to study cases of social injustice, misrepresentation, negative biases, offensive terminologies, and hegemonic and oppressive hierarchical structures in the representation of communities and identities in knowledge organization systems. The aim of this study is to provide a critical analysis of the representation of sexual orientation in the Portuguese Universal Decimal Classification, grounded in a qualitative content analysis method. The results show that the principle of exhaustiveness does not manifest itself in the representation of sexual orientation. The absence of the term ‘heterosexuality’ mirrors the heteronormative hegemony, while the minoritization of ‘lesbianism’, but not of ‘male homosexuality’, reflects the patriarchal hegemony. The representation of sexual orientation carries the historical pathologization of sexual orientations other than heterosexuality. The Portuguese Universal Decimal Classification conveys negative biases and misrepresents sexual orientation in a way that is irreconcilable with present-day reality. Critical thinking must be encouraged within the library community and the Universal Decimal Classification should be promptly revised and updated.

Keywords

Classification, subject analysis, critical cataloguing, Universal Decimal Classification, knowledge organization system, critical perspectives, library and information science, bias

Introduction

‘To classify is human’ (Bowker and Star, 2000: 1). The acts of categorizing (i.e. of creating and defining categories or classes) and classifying (i.e. of determining the class, or classes, to which objects, both in the corporeal and in the abstract realms, belong) allow chaos to be made intelligible and, consequently, us to make sense of reality. The need to categorize and classify the universe is innate to humankind, and we operationalize it both lucidly and instinctively (Bowker and Star, 2000).

The knowledge organization systems (KOSs) in which classifications are included descend from and reflect this intrinsic need we have to categorize and classify, and, in the case of library classifications

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and in the epistemic context of knowledge organization, the universe that matters is knowledge itself.

Mai (2013: 243) states that at the beginning of the history of library classification theory, ‘it was assumed that the universe of knowledge exists independently of human perception and specific cultures’. We assert that such a view is controversial and illogical, fallacious even, for if knowledge is a human construct arising from thought, how can we argue that it exists apart from its creator? This point of view is shared by Drabinski (2013: 103), who states that ‘we do not discover knowledge: we create knowledge’.

At present, the subjective nature of classifications is accepted by most of the academic and scientific community (Mai, 2016). Although KOSs continue to be governed by the maxims of objectivity, neutrality and universality (Thornley et al., 2022), ‘classification is one method of organising, structuring and describing the world. As such, like any method of describing, it both reflects a particular human perspective on the world and can also reinforce or undermine particular perspectives’ (Thornley et al., 2022: 1463).

Based on these assumptions, we intend to present a critical analysis of the representation of the concept of ‘sexual orientation’ in the Portuguese edition of the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC), and examine its adequacy or inadequacy, providing awareness of critical cataloguing in the Portuguese librarian community.

We will start by exploring the biased nature of KOSs, which is followed by a literature review on the representation of the queer domain within the field of knowledge organization. This section ends with a subsection on works related to this article, where we explain the need and pertinence of our work.

The biased nature of KOSs

The biased nature of KOSs can take many forms, both beneficial and harmful. Colombo (2020) emphasizes that the inalienable particular human and social perspectives inherent to the design of KOSs translate into cases of representation, under-representation and misrepresentation of information within systems. The author highlights that ‘by preferring a name (terms or words) to represent a concept, an identity to that concept is being established. This identity is biased, it has a way of recognising and observing that reality’ (Colombo, 2020: 99). Colombo (2020) also seeks to discuss and underline the connection between the representation and misrepresentation of information in KOSs and the phenomenon of bias. To this end, Colombo (2020) put forth a distinction between

positive and negative biases. Positive biases may be assumed to exist if the representation of reality is expressed beneficially and favours a certain community or domain of knowledge. As far as negative biases (prejudices) are concerned, these occur

when a bias does not represent the ideological, cultural peculiarities and fails to represent the concepts, in some cases reaching prejudice. . . . [A] system that has misrepresentation as a result of a void in the representation or due to the fact that the concepts are not represented in a proper way . . . has a negative bias. (Colombo, 2020: 101–102)

According to Perera (2022), the issue of negative biases and misrepresentation in KOSs has been studied in the light of an approach called critical cataloguing, which derives from a school of thought, primarily radical in nature, known as critical librarianship.

