The DEI Metadata Handbook

A Guide to Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Description

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why DEI metadata?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended audiences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals of the handbook</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of contents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload management</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Inclusive Description</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to identity</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to names</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for persistent problematic metadata or content</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Name Authority Considerations</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General considerations</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names of transgender people</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married women’s names</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English names</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Persons and Groups</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential prompts</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerations</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary options</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and group attributes in resource description</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and group attributes in name authorities</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Classification
   
   Overview
   Introduction to library classification
   Working within DDC and LCC
   Alternative classification
   Conclusion
   Resources

5. Subject Headings
   
   Overview
   Introduction to subject headings
   Working within LCSH
   Alternative subject headings
   Conclusion
   Resources

6. Accessibility
   
   Overview
   Accessibility and accessibility metadata
   Accessibility metadata in MARC
   Accessibility metadata for resources on the web
   Conclusion
   Resources

Afterword

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Introduction

As cataloguers, we have significant influence over how information resources are represented through the choices we make.
–Cataloguing Code of Ethics

Why DEI metadata?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are a set of principles adopted by many institutions to foster a welcoming climate where individuals from all backgrounds are treated fairly and have the opportunity to participate fully. Practices based on these principles are commonly referred to as DEI, though they are also known as EDI, DEIA (with an “A” for accessibility), EDIJ or JEDI (with a “J” for justice), EDISJ (with an SJ for “social justice”), and related initialisms. While critics claim that DEI-informed practices are ineffective, burdensome, or discriminatory against conservative viewpoints, advocates maintain that they mitigate discrimination and support historically marginalized groups. This handbook does not address the effectiveness of DEI initiatives, nor does it contend that any of the strategies discussed within are compulsory. Rather, it proposes that DEI-informed metadata promotes respect for all people who interact with or are described by metadata.

In the context of this book, metadata refers to information about resources collected by libraries, archives, and other cultural heritage institutions. Like DEI practices in general, metadata work with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion has various names, including conscious editing, critical cataloging, descriptive equity, equitable metadata, inclusive description, and reparative resource description. No matter the label, DEI metadata practices share common goals: enhancing diverse representation in descriptive metadata; improving discovery of diverse resources; and mitigating negative effects of inaccurate, outdated, or offensive terminology.

Although DEI is a relatively new initialism, the goals of DEI metadata have decades-old origins. Catalogers have long recognized the importance of representing diverse perspectives in bibliographic metadata. In the 1930s, Catherine Latimer and Dorothy Porter countered the limitations of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) by creating terms for topics important to Black researchers, such as slave insurrections,

passing, and Pan-Africanism. In 1971, Sanford Berman criticized the “prejudices and antipathies” found within the LCSH and called for revising pejorative terms for people. In 2001, Hope A. Olson identified “marginalizations and exclusions” in the library catalog and called on libraries to create space for underrepresented voices in bibliographic information—for example, by allowing multiple authoritative headings for a topic or by subverting traditional classification schemes. In 2008, Radical Cataloging: Essays at the Front brought renewed focus to the biases and shortcomings of traditional cataloging and suggested methods for making cataloging more inclusive.

The American Library Association (ALA) included diversity as one of the core values of librarianship in 2004—specifically stating that libraries reflect the nation’s diversity “by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve.” (ALA later folded diversity into a consolidated list of five core values: access, equity, intellectual freedom and privacy, public good, and sustainability.) As libraries cannot provide access to diverse resources without metadata, catalogers and metadata creators play a key role in improving their discovery. Furthermore, as Rachel Ivy Clarke and Sayward Schoonmaker argue, library metadata must not only “enable access to diverse reading materials” but also “promote these materials to wider audiences and enable more transparent dialogic interactions between catalogs and users.”

The ramifications of negative user interactions with library metadata gained attention in the 2010s, during an effort by Dartmouth College students to change the LCSH “Illegal aliens.” Calling the term “dehumanizing, offensive, inflammatory, and even a racial slur,” the ALA Council in 2016 supported its replacement with “Undocumented immigrants.” Although the Library of Congress eventually replaced the heading with “Noncitizens” and “Illegal immigration,” some cataloging and metadata professionals did not wait for the official change; by the end of the decade, they had adopted various strategies to remediate

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the problematic heading in library metadata.\textsuperscript{13} (See Chapter 5 for more on this issue and subject terms in general.)

The importance of diverse, equitable, and inclusive perspectives in cultural and educational institutions won increased attention during the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, particularly after the 2020 protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, by police in Minneapolis.\textsuperscript{14} In the wake of the protests, many libraries and other institutions issued statements condemning racism. Yet statements alone cannot dismantle systemic racism. Instead, as Amelia N. Gibson et al. note, “institutions must commit to action and accountability if they want to make change.”\textsuperscript{15}

In the succeeding years, enough institutions have heeded this call to make critical librarianship (critlib) one of the top trends identified by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL); this theoretical perspective “challenges librarians to take active steps toward antiracist and antioppressive practices” to benefit library users and the profession.\textsuperscript{16} Occasionally tense discussions in the field have juxtaposed critlib and social justice work against intellectual freedom, particularly the traditionally “neutral” policies of libraries that prohibit censorship or discrimination based on viewpoint. Nevertheless, like diversity, social responsibility and intellectual freedom are both core values of librarianship, and Emily Knox argues that “librarians are looking for practical and actionable methods … that take both values into account.”\textsuperscript{17}

Today, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), ALA, and many libraries worldwide—including Iowa State University Library, publisher of this handbook—have committed to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (https://sdgs.un.org/goals), the tenth of which is “reduced inequalities.”\textsuperscript{18} Metadata improvement is a practical method for working toward that goal: more inclusive description not only promotes diversity; it also upholds libraries’ mission to “provide meaningful access to information for all.”\textsuperscript{19}

For their part, cataloging and metadata librarians have begun to develop best practices for DEI metadata work. Notably, the Digital Library Federation’s Cultural Assessment Working Group began preparing an inclusive metadata toolkit in 2020; the Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee released the Cataloguing Code of Ethics in 2021; and the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) issued its Guiding Principles for

\begin{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Metadata Creation in 2023.\textsuperscript{20} This handbook refers to several of these recommendations and guidelines.

At Iowa State University Library, the Metadata Services department has committed itself to establishing thoughtful DEI practices in the metadata it creates and enhances. The authors of this book recognize that we work in a predominantly white profession in predominantly white institutions, and that the resources in our collections and their descriptions have long reflected this hegemony.\textsuperscript{21} We have undertaken DEI metadata work out of a shared belief in the importance of the goals stated above, as well as interest in representing our own diverse backgrounds. We understand the logistical challenges of remediating hundreds of thousands of metadata records in our collections, as well as the limitations of our own knowledge and biases. We have attempted outreach to some of the communities we describe, including representatives of several tribal nations and the advisory board for the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)-funded project Amplifying Black Voices in Iowa, but we have only begun to understand the dedication and cultural humility that this kind of work requires.\textsuperscript{22} Nonetheless, we summarize our commitment as follows:

Identities, names, and language are powerful; we will break down bias, cultural misrepresentation, discrimination, and racism through our work. We will describe our resources accurately with regard to culture, gender, and race, using terms that are appropriate and respectful to marginalized communities. We will rely on information readily available within the resources or from the creators. Our work may require revising legacy metadata to overcome past practices, controlled vocabulary limitations, and any implicit bias. We may make mistakes or overlook legacy metadata needing reparative remediation but will strive to remedy these promptly.

**Intended audiences**

Library professionals responsible for creating and managing metadata are the primary audience for this DEI metadata handbook. Additional audiences include, but are not limited to, professionals in other specialties of library and information science, archives, and other information management industries. Examples of these audiences include:

- **Library metadata creators** such as librarians, catalogers, metadata specialists, and any library workers who create and manage metadata.
- **Information professionals** creating resource descriptions or using metadata in their work, such as archivists, museum professionals, researchers, scholars, and data scientists.
- **Educators and students** who teach or take courses in library and information science, archives, and related fields.


• **DEI professionals** who specialize in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and are responsible for ensuring that metadata is created and managed in a way that promotes these values.

Throughout this handbook, references to professionals encompass members of all these groups.

**Goals of the handbook**

Readers will be able to use this handbook to:

- **Gain a broad awareness** of various DEI-related issues existing in metadata creation and management.
- **Learn techniques** for retroactively reviewing and updating existing metadata to address these issues.
- **Develop strategies** to create metadata that better meets DEI needs.

**Overview of contents**

This handbook may be read cover to cover, but its organization also facilitates skipping to chapters that are relevant to your work or interests. Each chapter focuses on a particular area of metadata work, detailing different ethical considerations and approaches. Each chapter includes examples and use cases related to its topic.

- **Chapter 1** covers inclusive description practices in free-text or uncontrolled elements, including titles and summaries. It outlines fundamental principles of inclusive description—relevance, users’ needs, accuracy, and respect—and offers tips for describing identities and determining which form of a name to use. The chapter concludes with strategies for handling cases where outdated or problematic language persists in metadata, including redaction, annotation, harmful language statements, and special genre terms.
- **Chapter 2** discusses various ethical considerations around name authorities, including privacy concerns surrounding birth dates, pseudonyms and anonymity, gender, and transgender names. It also acknowledges the complexity of determining the preferred forms of non-English names, including transliteration, spelling, and cultural considerations.
- **Chapter 3** explores the use of demographic group headings to describe people or groups. It covers why one may use such headings, what to consider before using them, vocabulary options, and how they can be incorporated into MARC (Machine-Readable Cataloging) and non-MARC metadata.
- **Chapter 4** describes issues regarding classification, particularly the historical origins of biases in the Library of Congress and Dewey Decimal classifications. Case studies illustrate two ways to address these biases: keeping current with changes and considering alternative classification systems.
- **Chapter 5** addresses biases that exist in subject headings, with a focus on Library of Congress Subject Headings, and ways to mitigate them. Case studies examine two strategies: changing existing headings through the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) and adding alternative headings to exiting library metadata. The chapter also includes a list of practical questions to consider before implementing alternative subject headings.
- **Chapter 6** defines accessibility metadata for physical and digital resources. It explores accessibility
metadata in MARC and focuses on the emerging importance of web accessibility, not only for inclusivity but also for legal compliance. Examples illustrate best practices for accessibility metadata, including alt text and extended description for images; audio description, captions, and transcripts for audiovisual resources; optical character recognition (OCR) for digitized text, and language information for digital resources.

Outreach

Several sections of the book recommend outreach to described communities as a method for determining preferred terminology. As mentioned above, the authors have reached out to some of the communities we describe. We have had fruitful communications as well as failures to connect. We realize that outreach is not a simple undertaking—it requires planning, resources, and ideally the support of your department or institution. If you work in a larger institution, you may be able to consult with communication specialists, DEI offices, or affinity associations for ideas and advice. Resources geared toward community engagement also can provide ideas for outreach activities and methods—for example, the open-access Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement (https://iopn.library.illinois.edu/journals/jloe/) and books such as Building Community Engagement and Outreach in Libraries (2022).

