# ANSCRing the question: A hands-on approach to sound recording classification for college libraries

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What is ANSCR?

The Alpha-Numeric System for Classification of Sound Recordings (**ANSCR**) was created by Caroline Saheb-Ettaba and Roger B. McFarland in 1969. Consisting of 24 broad genres and a few subgenres, ANSCR was designed solely for sound recordings (unlike LCC or DDC) in any physical format.

ANSCR could be used for any size collection, but works especially well for the needs of a small (under 15,000) academic sound recording collection.

ANSCR call numbers at SLC
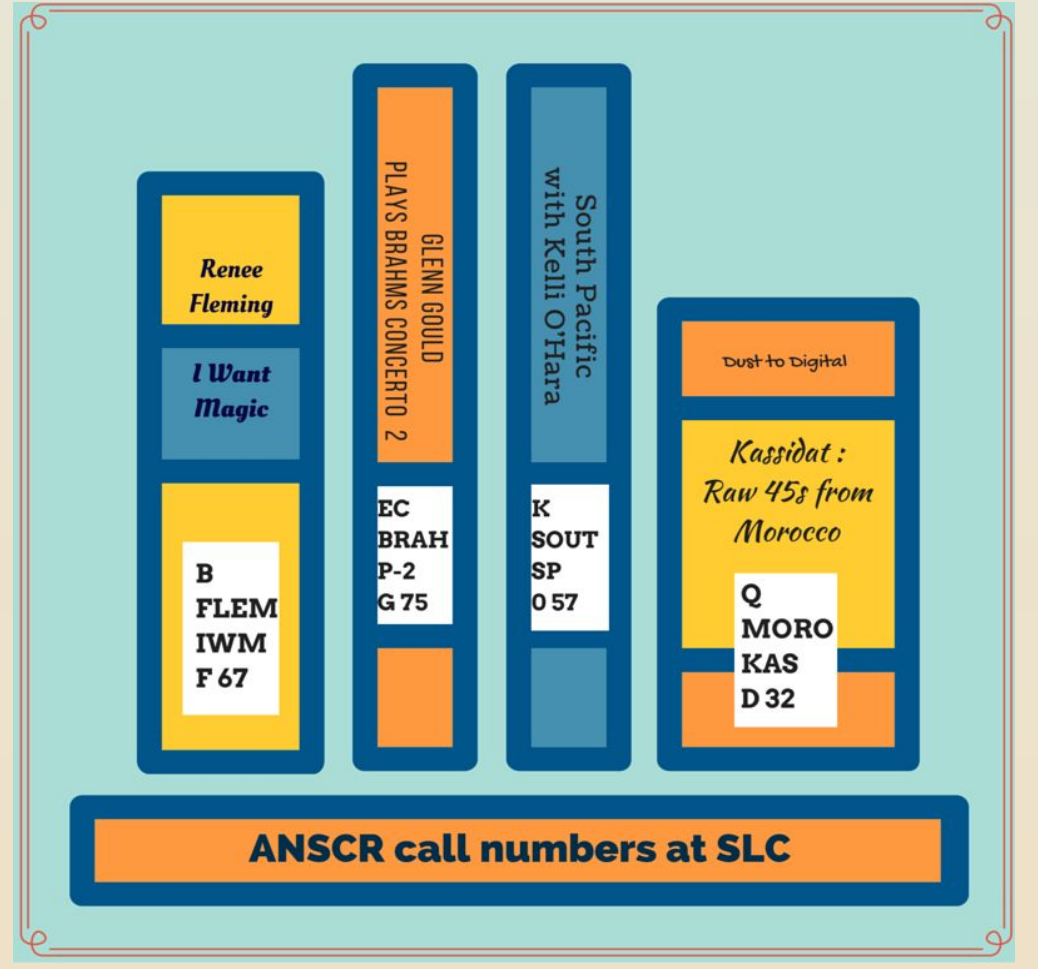
Current Sound Recording Classifications

A 2004 study by Lynne Weber & Jessica Schomberg of Minnesota State University, Mankato, found that 72% of 79 academic libraries respondents used accession numbers, 16% used LCC, 25% used home-grown systems, and 1% used ANSCR.

In 2015, 150 libraries were surveyed to assess the sound recording classifications used by academic and public libraries. Fewer use accession now.