Critical cataloguing, which translates into the use of critical knowledge and thinking in cataloguing (Olson, 1997), has sought to study cases of social injustice, misrepresentation and negative biases, offensive terminologies, and hegemonic and oppressive hierarchical structures in the representation of communities and identities in KOSs and library catalogues (Dobreski et al., 2022; Perera, 2022; Snow and Dunbar, 2022). These issues have been discussed by authors whose studies have addressed the representation of various concepts in KOSs – for example, religion (De Miranda and Da Silva, 2019), ethnicity (Adler and Harper, 2018; Simões, 2010), gender identity (McDonald, 2020) and sexual orientation (Christensen, 2008) – with a particular focus on the Library of Congress Classification and the Library of Congress Subject Headings, and also the UDC, although to a lesser extent (e.g. Courbières, 2013; Santos et al., 1999; Simões, 2010).

Olson (2001: 4) notes that the prevalence of prejudices and negative biases in the studied KOSs results from a patriarchal, Caucasian, Christian, cisnormative, heteronormative and binary (in terms of gender identity) perspective, which ‘is labelled the mainstream and, hence, the universal from which all else is a deviation’. Guimarães et al. (2019) state that if these same biases coincide and translate the preconceived ideals of the society and culture in question, especially of the dominant societal units that marginalize and make invisible social minorities, the biases can be dangerous and harmful for the respective communities of users. In turn, Drabinski (2013: 97) highlights that the biased and inherently deviant-from-reality nature of KOSs perpetuates the maintenance of negative and pernicious biases in society, as

‘biased ideological stories continue to be “told” by the organizational systems’. According to the author, ‘as users interact with these structures to browse and retrieve materials, they inevitably learn negative stereotypes about . . . social identities’. This view is similarly advocated by Dobreski et al. (2022) and Westenberg (2022), who emphasize the perpetuation of problematic terminologies in controlled vocabularies.

Nascimento and Guimarães (2017: 357) underline the weight of language, *lato sensu*, in the queer domain and the empowering role of knowledge organization, advocating it as a gesture of self-empowerment. Nevertheless, Guyan (2021) questions whether categorizing, in a detailed way, concepts related to identity characteristics in KOSs might produce the opposite consequence to that first intended – that is, stimulate and strengthen the segregation of social minorities, focusing on the case of the queer community.¹ In turn, Clarke and Schoonmaker (2018: 23) argue that ‘people from traditionally marginalised communities . . . need access to books and library resources about or created by people like themselves so that they can see their identities, stories, and experiences reflected in contemporary media’, which, they assert, requires that KOS vocabularies and structures accurately portray these identities and experiences.

Knowledge organization and the queer domain

The representation of the queer community and, inherently, of the concepts of ‘gender identity’ and ‘sexual orientation’ in KOSs has been studied by authors such as Adler (2015), Bullard et al. (2020), Christensen (2008), Drabinski (2013), Pinho and Milani (2021), Santos et al. (1999) and Watson (2020), whose findings have strengthened the relevance of KOSs containing terms that truly and properly represent the contemporary spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations.

Pinho and Milani (2021: 189) deal with ethics in information representation and stress the social character of the library profession, as they state that it is a profession that cares not only about information but also about people. They argue that librarians should focus the task of information representation on the triad of critical thought, multilingual competence and ethical wish, claiming that their denial is what causes the inadequate and biased representation of information. They discuss in detail the representation of homosexuality and warn about the difficulty in representing concepts inherent to the queer domain, given the numerous metaphors and figures of speech (Pinho

and Milani, 2021: 198), reinforcing the joint role of literary and user warrants. They conclude that there is a peremptory and pressing necessity to critically and ethically reflect on current KOSs and recognize the values that are intrinsic to the processes of information representation and knowledge organization, such as transculturality in mediation, linguistic diversity and cultural warrant.

Utilizing queer theory in conjunction with library classification theory and cataloguing, Drabinski (2013: 108) explores the endemic nature of negative biases in KOSs and the underlying power structures, and concludes that if one assumes identity categories or labels ‘as embedded in contingencies of space, time, and discourse, then bias is inextricable from the process of classification’. However, as McAuliffe (2021: 214) clarifies in her review of Drabinski’s work, ‘altering controlled vocabulary, especially when talking about queer identities and content, is a contradictory endeavour that merely erases relevant discourse while also continuing to fail to meet the information needs of those seeking content classified in such controlled ways’. Within this line of thought, Drabinski (2013) argued that KOSs should not get their biases erased, which would allow librarians to continue to critically look at KOSs as mutable and subjective structures. We view this to be an interesting theory whose applicability reveals potential constraints, as elucidated by McAuliffe (2021) in her review and analysis of Drabinski (2013).