Outreach requires a respectful approach that may be described as cultural humility, a concept developed in healthcare, counseling, social work, and education and adopted by some librarians. Cultural humility, which aims to remedy power imbalances in personal interactions, is not an easily obtained skill but a set of ongoing practices that take time and self-reflection. Hurley, Kostelecky, and Townsend’s introductory article “Cultural Humility in Libraries” and book Hopeful Visions, Practical Actions: Cultural Humility in Library Work offer ideas and additional resources. Practical guidelines and templates for email outreach can be found in the PCC Standing Committee on Training’s document “Authority Control FAQs for Catalogers Contacting Creators/Contributors” and Cataloging Lab’s “Best Practices in Authority Work Relating to Indigenous Nations in the U.S.”

Workload management

Finally, we recognize that metadata professionals’ time is precious. Researching facts or conducting research to verify community preferences can consume much of our time and effort. To avoid becoming overwhelmed, we propose a few strategies for managing DEI metadata work:

1. **Usage statistics.** Through the virtue of circulation or online use, a resource’s importance to library users can indicate the urgency of metadata enhancement, including DEI work. Consider reviewing online usage data or circulation data (loans and in-house counts) to identify and prioritize high-use candidates for review.

2. **Flagging materials.** Consider creating a mechanism to flag materials, either during initial processing or whenever workers encounter them, that could benefit from a later DEI review or that could be referred to a colleague for DEI enhancement. This may be a preferable option for busy department staff tasked with processing many materials with tight deadlines. Materials could be flagged in your library system or tracked in project or task management tools.

3. **Metadata audits.** An audit of existing metadata may be another useful way to identify resources in need of remediation. Audits do not need to be comprehensive! Start by simply searching for a selection of problematic terms in existing metadata to create a list of records for potential remediation. Focus on terms relevant to your users.

4. **User feedback.** Consider a shared email address or online form to collect feedback from users about your catalog and digital repositories. Chapter 1 contains examples of harmful language statements that include instructions for reporting problematic metadata.

However you identify resources for DEI work, track their titles and identifiers on a task management board (e.g., Trello or Jira), a shared document (such as an Excel workbook or Google Sheet), or a combination of these methods. Staff can then reference these lists during enhancement or remediation projects or during slower periods of the year.

We recognize that the lack of a single DEI standard to follow is challenging, and the amount of reparative work to be done may seem infinite. Nevertheless, as archivist Dorothy Berry reminds those who undertake DEI metadata work, “Perfection is not the goal. Progress is the goal.”

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29. Dorothy Berry, “Conscious Editing: Enhancing Diversity and Discovery” (webinar, Sunshine State Digital Network Introduction to Conscious Editing Series, October 7, 2020), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nOKbyU3K-nm2Y4GNh0OI96KD8d-ZOAtN/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nOKbyU3K-nm2Y4GNh0OI96KD8d-ZOAtN/view).
Chapter 1

Inclusive Description

Overview

Inclusive description is one of many terms used to describe DEI metadata practices, but what exactly does it mean? The dictionary definition of inclusion—the “I” in DEI—is the “practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (as because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability).” Organizations such as Iowa State University have defined inclusion more broadly than the dictionary, as a “[c]ommitment to fostering a climate where all individuals have a sense of belonging through support and respect.” Inclusion thus refers to actions taken to respect and accommodate the needs of people—particularly those who have endured unequal treatment in mainstream society. Applying this idea to the information professionals’ understanding of description, inclusive description is information about a resource that not only helps users to discover and identify it but also meets those needs respectfully.

As a metadata professional, often working behind the scenes, you may not view yourself as having direct influence in the treatment of visitors to your library, archives, or museum. However, as a creator or enhancer of resource descriptions, you wield the power of language. Your work may be reactive, such as remediating biased or outdated terminology. It also may be proactive, such as writing descriptions that acknowledge the diverse backgrounds of your potential audiences. Either way, the metadata you produce is one of the primary ways that users interact with your institution. For that reason, you have a responsibility to foster respectful interactions.

This chapter provides recommendations for inclusive description in areas where metadata professionals have more flexibility and thus more responsibility to use accurate and respectful language. Free-text and uncontrolled elements—for instance, descriptions, summaries, biographical histories, notes, and alt text—offer a measure of descriptive freedom (see Figure 1.1). In addition, the title element, while usually restricted to the transcription of formal titles, offers flexibility when you need to devise titles for resources that lack them. (See Chapters 2, 3, and 5 for information about controlled fields.)

4. For a creative examination of metadata work as invisible labor, see Ann Kardos, Unseen Labor (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, 2022), https://doi.org/10.7275/qg36-rn69.
In any free-text element, references to human identity and personal names require attention and care. The next sections of this chapter offer strategies for describing identities and general tips about the use of names in free-text elements. However, sometimes metadata records contain problematic language that cannot easily be remediated. Insufficient resources and system limitations have meant that outdated metadata persists in many catalogs. Moreover, a commitment to historical accuracy may require the retention of offensive terminology. For these cases, the chapter concludes with sections on strategies for alerting users to potentially offensive descriptions: redaction or annotation; harmful language statements, also known as disclaimers or trigger warnings; and special genre terms that identify works as prejudicial.

References to identity

Identity is a complex concept that describes people’s character and personality, as well as their psychological orientation toward groups of associated people. A person’s identity comprises multiple, often intersectional, categories related to ability, age, class, gender, race and ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. Additional categories such as education level, family status, language, political beliefs, and work experience also contribute to identity.

Fundamental principles

If you are describing people in uncontrolled elements, when and how should you refer to identity? Consider the following principles to help you decide:

- Relevance
- Users’ needs

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• Accuracy
• Respect

Note: These principles also apply to descriptions of people in controlled elements. See Chapters 2, 3, and 5 for guidance.

Relevance

First, prioritize relevance. Is identity-related information a significant aspect of the resource? Irrelevant references to personal characteristics may “other” individuals, or imply they are outside the norm. For instance, describing someone as a “woman scientist” could seem belittling. Moreover, gender may be unnecessary to mention, unless it is key to understanding or discovering the resource. Some identifying terms even could violate the privacy or preferences of the people you’re describing. (For more on othering, see Chapter 3. For more on privacy, see Chapter 2.)

Users’ needs

If identity is relevant and appropriate to mention, consider how identity-related language in a free-text element might help users to find, identify, select, obtain, and explore resources. In other words, would researchers use the terms in your description to search for and discover the resource? Would the terminology help them decide whether to access the resource? Would it provide context to enhance understanding of the resource?

Accuracy

When you do use identity-related language, always ensure accuracy, which is a longstanding principle of descriptive work. Record only factual information—that is, information found in the original resource or other authoritative sources. It is human nature to make assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, or other identities, but you never should record your inferences without supporting evidence. For example, could a person potentially described as African American be from outside the United States or not of African heritage? Moreover, especially for living people, aim to follow personal preferences and privacy whenever

possible. For instance, if an author has a personal website that states how they prefer to be identified, respect their wishes. (For more on these considerations, see Chapters 2 and 3.)

Respect

Finally, be respectful. Again, when possible, use the terminology preferred by the people and communities you’re describing. If your department or institution has developed relationships with representatives of local communities, ask them how they prefer to be described. Considering the constraints of the platform in use, explain what changes or additions are possible in your metadata. Be receptive to their feedback and thank them for their contributions, perhaps through a grant-funded donation or a credit on your website, or by offering access to information resources in exchange. If local outreach is not possible, consult with metadata professionals who have done similar work and refer to sources created or approved by the subjects of your descriptions. You also can refer to the resources below for terminology suggestions. (See the Introduction to this handbook for more considerations about outreach.)

Outreach is not a realistic option when describing people identified in historical materials created before the mid-twentieth century. In these cases, you may consult historians or other experts in the field, or you may rely on the materials themselves to determine which terminology was appropriate for the era. If you do reproduce outdated terminology in a title or free-text element, be sure to provide adequate context. (See Figure 1.2a.) Also consider applying a harmful language statement, using a genre term for prejudicial works, or both. (Refer to the sections on these strategies at the end of the chapter.)

Recommendations

Below are some specific recommendations for referring to identity, organized by several dimensions of diversity. Although this list was inspired by the work of numerous creators of inclusive metadata, consider it a starting point rather than a definitive standard.12 In every case, do research or conduct outreach to determine the terminology preferred by the described individual or community. (Refer the the “Respect” section above for tips.) Moreover, keep in mind these caveats:

- Members of any group may have conflicting preferences.
- Preferred terminology for any group may change over time.

Ability

- Be aware of differing terminology preferences in this area.
  - Person-first language, or describing a person before their disability, generally is considered respectful. For example, an individual with a disability.
  - However, some individuals and communities prefer identity-first language. In these cases, an

adjective describing the disability may come first—for example, a *hard of hearing person.*13

- Avoid condescending terms such as “handicapped,” “impaired,” and “challenged.”
- For terms to avoid and possible alternatives, consult the Cataloging Lab’s list of problematic Library of Congress Subject Headings ([https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/](https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/))
- Consult the ADA National Network’s Guidelines for Writing about People with Disabilities ([https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing](https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing))

**Class**

- Describe people equitably. When possible, specify names and other relevant details for all individuals described, not just the privileged and powerful.
- Avoid assumptions about socioeconomic status.
- Do not use dehumanizing terms like “the poor” or “the homeless.” Include the word “people”—for example, “poor people” or “people without housing.”

**Gender and sexuality**

- Do not assume gender or pronouns based on names or visual details. When gender is unknown or not relevant, use “person,” “individual,” “adult,” or “child” rather than “man,” “woman,” “boy,” or “girl.”
- When describing photographs, identify subjects from left to right rather than prioritizing by gender or status.
- Describe women by their full names, if known, rather than by their spouse’s name. If a first name is unknown, use the honorific and last name—for example, “Mrs. Smith” rather than “Mrs. John Smith” or “John Smith’s wife.”
- When describing individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, include information that you would include for cisgender heterosexual people—for example, marital, romantic, or parental status (if known and relevant).
- Consult these resources:
  - Homosaurus, a linked data vocabulary of LGBTQ+ terms ([https://homosaurus.org](https://homosaurus.org))
  - Cataloging Lab’s list of problematic Library of Congress Subject Headings ([https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/](https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/))

**Race and ethnicity**

- Do not assume race or ethnicity based on names or visual details, without supporting evidence.
- Avoid presenting whiteness as the norm or focusing on white subjects at the expense of people of color.
- Consult these resources:
  - Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia’s Anti-Racist Description Resources

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Creating Subject Headings for Indigenous Topics: A Culturally Respectful Guide
Cataloging Lab's list of problematic Library of Congress Subject Headings and Best Practices in Authority Work Relating to Indigenous Nations in the U.S.

Religion

- Do not assume religion based on race or ethnicity, or vice versa.
- Refer to Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices as religion rather than mythology.

