# **Holocaust denial literature classification proposal**

Proposed class #: D804.8

[Current class #: D804.35]

Cataloger's Comments: Denialist literature is antithetical to historical scholarship. It is characterized by purposeful mistranslation of documents; manipulation of statistics; misattribution of conclusions to sources that report the opposite; presentation of known forgeries as genuine texts; and so on. It is used for deliberate political aims instead of historical inquiry, denying the realities of things supported by the majority of historical evidence. As such, denialist literature is topically dissimilar to legitimate historical analyses; classifying it with or near historical scholarship is therefore inaccurate. And it's also problematic–classifying denialist literature adjacent to legitimate historical scholarship lends denialist works undeserved credibility. Library users, seeing the texts near each other, might not understand the difference between denialist works and credible scholarship. The ALA Core Subject Analysis Committee accordingly recommends that Holocaust denialist literature be classified (and maintained) at the end of Holocaust numerical range, to separate it both numerically and physically from legitimate historical works (including critiques of Holocaust denialism).

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# **Holodomor denial literature classification proposals**

Proposed class #: DK508.8379 (for Holodomor denial literature)

Change proposal for original class #: DL508.8378.H65 (to make just for works *about* Holodomor denial)

[Current class #: DK508.8378.H65 for both Holodomor denial AND Holodomor denial literature]

Cataloger's Comments (for change proposal): Denialist literature is antithetical to historical scholarship. It is characterized by purposeful mistranslation of documents; manipulation of statistics; misattribution of conclusions to sources that report the opposite; presentation of known forgeries as genuine texts; and so on. It is used for deliberate political aims instead of historical inquiry, denying the realities of things supported by the majority of historical evidence. As such, denialist literature is topically dissimilar to legitimate historical analyses; classifying it with or near historical scholarship is therefore inaccurate. And it's also problematic–classifying denialist literature adjacent to legitimate historical scholarship lends denialist works undeserved credibility. Library users, seeing the texts near each other, might not understand the difference between denialist works and credible scholarship. The ALA Core Subject Analysis Committee accordingly recommends that Holodomor denialist literature be classified (and maintained) at the end of Holodomor numerical range, to separate it both numerically and physically from legitimate historical works about the Holodomor (including critiques of Holodomor denialism).

Cataloger's Comments (for new proposal): Denialist literature is antithetical to historical scholarship. It is characterized by purposeful mistranslation of documents; manipulation of statistics; misattribution of conclusions to sources that report the opposite; presentation of known forgeries as genuine texts; and so on. It is used for deliberate political aims instead of historical inquiry, denying the realities of things supported by the majority of historical evidence. As such, denialist literature is topically dissimilar to legitimate historical analyses; classifying it with or near historical scholarship is therefore inaccurate. And it's also problematic–classifying denialist literature adjacent to legitimate historical scholarship lends denialist works undeserved credibility. Library users, seeing the texts near each other, might not understand the difference between denialist works and credible scholarship. The ALA Core Subject Analysis Committee accordingly recommends that Holodomor denialist literature be classified (and maintained) at the end of Holodomor numerical range, to separate it both numerically and physically from legitimate historical works.

–Literary warrant if needed for the change proposal:

Whisman, A. Unwritten : the hidden history of the Holodomor, 2018 $w (OCoLC)1050442311

July 19, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

From: ALA Core Subject Analysis Committee (SAC)

To: The Library of Congress

**RE: Proposals to reclassify denialist literature to the end of their topical numerical**

**ranges**

Denialist literature is antithetical to historical scholarship. It is characterized by purposeful mistranslation of documents; manipulation of statistics; attribution of "conclusions to books and sources that report the opposite"; presentation of known forgeries as genuine texts; and so on.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is used for deliberate political aims instead of historical inquiry, denying "the reality of something … supported by the majority of scientific or historical evidence."[[2]](#footnote-2) As such, denialist literature is topically dissimilar to legitimate historical analyses; classifying it with or near historical scholarship is therefore inaccurate. And it's also problematic–classifying denialist literature adjacent to legitimate historical scholarship lends denialist works "undeserved credibility."[[3]](#footnote-3) Library users, seeing the texts near each other, might not "understand the difference between the denial books' lack of appropriate research and their lack of credibility compared to the serious and credible books" on historical topics.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The ALA Core Subject Analysis Committee accordingly recommends that denialist literatures be classified (and maintained) at the ends of the numerical ranges assigned to the topics being denied, to separate them both numerically and physically from legitimate historical works. We have submitted proposals for changing the classification of "Holocaust denial literature" and "Holodomor denial literature," the two denialist literatures currently recognized in the LCSH and LCC. This pattern could and should be used for any future denialist literature subjects and classifications, as well.