Christensen (2008) seeks to trace the evolution in the Library of Congress Subject Headings since the early 1990s, continuing Greenblatt’s (1990) work, of the terms used to represent both male and female homosexuality, and, replicating the Greenblatt’s research methodology, examines the same phenomenon in the Library of Congress Classification. As far as the Library of Congress Classification is concerned, Christensen clarifies that it is natural to have a lower degree of exhaustiveness and specificity in classes that do not have so much direct contact with sexual orientation, and that the representation of the concept in library classifications should be grounded in the literary warrant. In light of the minoritization versus universalization dichotomy in KOSs, elucidated by Campbell (2000), Christensen (2008: 236) advocates that, in the representation of sexual orientation, minoritization should be favoured over universalization – that is ‘visibility at any cost’.

Adler (2015) travels through the 1970s and 1980s and explores and reports on the Herculean battle of North American librarian activists with the Library of Congress to persuade this cultural heritage institution to revise the representation of homosexuality in its

KOSs – that is, the Library of Congress Classification and Library of Congress Subject Headings. Adler emphasizes the historical pathologization of homosexuality in these two KOSs and highlights the dialectical and even symbiotic character of library classifications and classified entities – a notion she illustrates by quoting Hacking (2004: 280): ‘naming has real effects on people, and changes in people have real effects on subsequent classifications’.

Watson (2020) develops the theme of critical cataloguing, contextualizing and historicizing it by reviewing literature that focuses on the problematic of the representation of sexual orientation in KOSs. Watson uses the introduction of the term ‘asexuality’ in the Library of Congress Subject Headings as a case study for all the reflections proposed. Moreover, Watson commends the role of the librarians involved in the critical cataloguing movement in the North American context, and stresses the attention that should be given to the relationship between users and metadata, advocating that users have the right to recognize themselves in the description of information resources (i.e. in the metadata), just as they have the right to find themselves in the resources of collections. Watson illustrates the weight of metadata – namely, of controlled vocabularies – by commenting that if a user comes across terminology in a catalogue that may not be recognized or may be found offensive, the likelihood of the user actually using the information resource or, in the extreme, wanting to continue to retrieve information from that catalogue is reduced.

Bullard et al. (2020), aware of the limitations of contemporary KOSs – specifically, library classifications and subject heading lists – when it comes to the queer domain, design and develop KOSs for a library specialized in queer information and knowledge. Concerning the design of the library classification, Bullard et al. emphasize the impracticality of the mutual exclusivity of concepts (a classic principle of library classification theory) when attempting to represent intersectional identities. They argue that decisions should be based on the cultural rather than the literary warrant, and further assert that observing KOSs in light of queer subjectivity offers new ways of approaching the related phenomena and serves to circumvent obsolescence.

Problem statement

In the European context, Santos et al. (1999) analyse the 1995 edition of the UDC, translated into Spanish, and study cases of discrimination against social minorities. Concerning the representation of sexuality, Santos et al. report a strong and undoubted religious ideological

influence and an inadequate correspondence between the concepts of ‘sex assigned at birth’ and ‘sexual orientation’. They comment that when there should only be two notations, it is striking that, within the group of persons according to sex, a differentiation is made with regard to sexual preferences and, furthermore, that regarding the sexual tendencies indicated, they believe they should not be included in such a subclass since a person’s sexual preferences or behaviours do not determine a person’s sex (Santos et al., 1999: 110).

In turn, Courbières (2013: 112) studies the representation of the concept of ‘gender’ in Dewey Decimal Classification and the UDC, and begins by stating that classification systems are ‘both ideological products and producers of ideology’. When it comes to the UDC and the representation of the concept of ‘sexual orientation’, Courbières mainly concludes that the UDC promotes the idea that sexual orientation is not independent of gender identity.

Deeply rooted in the English-speaking, mainly North American, librarianship culture and community, critical cataloguing has been a driver of reflections, discussions and studies in knowledge organization dealing with the biased propensity of KOSs and the resulting repercussions. In the European context – more specifically, in the Portuguese sphere – critical cataloguing and critical librarianship are barely noted. There are therefore few works on misrepresentation and the negative biases of queer identities in library classification systems in Portuguese in Europe – namely, the Portuguese edition of the UDC.