References to names

Names in devised titles, descriptions, and other uncontrolled fields differ from the authorized versions of names recorded in agent or subject elements or in MARC access points. First, names given in these fields are unstructured: they are not tagged or identified as names. Second, they are typically in direct order, rather than inverted. Third, they may include terms of address or honorific titles, pseudonyms, nicknames, spouses’ names, former names, and chosen or preferred names. This flexibility means that metadata creators must exercise careful judgment when determining the form of a name to record in an uncontrolled field.

Content or input standards, including Resource Description and Access (RDA) and Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS), direct metadata creators to include names in devised titles to indicate the subject of the resource or the name of the creator. In devised titles, these standards generally advise using the authorized version of the name (but in “natural language” or direct order). If no authority record exists, they advise using the form of the name used in the resource being described, the form given by other sources most frequently or most recently, or the form by which the person or entity is generally known.

It is good practice to follow these guidelines when including names in free-text fields. However, the flexibility offered by uncontrolled fields means that you also can provide context when needed. While giving precedence to preferred names, you can give alternative names and supporting information when warranted, particularly in description or note fields. If the resource itself uses an offensive or former name, you may be able to offer historical context in an explanatory note, or you may choose to add a harmful language statement. For more information about names, see Chapter 2.


Examples

Figure 1.2a. Summary field (MARC 520) containing a former name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 1#</td>
<td>$a Bernard, Catherine, $e author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245 10</td>
<td>$a Sojourner Truth : $b women’s rights activist and abolitionist / $c Catherine Bernard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>520 ##</td>
<td>$a Born a slave named Isabella in New York, Sojourner Truth lived an amazing life. She spoke multiple languages, lived all around the United States, and was a mother, grandmother, author, speaker, and advocate for change. From emancipation to women’s suffrage, Sojourner Truth dedicated her life to equality. Discover what makes her such a treasured figure in American history and a true hero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 17</td>
<td>$a Truth, Sojourner, $d 1799-1883. $2 fast $0 (OCoLC)fst01851782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 1.2a, the title (245), summary (520), and subject (600) fields use the name preferred by Sojourner Truth, but the summary also includes Truth’s former name. This assigned name provides historical context and could possibly assist with discovery or selection. However, if you were creating or editing this record, you might consult the resource or other authoritative sources to determine whether Truth used or acknowledged that name.

It also would be a good idea to cite the source of this summary and place the cited text within quotation marks. Moreover, you should consider describing Truth with the adjective “enslaved” rather than identifying her by the noun “slave.” For more information, see the source notes in the Library of Congress subject heading (LCSH) Enslaved persons, as well as the Redaction and Annotation sections below.

Figure 1.2b. MARC main entry—personal name (100), title statement (245), and general note (500) fields for a hypothetical book having a deadname on the title page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 1#</td>
<td>$a Name, Right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245 10</td>
<td>$a Sample book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 ##</td>
<td>$a The name appearing on the title page has been omitted for privacy reasons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.2b shows three MARC fields for a hypothetical book written by a trans person before their public transition, where the title page shows the author’s deadname (a name given at birth that they no longer use). Catalogers typically transcribe the name on the title page in the statement of responsibility (MARC 245 $c), even if it differs from the author’s name in their authority record, shown in the main entry—personal name field (MARC 100 $a). If you omit a deadname, you may add a note (MARC 500) about the change to the statement of responsibility. (For more on omitting and annotating data, refer to the Redaction

17. “LC-PCC Policy Statements for Statement of Responsibility Relating to Title Proper,” RDA Toolkit, accessed April 26, 2024, [https://access.rdatoolkit.org/en-US_ala-0bd84b44-ab99-3250-b777-26927ba54e00/ala-0bd84b44-ab99-3250-b777-26927ba54e00](https://access.rdatoolkit.org/en-US_ala-0bd84b44-ab99-3250-b777-26927ba54e00/ala-0bd84b44-ab99-3250-b777-26927ba54e00).
and Annotation sections below. For more about names, authority records, and creator characteristics, see Chapters 2 and 3.)

**Figure 1.3. Non-MARC title field containing a preferred name**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Phi Beta Kappa letter to Cleota Proctor Wilbekin regarding S. Joe Brown’s membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Brown, Samuel Joe, 1875-1950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 1.3, the *devised* title of a letter regarding the first African American elected to Phi Beta Kappa in Iowa, the subject’s preferred name, S. Joe Brown, is indicated in the resource and in other materials in the National Bar Association digital collection.\(^{18}\) Although the subject field uses the form of the name used in Drake University’s archival management system, the devised title uses this preferred name.

**Figure 1.4 Non-MARC fields containing transcribed and authorized forms of a name, plus historical context**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Mrs. Welch’s Cook Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Welch, Mary B. (Mary Beaumont), 1840-1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Cookbook by Mary B. Welch, Instructor, Domestic Economy, Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Ames, Iowa. Among the contributors are other professors from Iowa State College, including Professor of Pathology and Histology Dr. D. S. Fairchild; Professor of Chemistry Thomas E. Pope; and Professor of Physics J. K. Macomber.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 1.4, the honorific title and name “Mrs. Welch” is retained in the transcribed title of an 1884 cookbook, but the name in the creator field is the Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF) authorized form, which includes Welch’s full name and life dates.\(^{19}\) Moreover, the description provides additional context about the author by stating her professional credentials.\(^{20}\)

---


19. “Mrs. Welch’s Cook Book,” Iowa State University Digital Collections, Iowa State University Library, accessed November 10, 2023, [https://n2t.net/ark:/87292/w9fk9m](https://n2t.net/ark:/87292/w9fk9m).

20. “Mrs. Welch’s Cook Book.”
Figure 1.5 shows an example of a woman’s name that could have been hidden from discovery. The title of the source newspaper (appended to the transcribed title of the illustration) includes the publisher’s name, Frank Leslie. However, the description and publisher fields give additional context about the publication, specifically that Miriam Leslie, Frank’s widow, ran the paper after his death. Her name authority record uses Frank’s name rather than her own first name, but the description provides it.

**Strategies for persistent problematic metadata or content**

Realistically, your institution’s metadata will continue to contain outdated or biased language for several reasons. First, language continually evolves. Words meant as disparaging today may shift in meaning or even be reappropriated by targeted groups. Alternatively, words considered preferable today may become outdated or offensive in the future. Second, your institution may decide to retain certain terminology for accuracy and discovery. Third, the remediation of legacy descriptions takes time and resources, which may be in short supply.

Moreover, your institution’s resources likely will continue to contain problematic content, from titles containing offensive terminology to photographs depicting sensitive topics. Access and preservation are core tenets of libraries and archives. For that reason, these institutions always will hold a wide range of materials, including those with language and ideas that have become outdated or offensive over time.

Strategies for addressing problematic descriptions or content at the item level include redaction, editing, annotation, and access restrictions. Strategies that can be applied more broadly are harmful language statements and problematic genre/form terms.

**Redaction**

When text transcribed from a resource contains offensive terminology, redaction is one potential option, particularly for titles and summaries. Redaction is the removal or masking of letters or words—for example, by replacing them with punctuation marks (usually asterisks or dashes) or alternative text. In traditional cataloging, content standards such as RDA may indicate that alternative or non-transcribed text should be enclosed in brackets. In non-MARC metadata creation, such as for digital collections, brackets may not
be required, depending on the content standard in use. Be sure to include any decisions about the use of punctuation in your local content standard or metadata creation guidelines.

Before deciding to redact text, be mindful that removing key words may impede discovery of the item. If your library services platform allows it, you may be able to separate what is indexed for search from what is displayed to the end user.²² (For more on display possibilities, see Chapter 5.) Moreover, library and archival professions generally oppose censorship. Be sure to consult with colleagues before enacting a redaction policy.

**Figure 1.6. Redacted title**

| Title | Sculpture of an enslaved person in the gardens of Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire |

Figure 1.6 shows a redacted title for a digitized photograph with the caption “The Black Slave.”²³ The metadata creator replaced the transcribed title with a devised title that uses updated language and provides context.

**Figure 1.7 Redacted summary**

| Summary | Suits Me is the biography of a now notorious jazz musician named Billy Tipton, who [was assigned female at birth and grew up] in Oklahoma City and Kansas City but lived as a man from the time [he] was nineteen until [he] died at age seventy-four. Billy Tipton’s death in Spokane, Washington, made news all over the world, not because he was celebrated as a musician but because the [press sensationalized his transgender identity] …”—Jacket. |

Figure 1.7 displays a redacted summary for a resource about a transgender person.²⁴ The original summary for this resource contained insensitive language and used both male and female pronouns, despite the subject’s gender identity.²⁵ In the redacted summary, the phrase “assigned female at birth” replaces the subject’s name at birth, and male pronouns are used consistently. In addition, the original final phrase, which characterized the subject’s life as a large-scale “deception,” was recast to focus on the media’s role in sensationalizing his story.²⁶ If the book itself contains insensitive language or misgenders the subject, you also could add another note describing the issues, as in Figure 1.2b.

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²³. “Sculpture of an Enslaved Person in the Gardens of Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire,” Iowa State University Digital Collections, Iowa State University Library, accessed November 10, 2023, [https://n2t.net/ark:/87292/w9rr13](https://n2t.net/ark:/87292/w9rr13).


²⁶. “Suits Me,” University of Wisconsin–Madison and Naquin, “Core IG Week.”
Annotation

Notes can be used to explain your approach to metadata remediation while respecting users’ needs. Summary and note elements have many potential uses, as evidenced by the long list of MARC note fields and the flexibility of the Dublin Core description element. You can use notes to indicate where potentially offensive language originated and explain what changes you made. If your institution has determined that access to the resource is restricted for privacy or sensitivity reasons, a note can explain how to access the resource. For transparency, you also may give a reason for the restriction. For example, in Figure 1.8, a note in the usage rights field helps users understand both why the video is restricted and how to access it.

![Figure 1.8. Restricted access note](image)

| Usage Rights | Per request by the creator, this video is available for viewing only in the Special Collections and University Archives reading room at Iowa State University Library. |

Harmful language statements

Harmful language statements offer a means of alerting users to potentially offensive terminology. When these statements refer to the content of a resource as well as its description, they also may be known as content warnings, trigger warnings, or disclaimers. Because metadata remediation is an ongoing process, such statements acknowledge that the institution is aware of the issue and working to address it. In addition to alerting users, some institutions use these statements to invite users to report harmful language they come across in resource descriptions. A reporting feature can help you to target your remediation work. It also can promote positive engagement with users.

Harmful language statements can be displayed in item-level or collection-level metadata—for example, in a note element or field. Depending on the functionality of your library services platform, you also may be able to display a statement on the results or record pages in a discovery layer. For instance, libraries using Ex Libris Primo can implement a normalization rule that adds a statement to the full record display. In addition, statements can be displayed on the homepage of your library, repository, or collection website. However, be aware that many users go directly to search results, so they may be likely to miss homepage content.