2015 Survey of Library Sound Recording Classification: Systems by Library Type
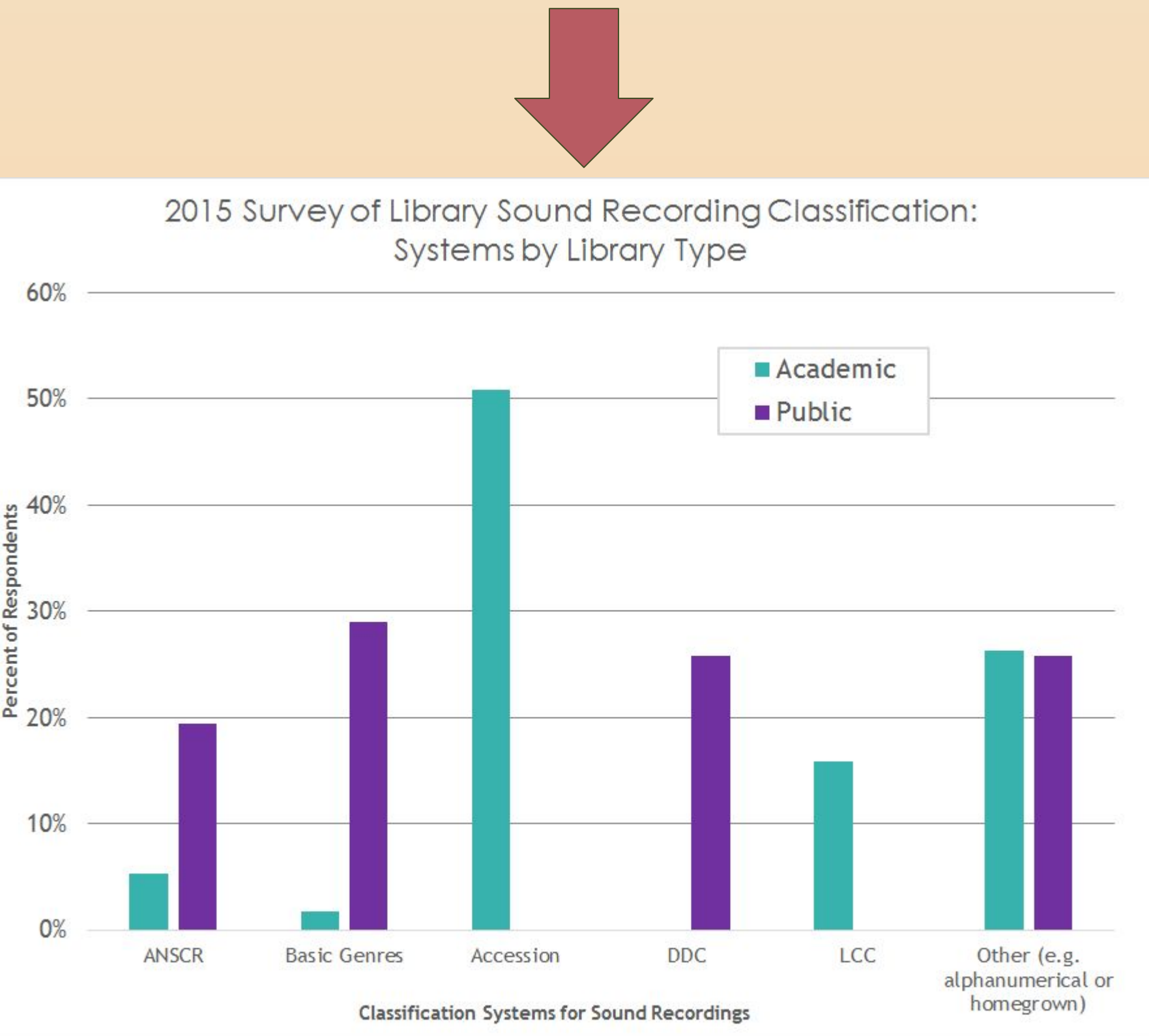
Categories of ANSCR

|			
A	Music appreciation, history	H	Band, wind, brass groups
B	Operas	J	Electronic music
C	Choral music	K	Musicals & operettas
D	Vocal music	L	Soundtrack music
(E)	Orchestral music	(M)	Popular music
EA	General orchestral	MA	Popular music: General
EB	Ballet music	MB	Blues
EC	Concertos	MC	Bluegrass & country music
ES	Symphonies	MG	Gospel
F	Chamber music	MJ	Jazz
(G)	Solo & duo instrumental	MP	Rap, Hip-hop, R&B
GG	Guitar	MR	Rock, Punk, etc.
GO	Organ & accordion	P	Folk music (USA, Canada)
GP	Piano	Q	Folk music (international)
GS	Stringed instruments	S	Varieties & humor
GV	Violin	Y	Sounds & special effects
GW	Wind instruments	Z	Children's music
GX	Percussion instruments		

Why we chose ANSCR

While several articles have promoted the benefits of serendipity in browsing, the SLC Library conducted our own study of patrons after observing difficulty in using the accession system.

