

January 11, 2006

James H. Billington  
Librarian of Congress  
Washington, DC 20540-4035

Dear Colleague,

On September 26, 2005, I formally recommended to the Chief of the Library of Congress Cataloging Policy and Support Office that the LC subject heading, ARMENIAN MASSACRES, 1915-1923, be replaced with ARMENIAN GENOCIDE, 1915-1923. That communication, which cited relevant precedents and scholarly justification, produced no reply. Subsequently, on 10-18-2005, 10-22-05, 10-28-05, 11-7-05, and 11-10-05, I submitted further documentation, from such sources as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and University of Minnesota Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. These, too, elicited no response.

In the meantime, I have heard--albeit indirectly--that this overdue change has been stymied or prevented by the State Department, presumably in order to avoid disturbing or inflaming relations with a NATO ally, Turkey.

I have two concerns:

1. The failure of the Library of Congress to acknowledge my suggestion and report on its status in a timely fashion.
2. The outrageous interference (or influence), if true, by an executive agency in the operation of the Library of Congress, in this case possibly damaging the historical accuracy and intellectual integrity of LC's product and undermining both the credibility and autonomy of the institution itself.

I trust you agree that serious communications to LC staff should be treated with speed and courtesy, and that professional cataloging decisions should be immune to political intervention. The Library of Congress should not be an instrument of any administration's foreign or domestic policy.

With best wishes,

  
Sanford Berman

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cc: Hon. Jim Ramstad  
Hon. Mark Dayton  
Hon. Norm Coleman