29. Naquin, “Core IG Week.”
Figure 1.9. Harmful language statements and content warnings

| Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) | Through its digital collections, dLOC offers public access to a wide range of information, including historical materials that may contain offensive language or negative stereotypes; dLOC does not endorse the views expressed in such materials.30 |
| Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) | DPLA contains some content that may be harmful or difficult to view. Our cultural heritage partners collect materials from history, as well as artifacts from many cultures and time periods, to preserve and make available the historical record. As a result, some of the materials presented here may reflect outdated, biased, offensive, and possibly violent views and opinions due to pervasive systemic intolerance. In addition, some cultural heritage institutions collect and preserve materials relating to violent or graphic events which are preserved for their historical significance.31 |
| National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) | The Catalog and web pages contain some content that may be harmful or difficult to view. NARA’s records span the history of the United States, and it is our charge to preserve and make available these historical records. As a result, some of the materials presented here may reflect outdated, biased, offensive, and possibly violent views and opinions. In addition, some of the materials may relate to violent or graphic events and are preserved for their historical significance.32 |
| Iowa State University Digital Collections | Digital collections materials come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may be offensive, disrespectful, or contain negative stereotypes. Their presence should be viewed and considered within their historical context. They do not represent the views of Iowa State University or the Library, which strives to create and maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment.33 |
| National Library of Australia | The collections held in the National Library of Australia reflect all Australians from all walks of life. By collecting today what is important tomorrow, the Library’s collection aims to better tell the stories and history of all Australians. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this catalogue may contain images, voices and names of deceased persons. Some words or descriptions in the catalogue may reflect the attitudes of the period in which the works were created, and may now be considered inaccurate, inappropriate or offensive.34 |

Figure 1.9 lists harmful language statements and content warnings published by dLOC, DPLA, NARA, Iowa State University Library, and the National Library of Australia. dLOC’s statement appears at the bottom of its homepage and every results page. The DPLA and NARA pages include instructions on how to report potentially harmful language in archival descriptions. Iowa State University Library’s statement appears on the Digital Collections homepage and in a disclaimer element in the metadata for objects identified for

DEI metadata remediation. National Library of Australia’s statement appears on the homepage, while a separate land acknowledgment statement is displayed on every record page in its online catalog. For more examples, refer to the Cataloging Lab’s List of Statements on Bias in Library and Archives Description (https://cataloginglab.org/list-of-statements-on-bias-in-library-and-archives-description/).

Genre/form terms

Another option for alerting users to problematic content is the use of genre or form terms, which describe the category of content or style represented by a resource. (Take care not to confuse genre terms with subject terms, which describe what a resource is about. See Chapter 5.) Depending on the metadata schema and application profile you use, you may be able to apply genre terms in these fields or elements: MARC 655, MODS genre, DPLA subtype, Dublin Core type, or VRA Core Work Type.

The Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT) vocabulary contains several terms that can be applied to works with clear biases. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Controlled Vocabulary for Rare Materials Cataloging (CVRMC) also includes terms for characterizing biased works. Figure 1.10 lists a selection of these terms. To facilitate the discovery and use of genre terms for prejudicial works, the Prejudicial Materials Working Group, part of the RBMS Controlled Vocabularies Editorial Group, compiled a list of new and revised terms in 2023. These terms are available through the Library of Congress Linked Data Service, which continues to be updated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCGFT</th>
<th>RBMS CVRMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Invectives (Literature)</td>
<td>• Colonialist works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Propaganda films</td>
<td>• Misogynistic works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political cartoons</td>
<td>• Transphobic works</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39. Prejudicial Materials Working Group, PMWG New and Revised Terms Compared to Original Terms, April 11, 2023, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CMgrZdYC4_gKEF7q51Im_pvyrJ0h1E2iPiBJWmaoHA.
Because the decision to describe an entire work as biased is subjective, it is important to establish clear guidelines, preferably in collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders, for the consistent application of genre terms. The RBMS CVRMC offers some guidance in its definitions. It states that prejudicial works “exhibit bias in relation to a particular group or groups of people based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, creed, national origin, etc.,” and that hate works “express hatred or advocate harm toward a particular group of people” based on the same dimensions of diversity. Again, however, consider not only the accuracy but also the utility of genre terms—will they help users to find, identify, select, and understand the resources described?

**Conclusion**

This chapter covered the importance of monitoring free-text or uncontrolled metadata elements for inclusive description, particularly when such elements contain references to human identity or personal names. The chapter highlighted the fundamental descriptive principles of relevance, users’ needs, accuracy, and respect and provided recommendations for several dimensions of diversity. It also gave examples of metadata containing various forms of personal names (former, preferred, authorized), as well as notes to acknowledge privacy concerns and historical context. For persistent problematic metadata or content, the chapter offered several strategies for alerting users: the redaction or annotation of metadata, the application of harmful language statements to individual records or entire collections, and the use of genre terms to identify works as biased.

**Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ADA National Network, Guidelines for Writing about People With Disabilities <a href="https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing">https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating Subject Headings for Indigenous Topics: A Culturally Respectful Guide <a href="https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/defaults/8c97kz40m">https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/defaults/8c97kz40m</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Latin American and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (LAIPA) Funnel, Best Practices in Authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Relating to Indigenous Nations in the U.S.
https://cataloginglab.org/best-practices/

- Modern Language Association, Principles of Inclusive Language
  https://doi.org/10.1632/BWZB3990
- PCC Guiding Principles for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Metadata Creation
  https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/resources/DEI-guiding-principles-for-metadata-creation.pdf
- Trans Metadata Collective, Metadata Best Practices for Trans and Gender Diverse Resources
  https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6686841

Vocabularies

- Cataloging Lab, List of Statements on Bias in Library and Archives Description
  https://cataloginglab.org/list-of-statements-on-bias-in-library-and-archives-description/
- Cataloging Lab, Problem LCSH
  https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/
- Homosaurus vocabulary site
  https://homosaurus.org/
- Iowa State University Library Metadata Services, Subject Headings for Iowa Indigenous Peoples
  https://go.iastate.edu/JTJXQL
- Prejudicial Materials Working Group, New and Revised Terms Compared to Original Terms
  https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CMgrZdYCu_gKFIt7kq51m_pygrJ0h1E2/PiBJWmaoHA

Bibliographies

- Equitable Knowledge Organization Group Library
  https://www.zotero.org/groups/2649517/equitable_knowledge_organization
- National Information Standards Organization (NISO), DEIA Resources and Websites
  https://www.niso.org/node/27137
- Social Justice in Cataloging Annotated Bibliography
  https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/fpml/141
- Society of American Archivists, Inclusive Description
  https://www2.archivists.org/groups/description-section/inclusive-description
- Sunshine State Digital Network, Inclusive Metadata & Conscious Editing Resources
  https://sunshinestatedigitalnetwork.wordpress.com/2020/10/05/inclusive-metadata-conscious-editing-resources/
Chapter 2

Name Authority Considerations

Overview

The approach this chapter takes to applying diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles to name authority records is to follow an ethics of care approach as proposed by Violet B. Fox and Kelly Swickard. We encourage readers to consider their responsibility to the people being described in name authority and other metadata records and to approach the act of creating metadata about people with empathy and respect. This care-based approach aligns with the values expressed in the American Library Association (ALA) in its Code of Ethics. Fox and Swickard note that point three of the code, to protect "each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality," can be extended to those we describe as well as those we serve directly in our institutions. This extension lines up well with the code's ninth point, which affirms "the inherent dignity and rights of every person," including those described in name authority records and elsewhere.

This chapter will refer to name authorities, as this is where much name work is done, but its advice is applicable to any situation where a person's name is used in any kind of metadata, including non-MARC name elements used for access points and faceting. In addition, much of the advice is broadly applicable to metadata about people beyond their names, especially the need to treat those we describe with empathy and respect. (For more about names in uncontrolled fields and inclusivity in metadata in general, see Chapter 1.) Finally, some of the advice presented herein may conflict with the Program for Cooperative Cataloging's (PCC) Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) guidelines. When creating local name authorities or working with names outside of authority records, this chapter’s guidance may be followed as is. When creating authority records for NACO, we advise that catalogers consult PCC guidelines to ensure their records conform to NACO requirements.

General considerations

One question to keep in mind when considering what information to include in a name authority record is: Could this harm the person I’m identifying? Whenever the answer to that question is “yes,” the best approach is to omit the information. Considerations of discoverability, completeness, or other library values don’t outweigh the need not to harm the people we seek to highlight through our work. The people we describe when creating or updating name authority records (NARs) are real people, not a set of descriptors collected into an authority record. Treat them with the same empathy and respect all people are due.

For NACO contributors, it is also important to keep in mind the PCC’s Guiding Principles for Diversity,

Equity, and Inclusion for Metadata Creation and the Cataloguing Code of Ethics endorsed by the PCC.\(^2\) The principles in both documents are good general guidelines for non-NACO metadata creators as well.

**Privacy**

**Birth dates**

Jennifer M. Martin notes that including birth dates in NARs poses serious privacy risks for living people by revealing personally identifiable information that could be used for identity theft. Also, birth dates reveal a person’s age, which could have negative professional consequences or cause discomfort for the person described.\(^3\) To address these concerns, Martin recommends using date of birth as a disambiguator for living people only if it is obtained directly from the subject of the NAR. Martin further recommends that the subject be made aware that the date’s inclusion in the NAR will make their birth date publicly accessible in a way that will be hard to undo. Providing them with this information allows the subject to make an informed decision about whether or not to grant permission.\(^4\) If necessary, a note may be recorded in the record’s 667 field indicating the rationale for excluding birth dates from a record.\(^5\) See Figure 2.1 for an example.

![Figure 2.1. Note regarding omission of birth date](image)

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**Pseudonymous and anonymous creators**

Another area where privacy considerations must be taken into consideration is with pseudonymous and anonymous creators. Creators may choose, for a variety of professional, personal, and safety reasons, to publish under one or more pseudonyms, to use only part of their name, or to omit their name entirely. This desire to separate public and private identities can run afoul of authority work. In "Identity Theft: How Authority Control Undermines Women's Agency," Michelle M. Kazmer discusses the cases of Agatha Mallowman, who published under her own name, her famous pseudonym: Agatha Christie, and as Mary Westmacott. Mallowman wished for her various public identities to remain separate. However, the work of the United States Copyright Office, part of the Library of Congress, made the link between Westmacott and Mallowman’s other identities public. Another author Kazmer discusses is Columbia University professor

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\(^2\) Program for Cooperative Cataloging, *PCC Guiding Principles for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Metadata Creation*, January 2023, [https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/resources/DEI-guiding-principles-for-metadata-creation.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/resources/DEI-guiding-principles-for-metadata-creation.pdf); Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee, *Cataloguing Code of Ethics*, January 2021, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IBz7nXQPhr3U1P6Xiar9cLakzoNX_P9fq7eHvzfSlZ0/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IBz7nXQPhr3U1P6Xiar9cLakzoNX_P9fq7eHvzfSlZ0/).

\(^3\) Program for Cooperative Cataloging, *Guiding Principles*; and Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee, *Cataloguing Code of Ethics*, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IBz7nXQPhr3U1P6Xiar9cLakzoNX_P9fq7eHvzfSlZ0/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IBz7nXQPhr3U1P6Xiar9cLakzoNX_P9fq7eHvzfSlZ0/).