Given the scarcity of critical and social-justice-oriented works on the UDC, studies such as those previously mentioned (Courbières, 2013; Santos et al., 1999; Simões, 2010) and the one we present here are urgently needed and pertinent. Hence, this work intends to give continuity to the works of both Courbières (2013) and Santos et al. (1999) from a more current perspective and with a focus on the Portuguese UDC in Europe. In this sense, the main aim of this study is the critical analysis, in the light of critical cataloguing, of the representation of sexual orientation in the current Portuguese edition of the UDC, published by the National Library of Portugal in 2005, and to create awareness in the Portuguese library community of critical cataloguing.

It must be clarified that, for our purposes, we will support our study with the definition of sexual orientation given by the Homosaurus (Digital Transgender Archive, n.d.), a queer linked data vocabulary, which allows us to ground our work in both literary and cultural warrants. In this sense, sexual orientation is perceived as ‘the direction of an individual’s sexual

attraction towards other individuals of the same, opposite, or multiple sexes; commonly understood to be biologically and physiologically dictated, rather than sociologically determined' (Digital Transgender Archive, n.d.).

Objectives and methodology

As previously stated, our analysis aims to highlight and critically reflect on the representation and conceptualization of sexual orientation in the current Portuguese edition of the UDC system, and thereby contribute to the broader critical cataloguing movement. Specifically, we intend to (1) explore and expose the representative terms of sexual orientation in the UDC; (2) analyse the hierarchical relationship of the notations that codify those same terms in the UDC scheme; (3) present the results as well as any perceived biases and cases of misrepresentation; and (4) discuss and criticize the adequacy (or not) of the UDC edition analysed in the current classification of information resources.

The study is grounded in a qualitative content analysis method, which, in the words of Zhang and Wildemuth,

goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts . . . it allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner . . . [and to] explore the underlying meanings of messages . . . [and] is mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them, in the data. (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2017: 318–319)

The qualitative content analysis method 'usually consists of purposively selected texts' (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2017: 319). In this case, we used Almeida and Santos's (2005) *CDU: Classificação Decimal Universal: Tabela de autoridade*. This work is an abbreviated translated edition of the 2001 *Master Reference File*, published by the UDC Consortium. We used the e-book version. The content analysis enabled the analysis of the controlled vocabulary in the UDC scheme, as well as the hierarchical relationship established between the notations that codify the terms representing the subjects related to the concept of 'sexual orientation'.

Given its exhaustiveness, specificity and topicality concerning the queer domain, the coding step concerning this method was grounded in the sexual-orientation-related terms of the Homosaurus (Digital Transgender Archive, n.d.) translated into Portuguese. The terms selected were asexuality, bisexuality, demisexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, allosexuality, monosexuality, polysexuality,

pansexuality, grey sexuality and megasexuality, as well as sexual orientation, sexual identity, sexual diversity, sexual preference, sexual minorities, sexuality and sex. This method of selection of categories of analysis allowed the retrieval of terms representative of sexual orientation in the corpus of the data – that is, the Portuguese edition of the UDC (Almeida and Santos, 2005) – and the study of the hierarchy of the UDC notations that represent those terms within the classification scheme.

The discussion of the research findings was sustained not only by the qualitative data gathered and analysed in light of the content analysis method itself, but also its contrast with the literature review previously conducted on the topic, whose scope was the innate factionalism of KOSs. In this sense, we focused on cases of negative biases in the representation of the queer domain, specifically in the representation of the concept of 'sexual orientation' in bibliographic classifications. The literature review simultaneously addressed the critical cataloguing movement, in the light of which the findings of the research were discussed.

Results and discussion

The following is an outline of the notations and associated terms representing the subjects related to the concept of 'sexual orientation' identified in the UDC, which are underlined (the original outline, in Portuguese, is presented in Appendix 1):

055.1/3 Persons according to sex

055.3 Persons with uncertain, ambivalent, or other sexual, psychosexual, or social features (*e.g.*, asexuals, Bisexuals, Intersexuals, Homosexuals, Lesbians, Transsexuals, Transvestites, Sexual Perverts, Sadists, Masochists). (Almeida and Santos, 2005: 120–121)