Below is a sample of literary and user warrant (formatted as SACO proposal sources without the initial 670 coding) supporting our change proposals. They demonstrate a widespread understanding that denialist literature isn't legitimate history, and that placing it near or with legitimate history does a disservice to patrons and scholars looking for actual historical analyses.

* WJC urges libraries to reclassify Holocaust denial content, Apr. 4, 2023, via World Jewish Congress website, viewed June 30, 2023 $b ("In a letter addressed to the senior leadership of the Library of Congress, the American Library Association, the New York Public Library, the National Library of Israel, and the British Library, WJC Associate Executive Vice President Menachem Rosensaft noted that works that deny the Holocaust … should at the very least be reclassified to more clearly distinguish with works that commemorate the memory of the Holocaust"; "Placing books that deny the Holocaust alongside books about the Holocaust lends Holocaust denying content an undeserved credibility and does a disservice to the pursuit of academic research and intellectual honesty, Rosensaft wrote") $u <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/wjc-urges-libraries-to-reclassify-holocaust-denial-content>
* Spidal, D. Treatment of Holocaust denial literature in Association of Research Libraries, in Journal of academic librarianship v. 38, no. 1 (Jan. 2012): $b Abstract ("Collocation of material on the shelves is a popular discovery tool of library users. Works classed together are assumed to be about the same topic. When works of Holocaust denial are classed with works about the Jewish Holocaust, it may inadvertently lend them credibility") p. 27 ("When works of Holocaust denial literature and Holocaust denial are interfiled with works on the Jewish Holocaust, we do a disservice to our users and to the six million who died")
* Holocaust denial books in the academic library, Dec. 4, 2017, via ALA intellectual freedom blog, viewed June 30, 2023 $b ("The professor recognized the concern about outright censorship during the committee meetings but felt the books were miscataloged. The books were cataloged so that they were shelved along with serious research on the Holocaust. The professor felt students would not understand the difference between the denial books' lack of appropriate research and their lack of credibility compared to the serious and credible books on the Holocaust that were shelved with them. The resolution was to recatalog them") $u <https://www.oif.ala.org/holocaust-denial-books-academic-library/>
* Drobnicki, J. A. Holocaust-denial literature in public libraries : an investigation of public librarians' attitudes regarding acquisition and access, in Public & access services quarterly v. 1 (1995): $b p. 10 ("Several cataloging and classification solutions have been offered by those who object to the placement of revisionist material in the Holocaust-history section. One would be for DDC and LCC to establish a separate class for Holocaust denial. It has also been suggested, since it is an example of anti-Semitic literature, that it be classified as such") p. 20 ("When asked for their opinions on where Holocaust-revisionist materials should be classified, the majority of respondents chose classification within the Holocaust-history section (64%) … 21% of all respondents said that Holocaust-revisionist materials should have a separate number outside the Holocaust-history section, and 8% selected 'Other.'") $u <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=yc_pubs>
* Oxford English dictionary, viewed June 30, 2023 $b Denialism ("The policy or stance of denying the existence or reality of something, esp. something which is supported by the majority of scientific or historical evidence")
* Omelchenko, Y. How libraries and bookstores can support Ukraine and its people, Dec. 22, 2022, via Vox Ukraine website, viewed June 30, 2023 $b ("Holodomor denial is yet another Library of Congress classification category. Books under 'Holocaust denial' category are properly labeled and placed in a specially marked location in major metropolitan libraries. Public libraries should examine their collections and name the books that incite genocide") $u <https://voxukraine.org/en/how-libraries-and-bookstores-can-support-ukraine-and-its-people>
* Loroff, N. Holodomor : denial and silences, via Holodomor Research and Education Consortium website, viewed July 7, 2023 $b (Holodomor denialist literature as works of political propaganda and not historical inquiry: "One of the most interesting examples of books denying the Holodomor was written, supposedly, by labour journalist Douglas Tottle. In his book 'Fraud, Famine, and Fascism: the Ukrainian Genocide Myth from Hitler to Harvard' … Tottle writes that the whole notion of the Famine was fabricated by Ukrainian nationalists. It is widely believed that the book's contents were prepared by Soviet scholars and most historians today consider it to be Soviet propaganda") $u <https://education.holodomor.ca/teaching-materials/holodomor-denial-silences/>