Carolyn Heilbrun, who published under the pseudonym Amanda Cross to avoid damaging her academic career. Despite her wishes, the link between her two identities was made public via an LCNAF record.6

Heilbrun is not alone in protecting her identity to avoid the risk of real-world harm. Many zine authors use pseudonyms to explore intimate personal topics without exposing themselves to negative personal or professional repercussions.7 Likewise, one early twentieth-century author used the pseudonyms Jennie June, Earl Lind, and Ralph Werther to protect her identity when publishing Autobiography of an Androgyne, 1918, and The Female-impersonators, 1922. June was a trans-feminine person who had sex with men. Under the laws of the time, much of what June described in both books was illegal. Under the Comstock Act, even the publication of the books themselves was of questionable legality. Had June’s identity been disclosed, as Mallowman’s and Heilbrun’s were, she could have faced criminal charges, violence, social isolation, and harassment.8 While it is not currently illegal to be transgender or engage in homosexual relationships in the United States, it is still not always safe for people to disclose these parts of themselves publicly. Creators in other countries, including thirteen that still criminalize transgender existence, may face the same degree of criminal, social, and economic risk as June would have should their identities be disclosed.9

To better protect a creator’s privacy, Fox and Swickard recommend contacting a creator whenever including information that might infringe on their privacy. They also recommend including a MARC 667 Nonpublic General Note field indicating a creator has requested that additional information not be added to their authority record. Since MARC does not have a way to fully secure sensitive information, it’s important to word such notes in a way that will not reveal the information the creator seeks to keep private.10 Figure 2.2 shows an example of how such a note might be entered:

**Figure 2.2. Author request for privacy**

| 667 ## | $a Author requested no further information be added to this record, [date updated]. |

Additionally, if you find a record with a privacy note, it’s important to honor it, even if you don’t know the specifics of why the note was added.

**Gender**

Issues surrounding gender present another area where protecting an author’s privacy is important. This is especially true for transgender authors who may not wish to have their gender identity made public and who may be put at risk if it is disclosed. Kelly Thompson found that the 375 field was sometimes used in ways

that might out people who were not public about their transgender identity and that 670 Source Data Found fields were also used in ways that could out transgender people.11

Guidance on how to handle the optional MARC 375 Gender field has been in flux over the past several years. The guidance in the original Resource Description and Access (RDA) version, in section 9.7, recommended recording gender as “female,” “male,” or “not known,” with the option of using alternative terms like “intersex” or “transsexual woman” if the above options were not “appropriate or sufficiently specific.” This guidance places intersex and transgender people explicitly outside the normal, acceptable gender terms and received various critiques after its publication.12 In 2016, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) Ad Hoc Task Group on Gender in Name Authority Records issued a report offering revised guidance on recording gender for individuals who don’t fit the Western cisgender binary.13 Kalani Adolpho noted that this report introduced its own problems, including that it was rooted in “Western-centric, cisnormative understandings of gender that deny gender diverse people both agency over our own identities and decision-making power over the frameworks that seek to include us.”14 In 2022, the PCC Ad Hoc Task Group on Recording Gender in Personal Name Authority Records issued a revised report with clear and easy-to-follow guidance:

Do not record the RDA gender element (MARC 375) in personal name authority records. Delete existing 375 fields when editing a record for any other reason.15

It is our recommendation that catalogers follow the above guidance.

Names of transgender people

Just as the recording of gender can pose privacy and safety concerns for transgender individuals, so too can the handling of names. Many people change their name one or more times as part of their transition and may not wish to have their prior name(s) publicly known. Also, a trans individual’s name may differ from their legal name. Where possible, it is advisable to contact a creator for permission to include any names in an NAR beyond those they publish under. In cases where you are unable to determine a creator’s wishes, the Trans Metadata Collective recommends the following principles:

Someone’s full body of work should be accessible using their current name. Former names that they have previously published under should be used as little as possible and kept private. Former names that the author has not published under should not be included.\textsuperscript{16}

\section*{Married women’s names}

In older publications and NARs, married women’s names may appear as their husband’s name with the title “Mrs.,” such as “Mrs. Frederic S. Goodwin.” See Figure 2.3 for an example of such an authority record.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\framebox{
\begin{tabular}{ll}
100 1# & $a$ Goodwin, Frederic S., $c$ Mrs. \\
\end{tabular}
}
\caption{Married woman’s name in an older authority record}
\end{figure}

In such cases, consult additional resources to find the person’s first name. It may not always be possible to satisfactorily identify someone, but when it is possible, it adds an additional route of discovery and access. When a married woman’s real name is known, use that form in the 100 field and record the married form of her name in a 400 field, as in Figure 2.4.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\framebox{
\begin{tabular}{ll}
100 1# & $a$ Goodwin, Minnie Newington \\
400 1# & $a$ Goodwin, Frederic S., $c$ Mrs. \\
\end{tabular}
}
\caption{Married woman’s name in an updated authority record}
\end{figure}

\section*{Non-English names}

When working with a name from a language other than English, it’s important to be cognizant of the culture from which the name originates. Differences in language, script, orthography, culture, and naming practices can present difficulties in accurately recording an individual’s name.

\section*{Romanizing names in Non-Latin scripts}

When working with names normally written with non-Latin scripts, it’s important to approach the work of transcription carefully. Arastoopoor and Ahmadinasab note fifteen sources of possible inconsistencies when Romanizing Persian personal and corporate names. Dagher and Soufi note numerous challenges to Romanizing Arabic names, including a common lack of clear vowel markers, dialect-dependent pronunciation, and complications presented by compound names. Regardless of the specific language or writing system, difficulties are likely to arise when Romanizing any names recorded in non-Latin scripts.

To ensure the most accurate Romanization, we recommend:

- Use a person’s transcription of their own name when available.

\textsuperscript{16} Trans Metadata Collective, Metadata Best Practices for Trans and Gender Diverse Resources, June 22, 2022, \url{https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6686841}. 
Consult with someone knowledgeable in the language and culture you are working with.
Familiarize yourself with the linguistic and cultural issues that could lead to a less-than-ideal translation.

One caveat that must be noted when working with NACO records is that the preferred version of the name used in the 100 field must conform to the ALA-LC Romanization Tables, which may conflict with the above guidance. However, alternative transliterations may be added as variant access points in the 400 field, as shown in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5. Alternative transliteration as variant access point**

| 100 1# | $a ʻAylah, Ahmad Bashir |
| 400 1# | $a ʻĪlah, Ahmad Bashir |
| 400 1# | $a ʻAyilah, Ahmad Bashir |
| 400 1# | $a ʻAyyilah, Ahmad Bashir |
| 400 1# | $a عيلة، أحمد بشير |
| 400 1# | $a بهشير أحمد العيلة، |

**Cultural considerations**

Every culture has its own naming conventions. In some cases, these might be close to Anglo-American naming conventions. In others, there can be numerous differences. A catalog of naming conventions across the cultures and languages of the world would require its own dedicated book. The following will highlight some broader issues that may occur across cultural groups. Consult a member of the community a name comes from, or a qualified expert, or research that community to gain familiarity with the naming conventions of a specific language and people. Style guides may also offer guidance on various naming conventions. The *MLA Handbook* briefly covers English and non-English names in Chapter 2. Sections 2.71 to 2.86 cover personal names. Sections 2.87 and 2.88 cover corporate names. The *Chicago Manual of Style* covers personal and corporate names in Chapter 8.

In some cases it may be important to link NARs to related names and places. Catherine Amey quotes Te Aue Davis, Tipene O'Regan, and John Wilson's “Ngā Tohu Pumahara: The Survey Pegs of the Past: Understanding Māori Place Names,” which notes that the meaning of many Māori names “can only be understood through their connection to other names and places.” When working in MARC, such connections can be made in various fields. Associated groups may be recorded in the 373 field. Family information can be recorded in the 376 field. Associated places may be recorded in the 370 field.

---

Conclusion

In this chapter, we covered various areas of concern when creating name authority records or otherwise working with names in metadata and steps that can be taken to make sure we treat those we describe with dignity and respect. The chapter covered ways to protect the privacy of the people we describe, including by omitting a living person’s birth date from NARs when possible, not outing pseudonymous or anonymous authors, and not recording gender in NARs. The chapter also covered approaches to handling names for transgender people, married women who may be known by their husband's name, and general approaches to handling non-English names.

Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago Manual of Style, Names, Terms, and Titles of Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MLA Handbook, Names of Organizations, Groups, Literary Periods, and Cultural Movements</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MLA Handbook, Names of Persons in Your Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program for Cooperative Cataloging, NACO Participants' Manual, 4th Edition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3

Persons and Groups

Overview

This chapter focuses on descriptions of creators, contributors, depicted people, audience, and more people or groups. This type of information has tended not to be explicit in library metadata. Furthermore, this type of information may have been, and sometimes still can be, inaccurate or biased. This chapter builds on Chapter 1: Inclusive description, focusing on structured metadata rather than variable text fields to provide information about characteristics or attributes of people or groups. This chapter also focuses on library resources, digital objects and collections, and name authorities, but it is worth noting that archives metadata work has often included creator information in some way, often through recording provenance or creating archival authority records.\(^1\)

Information entailing characteristics or attributes of these people and groups may be available indirectly in library catalogs and collection discovery portals. For example, the name of the series, the digital collection title or summary, descriptions in summaries or notes, and narrow subject terms displayed for titles or digital objects may provide ways to glean characteristics of the creators or other connected people and groups. It is unfortunate that, unless one is looking at a specialized collection consisting of materials focusing on a minoritized group, like a LGBTQIA+ library or a collection of oral histories about women in STEM, the diversity of creators and contributors usually cannot be discoverable through our library resources and collections.\(^2\) Searching for library materials written by a scientist who is a woman and a person of color, for example, is difficult unless you know their name.

In the past, well-meaning metadata creators have made efforts to describe these people but made erroneous assumptions or imposed biases (implicit or otherwise) in the metadata descriptions.\(^3\) Conscious editing (explained in Chapter 1) has gained strong momentum among metadata creators in recent years, but many challenges remain, including limited vocabulary options and limited availability for metadata elements to encode person and group attributes. The current political climate means there may be pushback—for example, critics may object to library metadata highlighting minoritized group creators over others. Nevertheless, we can and should take the time to enhance metadata describing our library collections and

2. Related to this is archival silence, or the gap in the historical record resulting from the unintentional or purposeful omission or distortion of documentation. Definition from the *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*, s.v. “archival silence,” [https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/archival-silence.html](https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/archival-silence.html).
resources with attributes for people and groups. We encourage metadata creators to include person and group attributes when appropriate. Such attributes improve discovery and spotlight materials created by or about historically overlooked groups. At the same time, it is important to consider and balance factors such as labor, need, and privacy. The Program for Cooperative Cataloging, in a recent position statement, reminds Name Authority Cooperative (NACO) participants that our goals as metadata professionals include facilitating discovery and that we should be judicious about including personal data in name authorities.4

Potential prompts

Just because we can include descriptions for creator or contributor characteristics does not mean we do this in every case. This work is time-intensive, as we would want to seek and use accurate information and do our best to select appropriate terms or languages that respect the person or group. There are various ways we might be prompted to consider creating metadata describing the characteristics of the creators, contributors, depicted people or groups, or audiences.