613.8 Health and hygiene of the nervous system. Health and ethics

613.88 Sexual hygiene. Sexual education. Sexual life. Sexual excess. Licentiousness, debauchery, promiscuity. Prostitution. Sexual moderation. Sexual abstinence. Abstinence. Chastity. Sexual ambivalence. Intersexuality. Homosexuality. Contraception methods. (Almeida and Santos, 2005: 447)

616.8 Neurology. Neuropathology. Nervous System. Congenital, hereditary nervous dysfunctions. Genetic Neuropathology. Electrotherapy. Psychotherapy. Neurosurgery

616.89-008.44 . . . Sexual psychopathology. Psychosexual abnormalities. Inversions. Sexual deviations, perversions . . . Satyriasis. Nymphomania. Sadism. Masochism. Sexual inversions. Homosexuality. Bisexuality. Homosexual acts of men and women. Lesbianism. Sodomy. (Almeida and Santos, 2005: 503)

Terms representative of the concept of 'sexual orientation'

Regarding the first specific objective – that is, the exposure of the terms that are representative of sexual orientation in the UDC – we note the presence of the following terms (listed alphabetically): asexuals, bisexuality, bisexuals, homosexual acts of men and women, homosexuality, homosexuals, lesbianism and lesbians. This set of terms reveals, first, that the principle of exhaustiveness, on which the UDC is grounded (Simões et al., 2018), does not manifest itself in the representation of sexual orientation, as the terms are both scarce and sparse, with terms such as demisexuality, allosexuality, monosexuality, pansexuality and grey sexuality, for example, being non-existent. However, it should be noted that some of the terms used in the queer domain are quite recent, and it is therefore to be expected that some of these terms were not in use in the queer community or in the literature at the time the UDC was edited (almost two decades ago). The discussion of this point is not, however, the focus of the present study. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the term 'sexual orientation' itself does not exist, so the current UDC used in Portugal makes it impossible to adequately classify information resources whose core content is sexual orientation.

In turn, heterosexuality is also not represented in this library classification. This situation was previously noted by Christensen (2008), but in the case of the Library of Congress Classification, whose introduction of the term 'heterosexuality' only occurred in 2007. According to Christensen (2008: 236), by analogy, such a circumstance reflects the heteronormative hegemony underlying the UDC and, with regard to the existence of prejudice, 'if homosexuality is explicitly present... but heterosexuality is not, homosexuality becomes a deviation from the norm', and it is the same with respect to other sexual orientations. That heterosexuality is not represented in the UDC, and homosexuality, bisexuality and asexuality are, mirrors the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm in this KOS, for 'that which is considered normal does not have to be labeled' (Christensen, 2008: 231).

Asexuality is made visible in the UDC through the term 'asexuals', a sexual orientation that, in the case of the Library of Congress Classification Outline Class H, for example, is still being neglected and made invisible (Henry et al., 2022). As for the representation of homosexuality, the patriarchal perspective of the UDC is clear, since male homosexuality is assumed to be dominant over lesbianism (female homosexuality). Despite the need for differentiation

and therefore categorization of sexual orientation according to sex/gender, as argued by Greenblatt (1990) – an advocate of minoritization in KOSs – particularizing female homosexuality (through the term 'lesbianism') and not male homosexuality (e.g. through the term 'gay men') assumes the male sex/gender as the standard and, as such, not in need of categorization. The patriarchal hegemony in the UDC has also been pointed out by Santos et al. (1999).

Hierarchical relationship of the notations within the classification scheme

Regarding our second goal – the analysis of the hierarchical relationship of the notations that codify the subjects represented in the UDC scheme – we highlight the fact that sexual orientation is subordinated in the main UDC tables to Class 6 'Applied sciences. Medicine. Technology', and specifically to Subclass 61 'Medical sciences'. Such evidence allows the assumption that the UDC pathologizes sexual orientation – an inference that is corroborated by the fact that, in Subclass 61, sexual orientation is subordinated to Subclass 616 'Pathology. Clinical medicine'. The pathologization of non-heteronormative sexual orientations is not unique to the UDC. As stated by Bullard et al. (2020: 394), 'knowledge organization systems (KOSs), including classification systems... have historically placed and defined topics such as homosexuality... as types of mental illness'.