A genre-based system was strongly preferred. Previous surveys had seen complaints from patrons on the accession system.

A migration to a new OPAC poorly-suited to music retrieval added to the need for a browsable system

Benefits

- Greater chance of serendipitous discovery
- Coherent call numbers
- Easy to browse
- More comprehensive than basic genres
- Less complex than LCC
- Greater visibility yields higher circulation
- Little training needed for staff to use
- Easy to modify
- Flexible

In a 2012 survey from the SLC Library

73%	11%
Preferred a genre-based system	Preferred the existing accession-based system
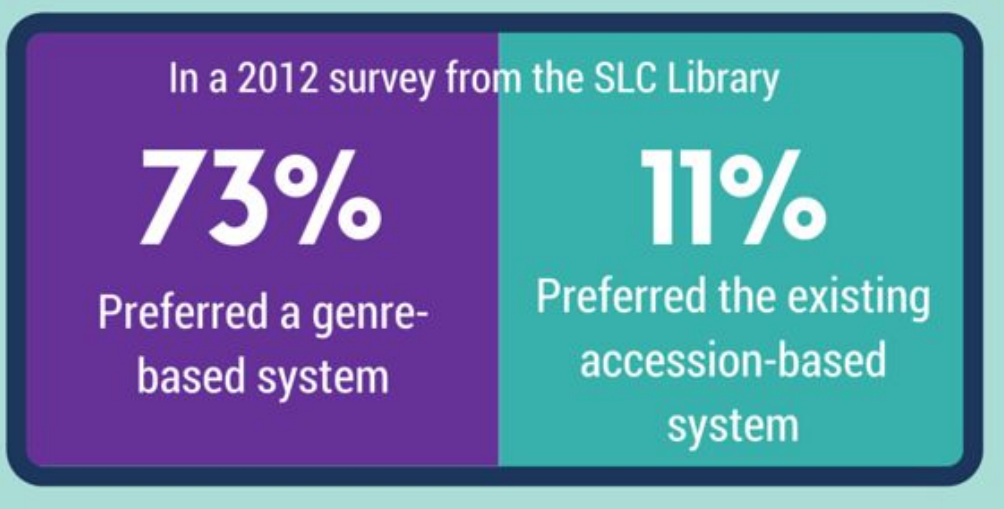
Roadblocks

- Shelf space: more is needed for new acquisitions
- Increased need for shifting throughout year
- Multiple genres on one recording
- Mysterious non-genres (e.g., Bang On a Can)
- Age of system (outdated terminology)
- Popular music (how do we define "popular"? Should Frank Sinatra be in the same category as Kelly Clarkson?)
- Western-centric
- Genre favored over composer might not suit some patrons
- Cost, time, and effort of reclassification
- Few online resources on ANSCR

Detours

Most of the problems encountered during the switch to ANSCR were workable - none were unsurmountable.

- We changed the use of GYPSY to ROMA as a term, and ESKI to INUIT
- We copied a few other libraries in the use of category MP for rap, hip-hop, and R&B. and MB for blues music
- Multiple genres on one recording were a problem for LCC as well, not unique to ANSCR. We'd go with whichever genre encompassed more of the CD as a whole
- Miscellaneous, "non-genres" would be shunted into "Chamber music" if mostly instrumental (not an ideal solution)

Sarah Lawrence College ANSCR Reclass

The Research

The SLC Library conducted a survey in 2011 to assess patron needs. Nearly 75% wanted a browsable system. ANSCR was chosen after a systematic review.

STEP 01

Summer Worker Maggie

The Budgeting

Our budget request had to occur the fiscal year before the reclass. The money needed for a full time student worker, labels, label tape, and CD cases was roughly **$4,000**

STEP 02

- **1** full-time student worker
- **1** full-time librarian
- **4** boxes of label tape
- **6,000** circulating CDs
- **12,000** labels printed

The Excel Sheets

From April through July 2012, we recorded existing call numbers, new call numbers, LCSH, and barcodes in spreadsheets

STEP 03

The Production

Behind schedule, we began printing the ANSCR call numbers and labeling CDs in mid-July, finishing during the 1st week of the new semester.

STEP 04

The ILS (or, the Panic)

Working from home on evenings & weekends became necessary to switch call numbers in the ILS, as no batch-edit was available. Tendonitis and panic set in.

STEP 05

The End

The reclass was finished by September 17th, in time for the start of music classes, but after the start of the semester. Small fixes could be done after that as we discovered minor errors.

STEP 06