Often, when working on materials, we may notice that a book is written by someone who might identify as a marginalized community member, or that the collection being digitized is about a historically overlooked group. Cues often come from author photographs or the names on materials, but take care to investigate what captured your attention! Implicit bias is interwoven into our daily lives, but we can consciously work to avoid imposing these biases in metadata work. The advice provided in Chapter 1 may be helpful here.

Perhaps a selector in your library has forwarded a title with the request to enhance the bibliographic description for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This could happen for any reason; they might have observed a cue as described above, or they might have personal knowledge about the author because they are a faculty member or a local author, recently visited the campus to give a talk, were recognized for an award, or were featured on a local news program.

No matter how a candidate for DEI metadata enhancement has caught your attention, take a few minutes to consider whether the added time to research the author or creator is something worth pursuing. Determine and adhere to the amount of time permissible for due process that works for you and your team—perhaps 15 minutes. Review these questions before proceeding:

- Can you confirm the **public** identity of the person or group with **accurate** information?
- Would it be **helpful** to provide additional information about the person or group?
- Would including the information about the person or group violate their **privacy**?5

Taking the time to consider these questions will help you make an informed decision and permit you to proceed with providing information about the person or group now, track it for later work, or take no further action to include attributes for them in the metadata. Keep in mind, if you can’t find any useful information within a short time frame, you can try again another day or pass it along to a colleague for a fresh look. See Workload Management in Chapter 1 for more tips.

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Considerations

It is crucial not to base your description of the creator on how they appear in a photograph without additional source information. Similarly, do not rely only on their names or appearance to determine their gender, race, ethnicity, or nationality. Numerous studies highlight the errors of our past practices using this approach.6

First and foremost, review the source(s) of information for the person or group you are considering describing. A main consideration is the person or group’s self-identification, which we should respect.7 Is the information public and does it appear factually accurate? Are you looking at the book jacket or cover, a biography included in the book, the author’s personal website or social media posts, or a news interview with them? The publishers may include a biography, or the creator may have shared their own biography, on their websites. If the person or group has an active public presence, consider also reaching out directly through email, social media, or phone. Archives can be a valuable resource with manuscript collections or records related to the person or group, but do confirm whether these contain any kind of privacy embargoes on identifying information.

Even when a request for DEI metadata enhancement comes from a colleague who may know an author personally or saw them speak on campus or presented on a news show, take a few minutes to seek out firsthand sources to verify the information. It is essential to be consistent and verify the information about persons or groups with written, factual sources while creating the metadata.

Evaluating sources

When reviewing sources, keep in mind that, as metadata professionals, we are not interested in outing persons or groups, or violating their privacy, no matter their viewpoints. It would be unethical to use or cite information from sources where stolen or hacked personal, sensitive information is posted (e.g., on doxing websites or social media posts)8 in our metadata.9 If you happen across a webpage that lists a person’s residential address, personal phone number or email, or other sensitive information, this is a good indicator that the website is the type of source to avoid as unreliable or malicious.

We tend to start our online research with search engines that often bring us to webpages or online articles that can be taken out of context very easily. When these excerpts are available on familiar websites like

Wikipedia and mainstream newspapers, it is understandable to accept these as safe sources, but try to quickly review the Wikipedia article’s citations or the list of publications by the journalist to get a sense of their reliability.

Many information professionals are researchers at heart. We might come across interesting facts about the persons and groups we are describing, but it is not necessary to include every tidbit we find in our metadata or name authority records.  

Removing information

Occasionally, a person or a group’s representative may request that information about them be removed. Or in your searches, you may come across cases where they clearly indicate a preference against recording identity information in library catalogs or digital collections. Such requests should always be respected. Removal notices may be tracked without violating privacy, to help prevent metadata professionals from inadvertently inserting the unwanted identity-related details again.

General instructions regarding confidential or removed information may be retained with a donor file in the archives. In the case of name authorities, a note indicating the entity’s request or preference can be recorded without specific details in a source data found field (MARC 670), as shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 in Chapter 2. Some digital collection platforms can have private note fields or internal changelogs available that help staff track these decisions or updates. To our knowledge, this type of information is not commonly recorded in bibliographic records, yet there is sufficient justification for doing so. It is feasible for staff to add local, private notes in bibliographic metadata to indicate decisions to remove or not to record identity information for a person or group (without recording the omitted details). As a community, we have yet to arrive at a best practice for updating shared records (such as in WorldCat), but possible MARC fields for this use include 500 for a general note (as illustrated in Figure 1.2b); 588, used to note source of description, which often contains information helpful to catalogers; and 583 or action note, which may be useful for recording description decisions.

Vocabulary options

For simplicity and considering today’s online environment, it may make sense to use faceted subject terms to describe people and groups instead of complex pre-coordinated headings or terms that are outdated or combine attribute groups into one without providing comprehensive options. Ideally, users searching for

10. Program on Cooperative Cataloging.
Black woman scientists, for example, could customize a search with a facet for author attributes by selecting terms to represent Black people, Women, and Scientists.

Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), as many critics have shown, is problematic because it does not account for all possible groups, and it even emphasizes gender in unnecessary and incomplete ways. Markedness, from linguistics, identifies something as atypical, “other,” or different. LCSH terms have many instances of markedness, such as Doctors versus Women doctors, or Librarians versus Women librarians. Markedness makes power visible by means of the normalized, unmarked term. It does not seem a good idea to use Women librarians when LCSH does not provide an equivalent for all gender identities. Also consider carefully the merit of including an attribute related to the gender demographic group category, as discussed in this and the preceding chapters.

Metadata creators may find it easier to use the faceted approach because pre-coordinated subject terms for persons and groups would require planning and identification for the fullest, most accurate term to apply. Despite markedness and other issues, some existing LCSH terms may be sufficient, but we can use any controlled vocabulary that best suits our needs. The Library of Congress has begun its vocabulary on Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT) (http://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms), which is growing but by no means comprehensive. Published online through the Library of Congress’s Linked ID Service, LCDGT is searchable and includes multiple serializations and bulk download options. Each term displays a label, description, URI, demographic group category, sources, variants, and version history. LCDGT includes several demographic group categories: Age; Educational level; Ethnic/cultural; Language; Medical, psychological, and disability; National/regional; Occupation/field of activity; Religion; and Social. With multiple group categories, this means there may be several terms to review for selection. Look at each term for the category that best meets your needs. Also be mindful that terms may not be available across all the categories. For example, searching LCDGT for potential terms for a Hmong author gives Hmong Americans, Hmong (Asian people), Hmong speakers, and a few other possibilities. The first two terms are both in the Ethnic/cultural category; either one could be included as appropriate, after confirming whether the author in question is American. The last term, Hmong speakers, is in the Language category.


and could be good to include when the resource focuses on Hmong language. Other vocabularies that may be suited to describing persons and groups include but are not limited to: Homosaurus, FAST, AAT, AFSET, and ERIC.

Homosaurus (https://homosaurus.org/) is a linked data vocabulary that focuses on LGBTQIA+ terms.20 The full vocabulary list is browsable online; furthermore, the vocabulary is available in several serializations for incorporating into systems.21 For each term, this vocabulary includes an identifier, preferred term, alternative term (use for), scope note, versioning information in dates and term replacements, broader and narrower terms, and a hierarchical display. Homosaurus contains many specific terms suitable for use for demographic groups, such as Afro-Latin American LGBTQ+ people.22 Not all libraries need this level of specificity; however, this vocabulary, built through support and feedback from the LGBTQIA+ community, is considered authoritative. It is a good option to incorporate when your user community interests require this high level of specificity.

OCLC’s Faceted Application of Subject Terminology (FAST) (https://fast.oclc.org/searchfast/) vocabulary is based on LCSH, so some of the issues mentioned above (markedness or harmful preferred terms) also exist in FAST. Terms should be reviewed before selection and use. An example of this is the soon-to-be updated headings related to Deaf people.23 For example, in the heading Deaf,24 which LCSH and FAST preferred over Deaf people, the omission of the word “people” de-humanizes them. Hearing impaired is a catchall term that might be used to describe persons and groups with hearing loss;25 however, the alternative term lacks the word “people” and is an outmoded name for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Despite these problems, FAST may still be useful in some cases because it is easier for people to learn and apply. FAST is searchable, and several integrations and serializations are available. Term display includes identifiers, alternative headings, usage statistics from the Library of Congress’s database and WorldCat, and sources.

The Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online (AAT) (https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat/) from the Getty Research Institute is a robust generic vocabulary that includes some terms that can be used as demographic group terms.26 AAT can be searched and browsed online. This vocabulary provides many serializations of its data for use in other systems. Each term includes an identifier, alternative terms in English and other languages when available, hierarchy, and sources/contributors. Review possible terms in AAT carefully because they may not reflect current terminology used by the people they are describing.

The American Folklore Society (AFS) publishes its Ethnographic Thesaurus (AFSET) (https://id.loc.gov/vocabulary/ethnographicTerms.html) in the Library of Congress’s Linked Id Service.27 Some of the terms may be used as demographic group terms, such as Deaf persons and Non-binary people.28 Like LCDGT,
AFSET can be searched, and the term information includes label, description, URI, serializations, sources, variants, and version history. With AFSET’s focus on ethnographic matters, the terms themselves appear current, respectful, and appropriate; however, not many ethnic groups or nationalities are represented.

The Institute of Education Sciences database, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) (https://eric.ed.gov/), also maintains a list of descriptors (subject-related terms) for use within ERIC, with some options for describing attributes of persons and groups. The descriptors tend to be broad; for example, it provides the term **Hmong people** but does not give options for Hmong Americans. 29 Nevertheless, the ERIC thesaurus (https://eric.ed.gov/?ti=all) may be useful for curricular and education-focused collections. The thesaurus is searchable online (select the Thesaurus tab), and term display includes scope notes, categories, broader terms, narrower terms, related terms, and alternative (use for) terms.

### Personal and group attributes in resource description

#### MARC

In 2013, new MARC fields were added to provide metadata creators opportunities to describe characteristics of audiences (MARC 21 field 385) and creators/contributors (386). 30 Field 385, for audience characteristics, allows metadata creators to record characteristics pertaining to the intended audience of the work described. When working on a record describing a book written for nursing students, the metadata creator would identify and select, if possible, at least one term that represents the audience group, such as **Nursing students**. 31 Likewise, 386, for creator and contributor characteristics, may be used by metadata creators to record characteristics related to the people (or group) responsible for the intellectual content of the work being described. In the same nursing book from above, if the author biography provided clear information that the author was a Black nurse, two demographic group terms to consider including might be **Black people** and **Nurses** from LCDGT. 32

In general, either the demographic group term or the demographic group code should be included in 385 and 386 as non-repeatable subfields m ($m) and n ($n), respectively. Here, demographic group terms actually refer to the category groups, not the vocabulary terms or headings themselves. The demographic group code is the MARC code equivalent for a demographic group term (category). So, for the Ethnic/cultural demographic group category, the corresponding code is “eth.” 33

Individual vocabulary terms or headings corresponding to creator or audience characteristics can be placed in subfield a ($a) and may be combined with a demographic group code from the same vocabulary.