In turn, the representation of sexual orientation is subordinated as well to Subclass 613.8 'Health and hygiene of the nervous system. Health and ethics'. The presence of the terms 'hygiene' and 'ethics' indicates the imprint of religious ideology in the UDC. Santos et al. (1999), with regard to the Spanish version of the 1995 edition of the UDC, noted this as well, mentioning that the combination of concepts such as hygiene and ethics is shocking. The concept of the hygiene of the nervous system is not feasible, so the intersection of hygiene with the nervous system and, at the same time, ethics (connected to moral principles) refers to the cleaning of the 'mental, spiritual' system, which suggests the influence of religious morals and the consideration of non-heteronormative sexual orientations as a dirty part of human beings that can be cleaned – in this case by some type of liturgical ablution, hence the imprint of religious ideology. It should be noted that, between the 1995 edition, studied by Santos et al. (1999), and the 2005 edition, there are no differences in the representation of sexual orientation in Subclass 613.88 of the UDC.

Sexual orientation is also represented in the UDC's auxiliary tables, in particular Table 613.88 'Persons

according to sex’, under Table -05 ‘Common auxiliaries of persons and personal characteristics’. In this case, it is important to clarify that the UDC assumes that someone’s sexual orientation results from their sex, since Table -055.1/.3 ‘Persons according to sex’ encompasses sexual orientations. This assumption, also evidenced by Santos et al. (1999), reinforces the existence of negative biases in the UDC’s representation of sexual orientation. Between the edition of the UDC studied by Santos et al. (1999) and the one discussed in this study, it is noteworthy that, in Table -055.3, there has been the inclusion of the term ‘asexuals’.

Despite the evidence highlighted and discussed above, it should also be clarified that sexual orientation is represented by the same notations that are used to represent mental illnesses (e.g. sexual psychopathology, psychosexual abnormalities, inversions, satyriasis, nymphomania), sexual behaviours that are not exclusive to people with non-heteronormative sexual orientations (e.g. sodomy, sadism, masochism) and concepts that are perceived by society as pejorative (e.g. debauchery, promiscuity, licentiousness).

Inadequacy of the Portuguese UDC in representing the concept of ‘sexual orientation’

Firstly, it should be made clear that this version of the UDC, in use in many Portuguese libraries (Simões et al., 2018), confuses the concepts of ‘sexual orientation’, ‘gender identity’, ‘gender expression’ and ‘sex assigned at birth’. From our point of view, by representing concepts such as ‘homosexuality’ and ‘intersexuality’ through the same notation, it, inadequately, declares that these autonomous concepts are interrelated autonomous concepts, since homosexuality is a sexual orientation, while intersexuality refers to the biological sexual features of an individual. We have noted that a similar situation occurs with the terms ‘transsexuals’, referring to a gender identity, and ‘transvestites’, which in Portuguese translates as both a gender expression and ‘drag queens’ or ‘drag kings’ (performing artists). Courbières (2013) comes to a similar conclusion by pointing out that the UDC promotes the idea that sexual orientation is not independent of gender identity.

As Simões et al. (2018: 13) clarify, in libraries, the UDC is used to (1) represent and categorize the subjects of the documents that make up their collections and, in some cases, (2) physically arrange those same documents. In this sense, according to our findings, the current edition of the UDC used in Portuguese libraries, which adopt this library classification as a tool to classify the information resources that make up

their collections, restricts and even prevents an adequate representation of the content – that is, of the core subject of the information resources that primarily address sexual orientation.

Critical cataloguing pushes librarians and knowledge organization researchers to critically observe and rethink KOSs ‘from a social justice-oriented perspective’, which in turn will make it possible to reflect ‘on the potential harm or benefit of each term on users and the library community as a whole’ (Watson, 2020: 553). So, the analysis of the Portuguese UDC in light of the critical cataloguing movement has revealed the existence of negative biases and misrepresentation, in Colombo’s (2020) conception, of sexual orientation.

The UDC notations may not be commonly observed and explored by library users, so the understanding of its meaning (and therefore of the underlying negative biases when thought through the contextualization of the UDC scheme) will usually be obscured. However, such meaning is assimilated by librarians and, as McAuliffe (2021: 217) warns, not all librarians will have the sensitivity to recognize the presence of these negative biases, which may ‘simply reinforce the traditional knowledge and power structures’.