* Applebaum, A. Red famine : Stalin's war on Ukraine, 2017: $b p. 380 ("Also in August 2015, Sputnik News, a Russian government propaganda website, published an article in English entitled 'Holodomor hoax.' The article presented views reminiscent of the old era of denial, called the famine 'one of the 20th century's most famous myths and vitriolic pieces of anti-Soviet propaganda' and even cited Douglas Tottle's long discredited book, 'Fraud, famine and facism.' The links that Tottle claimed between historians of the famine, alleged Ukrainian Nazis and alleged anti-Soviet forces in the West proved useful again to a Russia that once again sought to discredit the Ukranians as Nazis. By 2016 the arguments had come full circle. The post-Soviet Russian state was once again in full denial: the Holodomor did not happen and only 'Nazis' would claim that it did") $w (OCoLC)1000150623
* Gross, T. Expand, humanize, simplify : an interview with Sandy Berman, in Cataloging and classification quarterly v. 55, no. 6 (2017): $b p. 357 ([Written by Sanford Berman in response to Library of Congress rejection of proposals for specific types of denialism] "If, indeed, 'it is neither necessary nor desirable to establish headings for denialisms because in LCSH both sides of an argument are typically represented by a single heading,' why do the admitted HOLOCAUST DENIAL and HOLODOMOR DENIAL exist at all? Apparently, someone (rightly) recognized that there are in fact materials dealing directly and unequivocally with denial and deniers. That is, denial itself is the subject")
* Historical negationism, via Wikipedia, viewed June 30, 2023 $b ("Historical negationism, also called denialism, is falsification or distortion of the historical record"; "In attempting to revise the past, illegitimate historical revisionism may use techniques inadmissible in proper historical discourse, such as presenting known forged documents as genuine, inventing ingenious but implausible reasons for distrusting genuine documents, attributing conclusions to books and sources that report the opposite, manipulating statistical series to support the given point of view, and deliberately mistranslating texts"; "Usually, the purpose of historical negation is to achieve a national, political aim, by transferring war guilt, demonizing an enemy, providing an illusion of victory, or preserving a friendship"; "Because historians are credited as people who single-mindedly pursue truth, by way of fact, negationist historians capitalize on the historian's professional credibility, and present their pseudohistory as true scholarship. By adding a measure of credibility to the work of revised history, the ideas of the negationist historian are more readily accepted in the public mind") $u <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_negationism>
* International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania. Distortion, negationism, and minimalization of the Holocaust in postwar Romania, 2004: $b p. 2 ("An additional warranted clarification pertains to the use of the concept of denial or negationism, rather than the far more widely used term of revisionism. The choice stems from the fact that most of those who falsify, distort, and relativize the reality of the Holocaust label themselves 'revisionists' in order to gain respectability; after all, historical revisionism is a legitimate act that is always warranted in reexamining what predecessors have produced. Negationism, by contrast, is not a reexamination of established facts or a well-founded critique of prior interpretations; rather, it is a more-or-less explicit attempt to deny the Holocaust"; "Negationism is defined as the denial that the Holocaust took place and/or the denial of participation of significant numbers of members of one’s own nation in its perpetration. The negation may be outright and universal or deflective and particularistic") $u <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20080226-romania-commission-postwar.pdf>

1. “Historical Negationism,” in *Wikipedia*, accessed July 9, 2023,<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Historical_negationism&oldid=1164590638>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Denialism, n.,” in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed July 10, 2023,<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/87356762>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. World Jewish Congress, “WJC urges libraries to reclassify Holocaust denial content,” W*orld Jewish Congress*, April 04, 2023, <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/wjc-urges-libraries-to-reclassify-holocaust-denial-content>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Valerie Nye, “Holocaust Denial Books in the Academic Library,” *Intellectual Freedom Blog* (blog), December 4, 2017,<https://www.oif.ala.org/holocaust-denial-books-academic-library/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)