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Characteristic terms in subfield a ($a$) can be repeated in the same field if they are from the same selected vocabulary, and the source vocabulary code should be cited in subfield 2 ($2$). 385 and 386 can be repeated as necessary to incorporate appropriate characteristics from different vocabularies.

Both fields include subfield encoding for authority identifiers, source vocabulary codes, specified materials, and linkages. After 2013, these fields were expanded with additional subfields to provide the ability to encode URIs, data provenance, and in the case of 386, relationship information. Not all subfields for 385 and 386 are covered in detail here because they are universally applied in multiple MARC fields. After the 2013 release, these fields were slow to be adopted and populated in MARC records, but they are much more commonly found now.

Figures 3.1 through 3.3 are example snippets of records highlighting how characteristics for audience (385) or creators/contributors (386) may be included. Although 385 and 386 are repeatable as long as the headings are sourced from the same vocabulary, many people choose to separate them for readability or for easier parsing in library discovery environments. Including the demographic group codes could improve the granularity of filtering options and help users differentiate between similar terms. Another reason to repeat the fields is shown in Figure 3.1; the demographic group categories (386$n$) are different for each.

### Figure 3.1. Creator and contributor characteristics (MARC 386) example for Jazz Overtones (OCLC Control Number 1263824607)

| 100 1# | $a$ Anderson, T. J. $q$ (Thomas Jefferson), $d$ 1928- $e$ composer. |
| 300 ## | $a$ 1 score (18 pages) + 3 parts ; $c$ 31 cm. |
| 386 ## | $n$ nat $a$ Americans $2$ lcdgt |
| 386 ## | $n$ eth $a$ African Americans $2$ lcdgt |
| 386 ## | $n$ gdr $a$ Men $2$ lcdgt |

Figures 3.1 through 3.3 are example snippets of records highlighting how characteristics for audience (385) or creators/contributors (386) may be included. Although 385 and 386 are repeatable as long as the headings are sourced from the same vocabulary, many people choose to separate them for readability or for easier parsing in library discovery environments. Including the demographic group codes could improve the granularity of filtering options and help users differentiate between similar terms. Another reason to repeat the fields is shown in Figure 3.1; the demographic group categories (386$n$) are different for each.

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Figures 3.2 and 3.3 contain audience characteristics using controlled vocabulary terms. Providing audience characteristics information in 385 fields may be helpful because not all library discovery interfaces make searchable or display the fixed field (MARC LDR 008 position) for audience or variable-text information included in the summary note (MARC 520) or target audience note (MARC 521). In Figure 3.2, one LCDGT has been added to describe the Age group category. The textbook example in Figure 3.3 is more challenging; there are no apparent vocabularies to provide headings for Veterinary technicians or Veterinary nurses. If these Occupational/field of activity (code: occ) demographic groups would benefit your library users in addition to Veterinary students, available in LCSH, it would be acceptable to add them to the library’s local record versions, accompanied with a “$2 local” notation. The code soc, for Social group category, accompanies Veterinary students. For consistency and interoperability, it is acceptable to follow the demographic group categories and codes established in LCDGT, and these established in LCDGT, and these have been included in Figure 3.3 even though none of the terms came from LCDGT.

### Figures 3.2 and 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 #1</td>
<td>$a Pincus, Meeg, $e author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245 10</td>
<td>$a So much more to Helen! : $b the passions and pursuits of Helen Keller / $c written by Meeg Pincus ; illustrated by Caroline Bonne-Müller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385 ##</td>
<td>$n age $a Children $2 lcdgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>520 ##</td>
<td>$a “...This story teaches children to look beyond the surface with everyone they encounter”— $c Provided by publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>521 ##</td>
<td>$a Grades 4-6 $b Sleeping Bear Press.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2. Audience characteristics (MARC 385) example for So Much More to Helen! (OCLC Control Number 1261306499)**

**Figure 3.3. Audience characteristics (MARC 385) example for Clinical Textbook for Veterinary Technicians and Nurses (OCLC Control Number 1145315140)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>245 00</td>
<td>$a McCurnin’s clinical textbook for veterinary technicians and nurses / $c [edited by] Joanna M. Bassert, Angela D. Beal, Oreta M. Samples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385 ##</td>
<td>$n soc $a Veterinary students $2 lcsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385 ##</td>
<td>$n occ $a Veterinary technicians $2 local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385 ##</td>
<td>385 ## $n occ $a Veterinary nurses $2 local</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Beyond MARC**

Not many metadata schemas include elements for describing persons or groups, much less attributes/properties. The Bibliographic Framework (BIBFRAME) designed to replace MARC is expressed in Resource Description Framework (RDF). RDF is the standard data model for describing and exchanging information.

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in the semantic web environment. BIBFRAME’s origins as a replacement for MARC is evident in its many elements and attributes that correspond to MARC encoding. BIBFRAME class creatorCharacteristic is one place to record the URI value for a term describing one characteristic of the creator or contributor. Figure 3.4 gives an example of one creatorCharacteristic for Chanda Prescod-Weinstein as a URI triple without any notation syntax. creatorCharacteristic can be repeated.

Figure 3.4 is a BIBFRAME snippet example presented as a triple. The URI for Prescod-Weinstein’s authorized access point from the Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF) is the subject, shown on the first line. The URI for creatorCharacteristic is the second line, or predicate. The object in the last line is the URI for LCDGT term Physicists. Additional triples would describe other characteristics for Prescod-Weinstein.

Figure 3.4. BIBFRAME creatorCharacteristic example for Prescod-Weinstein

```
<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n2020051916>
<http://id.loc.gov/ontologies/bflc/Creator Characteristic>
<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060362>
```

The CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model (CIDOC CRM) is another metadata option where it is possible to describe person and group attributes. This international standard was originally issued by the CIDOC Documentation Standards Group, under the International Council of Museums’ International Committee for Documentation. CIDOC CRM is used in the cultural heritage and museum community.

The E39 Actor entity in CIDOC-CRM contains two subclasses, E21 Person, and E74 Group. E39 Actor has the direct incoming property P107 has current or former member (is current or former member of) through its E74 Group entity subclass. This property works bidirectionally; the first phrasing applies when encoding E74 Group and the other (parenthetical version) when encoding E39 Actor. Because it is a subclass of E39 Actor, E21 Person can inherit related P107 properties.

46. “P107 Has Current or Former Member (Is Current or Former Member of),” CIDOC-CRM, https://cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm/7.1.2/P107_has_current_or_former_member.
Figure 3.5 presents an example snippet expressed in CIDOC-CRM describing Prescod-Weinstein with **Physicists** as a group attribute.

The Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS) from the Library of Congress provides a few subelements for the **name** element. The **description** subelement is a variable text field where more information can be included about the named entity, and it is a suitable place to include attributes for the person or group. For an example of how we might use these elements in MODS to enhance descriptions for persons and groups, see the last example at the end of this chapter (Figure 3.11).

### Personal and group attributes in name authorities

In name authority records, a few options are available for recording characteristics of the person or group. Be aware of position statements or reports from PCC against including sensitive data, including gender, in name authority records. Chapter 2 goes into more detail about names. Most of our information systems do not cross-reference information stored in name authority records beyond variant headings listed in see from tracings (MARC fields 4XX) and see also from tracings (MARC fields 5XX). The primary purpose of name authority records is to disambiguate names, and it is only necessary to include enough information for metadata professionals to ascertain which authority record matches the person or group in question. People

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or groups with similar names may have different occupations and other characteristics that can be included in the record. The considerations reviewed earlier in this chapter also apply when creating or enhancing authority records.

In MARC authority record format, possible fields to record characteristics of the person or group include other attributes of person or corporate body (field 368) and occupation (field 374). For other attributes of person or corporate body (368), subfields a (Type of corporate body) and c (Other designation) are most relevant for persons and groups. 368$c has been used to note demographic group terms indicating ethnicity in some name authority records. Another MARC field (375) is available to record gender, but as mentioned in Chapter 2, it is not recommended for use.

When recording other attributes of a person or corporate body (in MARC field 368) or the occupation (MARC 374), metadata professionals may select a term and encode it as follows. The term is placed in the appropriate subfields for type of corporate body (368$a), other designation related to person or corporate body (368$c), or occupation (374$a), and the code corresponding to the source vocabulary is included in subfield 2 ($2). Multiple terms can be repeated, with additional subfields in the same field unless they come from different vocabularies. In the latter case, a new field for each vocabulary is necessary. Figure 3.6 shows the 374 field included in Prescod-Weinstein’s Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF) record.

**Figure 3.6. MARC name authority example for Prescod-Weinstein (Library of Congress Control Number n 2020051916 or OCLC Authority Record Number 13194193)**

| 374 ## | $a College teachers $a Physicists $a Journalists $a Authors $2 lcsh |

**Examples**

Our colleagues at Iowa State University Library conducted a research project to search for, identify, and collocate STEM resources created by people from minoritized groups. Their introductory text echoes sentiments expressed above and in other chapters:

> While there is increasing interest in these types of works they remain difficult to find, recommend, and purchase. This is frustrating for educators and librarians, but especially for readers who want to see diverse experiences and cultures reflected in media and education.

Their resulting data set is available in their Diverse STEM Reading: A Layer Cake of Problems bibliography. Using a selected work, *Black Software* by Charlton D. McIwain, from the Layer Cake data set, various team members created the metadata examples below. At the publisher’s website, the book synopsis indicates

51. “368 - Other Attributes of Person or Corporate Body (R),” MARC 21 Authority, last modified June 21, 2023, [https://www.loc.gov/marc/authority/ad368.html](https://www.loc.gov/marc/authority/ad368.html); “374 - Occupation (R),” MARC 21 Authority, last modified December 7, 2023, [https://www.loc.gov/marc/authority/ad374.html](https://www.loc.gov/marc/authority/ad374.html).

52. For an in-depth discussion on the problems of recording gender, see Billey, Drabinski, and Roberto, “What’s Gender Got to Do with It?”

the content focuses on African Americans. A wedding announcement in the *New York Times* shows that McIlwain was born to American parents and, therefore, would have American nationality. McIlwain is also identified in several online biographies as the founder of the Center for Critical Race and Digital Studies, a research center for scholars of color. Multiple sources also list McIlwain as a faculty member at New York University. Throughout these resources, he, his, and him pronouns are used in reference to McIlwain. With this research, we are comfortable inferring that we may elect to include certain vocabulary terms to describe McIlwain, such as **Americans, African Americans, Men, and/or University and college faculty members** from LCGDT.

The following examples are brief and generally contain corresponding elements to encode the book title, the author’s name, and at least one LCDGT term to provide an author attribute. These examples are sufficient to demonstrate how metadata creators might consider aiding discoverability of works through including attributes for people and groups in a few metadata schemas commonly used by information professionals.