However, users have a perception of the arrangement of information resources on the library shelves, and it follows from the UDC that resources whose core content is, for example, homosexuality or psychosexual abnormalities might be classified, for example, with the notation 616.89-008.44 and therefore arranged side by side. Such an occurrence may promote the perpetuation of hate speech; the marginalization of social minorities, especially of individuals whose sexual orientation is not heterosexuality; the maintenance of poor mental health states and feelings of not belonging, mainly in users belonging to the non-dominant communities of society; and the alienation of users from collections and libraries (Dobreski et al., 2022; Drabinski, 2013; Guimarães et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Library classifications, as is the case with the UDC, are designed and grounded in a social, political and cultural context that is intrinsic to them, and, inherently, the biases innate to such a conjuncture become imprinted in both the vocabulary and the hierarchy of these KOSs. Nevertheless, societies and knowledge evolve, and library classifications should ideally progress and adapt to societal and scientific progress at the same pace. However, such an ideal is not a

reality, as library classifications are rigid systems that are slow to change.

Montenegro (2000: 71) asks whether the UDC is the prehistoric monster of classifications? If we focus only on the findings of this study, the answer to this question might be that it is. However, it must be remembered that the edition of the UDC that we used was not considered in the context of its genesis (two decades ago). Did this current edition of the UDC, in the year of its translation, represent sexual orientation in light of the collective thinking and science of the time? Or, perhaps, does the most up-to-date *Master Reference File*, in English, represent sexual orientation without negative preconceptions? Whatever the answer is to these questions, this study has allowed us to conclude that the current edition of the UDC in use in Portuguese libraries, regarding all the possible repercussions discussed here, prevents an adequate representation of the concept of 'sexual orientation', besides expressing prejudiced inclinations that are irreconcilable with modern society and scientific knowledge in Portugal. Critical thinking must be encouraged within both the scholarly and the library communities Europe-wide, and the Portuguese UDC must be peremptorily and promptly revised and updated.

Finally, on the one hand, we would stress to the Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists, Information and Documentation Professionals, which holds the power to raise awareness within the Portuguese librarian community, the urgent need to accurately represent the queer community in Portuguese libraries and collections. Such an active role might be put into practice by promoting panel discussions and training sessions, and creating social media content. At the political level, the Association might establish dialogues with the National Library of Portugal, the authorized publisher of the UDC in Portugal, and active members of the editorial team and advisory board of the UDC Consortium in order to actively participate in the urgent revision process of the UDC.

On the other hand, higher education institutions that train future librarians also have the power to make students aware of social justice issues within the field of library and information science, in particular with regard to the queer community and how to accurately represent and classify information and knowledge pertaining to the very identity of human beings. As Hjørland (2008: 96) has noted, '[t]here is no neutral platform from which knowledge can be organised', which means that KOSs in general and library classifications in particular will always have intrinsic negative biases imprinted in them. Nonetheless, we should try as much as possible to minimize

any biased inclinations, and critical cataloguing may be the first step to be taken along this everlasting path.



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Note

1 Queer is an umbrella term that 'refers to people who do not identify as cisgender and/or heterosexual' (Green et al., 2022: 20).

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Appendix I

Notations and terms representing the concept of 'sexual orientation' in the original Portuguese UDC, in European Portuguese

055.1/3 Pessoas de acordo com o sexo

055.3 Pessoas com características sexuais incertas, ambivalentes, ou outras características sexuais, psicosexuais ou sociais (por exemplo: assexuais. Bissexuais. Intersexuais. Homossexuais. Lésbicas. Transexuais. Travestis. Perversos sexuais. Sádicos. Masoquistas). (Almeida and Santos, 2005: 120–121)

613.8 Saúde e higiene do sistema nervoso. Saúde e ética

613.88 Higiene sexual. Educação sexual. Vida sexual. Excesso sexual. Libertinagem, devassidão, promiscuidade. Prostituição. Moderação sexual. Abstinência sexual. Abstinência. Castidade. Ambivalência sexual. Intersexualidade. Homossexualidade. Métodos de contraceção. (Almeida and Santos, 2005: 447)

616.8 Neurologia. Neuropatologia. Sistema Nervoso. Disfunções nervosas congénitas, hereditárias. Neuropatologia genética. Electroterapia. Psicoterapia. Neurocirurgia

616.89-008.44... Psicopatologia sexual. Anormalidades psicosexuais. Inversões. Desvios, perversões sexuais... Satíriase. Ninfomania. Sadismo. Masoquismo. Inversões sexuais. Homossexualidade. Bissexualidade. Actos homossexuais dos homens e das mulheres. Lesbianismo. Sodomia. (Almeida and Santos, 2005: 503)