

**ANSS Subject and Bibliographic Access Committee Cataloging Question June 2007**

How does Library of Congress Subject Headings treat smaller and alternative religious groups as opposed to the major world religions?

“Cults” (former but discontinued headings include “cult” and “cultus”) is used for works concerning “groups or movements whose system of religious beliefs or practices differs significantly from the major world religions and which are often gathered around a specific deity or person.” “Religions” is the heading used for works on the major world religions.

Ex. Cults: “Cults--Caribbean Area”; “Cults--Law and Legislation (May Subd Geog)”

Ex. Religions: “Religions--African Influences”; “Religions--Classification”

The heading “Sects” is assigned to works on “religious groups whose adherents recognize special teaching or practices which fall within the normative bounds of the major world religions.”

Ex. Sects: “Sāhebadhanīs (Sect)”; “Sects--China”; “Islamic Sects” with a narrower term “Sunnites”

Works on major world religions, major varieties of a world religion (i.e., “Sects”), and religious groups whose number of adherents is smaller (i.e., “Cults”) can also get their own headings. If a heading has not been established for a religious group, you can request that it be established via the web form at <http://www.lib.odu.edu/anss/>

Ex. “Christianity”; “Baptists”; “Islam”; “Santeria”; “Scientology”; “Old Believers”; “Hasidism”

Note that the usage of qualifiers for smaller/alternative/indigenous religious groups is inconsistent.

Ex. “Voodooism,” although antiquated and inappropriate is the term used for religious groups in both Haiti and the Southern United States. Whereas “Kumina (Cult)” is used for a Jamaican religion and “Rastafari Movement” for another.

“Cult” and “Religion” are also used as topical subdivisions. “Cult” is used as a “topical subdivision under individual deities, divine persons, saints, and persons worshiped for works on systems of beliefs or rituals associated with them.” “Religion” is used “under names of countries, cities, etc., ethnic groups, types of educational institutions, names of individual corporate bodies, and names of individual persons, for general works on the religions or religious history of those places, institutions, or people.”

Ex. “Christian martyrs--Cult”; “Oxum (Afro-Brazilian deity)—Cult”; “Francis, of Assisi, Saint, 1182-1225—Cult”; “Latin America--Religion”; “Navajo Indians—Religion”; “Harvard University—Religion”; Springfield (Ill.)--Religion

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Note: "Religion" may not be further subdivided by "History."