Figure 3.7 shows the creator/contributor characteristics (MARC 386) fields listed in the MARC record for Black Software. For guidance on how to encode 386 fields with LCDGT, or your preferred vocabulary terms, refer to the earlier part of this chapter.

![Figure 3.7. MARC example for Black Software](image)

| 100 #1 | $a McIlwain, Charlton D., $d 1971- $e author. |
| 245 10 | $a Black software : $b the internet and racial justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter / $c Charlton D. McIlwain. |
| 386 ## | $n nat $a Americans $2 lcdgt |
| 386 ## | $n eth $a African Americans $2 lcdgt |
| 386 ## | $n gdr $a Men $2 lcdgt |

And Figure 3.8 provides an example of how McIlwain’s LCNAF record has been enhanced by adding a term for other attributes of person…other designation (368$c) and the occupation in MARC field 374 as described in the previous section.

57. For example, “Charlton McIlwain,” New York University.
58. “Americans,” LCGDT, last modified June 23, 2015, [https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060001](https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060001); “African Americans,” LCGDT, last modified March 22, 2022, [https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060362](https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060362); “Men,” LCGDT, last modified June 16, 2021, [https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060359](https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060359); and “University and College Faculty Members,” LCGDT, last modified November 9, 2022, [https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2016060024](https://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2016060024).
Two BIBFRAME examples are provided in Figures 3.9 and 3.10; both are expressed in Turtle (Terse RDF Triple Language or TTL). The first one uses Dublin Core Metadata Initiative Metadata Terms (dcterms), and the other, Metadata Authority Description Schema in RDF (MADS).

The dcterms and BIBFRAME example (Figure 3.9) contains two stanzas with abbreviated notation. The first stanza describes the work through two triples with the same subject, which is an imaginary URI intended to represent the work. The first triple’s predicate consists of a dcterms title element with an object consisting of a literal text string for the full book title. The second triple in this stanza consists of a dcterms contributor predicate with the URI for Charlton D. McIlwain’s Library of Congress Name Authority File access point as the object.

The second stanza describes Charlton D. McIlwain, using the author’s name authority URI as the subject. The first predicate, “is author of” (relators:aut), has the imaginary URI for the work as its object. The next predicate, BIBFRAME creatorCharacteristic, has as its object the URI for the LCDGT term African Americans.
Figure 3.10 Turtle (TTL) example for Black Software using MADS and BIBFRAME

@prefix bf: <http://id.loc.gov/ontologies/bibframe/>.
@prefix bflc: <http://id.loc.gov/ontologies/bflc/>.
@prefix madsrdf: <http://www.loc.gov/mads/rdf/v1#>.
@prefix rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>.
@prefix rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>.
@prefix datatypes: <http://id.loc.gov/datatypes/>.
@prefix lclocal: <http://id.loc.gov/ontologies/lclocal/>.

_:b0_b4 a bf:Title;
   rdfs:label "Black software : the Internet and racial justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter";
   bf:mainTitle "Black software : the Internet and racial justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter".

<http://id.loc.gov/rwo/agents/n2003110343> a madsrdf:PersonalName, bf:Agent;
   rdfs:label "McIlwain, Charlton D., 1971-";
   madsrdf:isIdentifiedByAuthority <http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n2003110343>;
   bflc:creatorCharacteristic <http://id.loc.gov/authorities/demographicTerms/dg2015060362>. 
Figure 3.11: MODS XML example for Black Software

```xml
<?xml version='1.0' encoding='UTF-8'?>
<mods xmlns:xlink="http://www.w3.org/1999/xlink" version="3.7"
xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
  <titleInfo>
    <title>
      Black software
    </title>
    <subTitle>
      the Internet and racial justice, from the AfroNet
to Black Lives Matter
    </subTitle>
  </titleInfo>
  <name type="personal" authority="naf"
authorityURI="https://id.loc.gov/authorities/names"
valueURI="http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n2003110343">
    <namePart>
      McIlwain, Charlton D., 1971-
    </namePart>
    <role>
      <roleTerm type="code">aut</roleTerm>
    </role>
    <description>
      African Americans
    </description>
  </name>
</mods>
```

A last example, Figure 3.11, is a simple record encoded in Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS). Note that in the MODS record, a description element is included in the overarching name metadata as a means to provide additional information about the person. The LCDGT term label itself is used in description rather than the URI.
Conclusion

In all, describing people and groups is a developing area of metadata work, particularly in machine operable and interoperable ways. It has been common to describe people depicted in photographs, but previous efforts may have caused harm or been non-inclusive. These descriptions of persons and groups were generally limited to human-readable text summaries or notes, which is covered in Chapter 1, but we now have machine readable and interoperable metadata encoding options available. We can use these metadata elements along with critical selection of corresponding vocabulary terms that identify attributes of the authors, contributors, audiences, and other related persons and groups in our library resources and collections. Readers may refer to Chapter 5 for additional considerations regarding selecting and assigning subject headings.

Resources

- The Getty Research Institute, AAT (Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online)
  https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat/
- Library of Congress, BIBFRAME (Bibliographic Framework Initiative)
  https://www.loc.gov/bibframe/
- Megan O’Donnell and Erin Thomas, Diverse STEM Reading: A Layer Cake of Problems
  https://bibliography.pubpub.org/pub/cq7x48fi/
- OCLC, FAST (Faceted Application of Subject Terminology)
  https://fast.oclc.org/searchfast/
- Homosaurus, an international LGBTQIA+ linked data vocabulary
  https://homosaurus.org/v3
- Library of Congress, MARC 21 format for authority data
  https://www.loc.gov/marc/authority/
- Library of Congress, MARC 21 format for bibliographic data
  https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/
- Library of Congress, MODS (Metadata Object Description Schema)
  https://www.loc.gov/standards/mods/
- Library of Congress, Subject Heading and Term Source Codes
  https://www.loc.gov/standards/sourcelist/subject.html
- W3C, Turtle version, RDF Primer
  https://www.w3.org/2007/02/turtle/primer/
- W3C, Turtle syntax specifications
  https://www.w3.org/TR/turtle/
Chapter 4

Classification

Overview

Subject metadata—particularly classification and subject headings, the respective focuses for the next two chapters—allows metadata creators to communicate what library resources are about using predetermined schemes and vocabularies. This chapter will discuss library classification as it relates to DEI. Rather than attempt to cover the topic exhaustively, it provides readers with a brief overview of the issues and why they matter. It will then describe two practices that can improve the inclusivity of library metadata: keeping the library’s classification current while continuing to use mainstream schemes (e.g., DDC and LCC) and embracing alternative classification. Two real-life case studies will be discussed to illustrate these methods. Note that Chapters 5 and 6 are organized similarly and that some instructions are repeated verbatim except when variation is necessary.

Introduction to library classification

Joudrey, Taylor, and Wisser define classification as "[t]he placing of subjects into categories; in organization of information, classification is the process of determining where an information resource fits into a given hierarchy and often then assigning the notation associated with the appropriate level of the hierarchy to the information resource and to its metadata." While other classification systems are available, this chapter focuses on the two predominant general-purpose classification schemes used in the United States: Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and Library of Congress Classification (LCC).

Introduced by Melvil Dewey in 1876, DDC divides the entirety of knowledge into ten main classes, which are divided into narrower subtopics denoted by three-digit Arabic numerals. Topics are subdivided further with the addition of a decimal point followed by more numbers. LCC, though developed specifically for the Library of Congress’s collection around the turn of the twentieth century, has become widely used by libraries throughout the world. The scheme consists of individual schedules created for various areas of knowledge and uses an alpha-numeric notational system.

DDC and LCC, like all classification schemes, are products of the cultural paradigms of their creators and are subject to explicit and implicit biases. DDC’s Western-centric worldview, for example, is particularly

apparent in the 200s—the section dedicated to religion. Christianity is spread throughout 220–289 in the schedule, while all other religions are crowded in the 290s (see Figure 4.1). As information professionals, it is critical that we strive to consider the diversity of our users in library classification. As Sahadath argues, “If we are not proactive in eliminating the inequalities in certain common classification schemes, we could end up alienating diverse and marginalized populations.”


---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DDC Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>Philosophy &amp; theory of religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>Christianity &amp; Christian theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>Christian moral &amp; devotional theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>Christian orders &amp; local church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>Social &amp; ecclesiastical theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td>History of Christianity &amp; Christian church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280</td>
<td>Christian denominations &amp; sects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
<td>Other religions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.1. Coverage of religious topics in DDC**

---

**Working within DDC and LCC**

Fortunately, DDC and LCC are not etched in stone; both have been continually updated to better reflect humanity’s ever-changing knowledge landscape, which includes changes for greater inclusivity. One of the easiest methods of enhancing the inclusivity of your catalog is to ensure that new resources are shelved under the most up-to-date classification numbers. DDC users can follow “025.431: The Dewey Blog” (https://ddc.typepad.com/) for updates and other information regarding the scheme. In addition, the Google Group Dewey Contributors (https://sites.google.com/view/deweycontributors) allows anyone to propose changes.

The Library of Congress’s Classification Web (https://classweb.org/approved/) lists monthly updates to LCC, and metadata creators can subscribe to receive notifications. Libraries can also recommend changes to LCC via the Library of Congress’s Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division (PTCP). When adopting changes to classification, libraries should consider retroactive conversion projects to ensure that materials cataloged before the new policies took effect are up to date with current practices, and to prevent libraries from creating “split” collections in which materials that should be classed together are separate.

We recommend that all libraries using DDC or LCC follow several practices:
1. **Evaluate** choices critically when assigning classification numbers.
2. **Follow** updates to DDC and LCC.
3. **Connect** with your stakeholders (i.e., users, library staff, community members, etc.) and involve them in the process when applicable.
4. **Know** your options for recommending changes to existing schemes.
5. **Consider** using alternative classification (see below) if the problem cannot be adequately addressed using DDC or LCC.

**Case study: N-Cutter reassignment at the Iowa State University Library**

An example of retroactively converting records to conform to recent developments was performed here at the Iowa State University Library. Some classification numbers in LCC use Cutter numbers, “a method of representing words or names by using a decimal point, followed first by a letter of the alphabet, then by one or more Arabic numerals,” to collocate subtopics. For example, in the E–F schedule (used for history of the Americas) the range for elements of the population (i.e., demographic groups) of the United States is E184–E185.98. Most groups are classified with a Cutter number under “E184,” such as “E184.C97” and “E184.I8” being used for Cuban Americans and Italian Americans, respectively.

This concept was applied at various places in the schedules for African Americans with N-Cutter numbers. The “N” was assigned in the past because it stood for “Negro,” which is no longer a preferred term for Black people. In June 2021 all existing classification numbers with N-Cutters were changed to B-Cutter (Black people). For example, the classification number D810.N4 (Negroes in World War II) was replaced by D810.B53 (“Black people. African Americans”).

**Figure 4.2. Classification number revision for Black people in World War II in LCC**

```
D1 - D2027 -- History (General)
D731 - D838 -- World War II (1939-1945)
D810.A-Z -- Other special topics, A-Z
  {Obsolete classification number}
  {Current classification number}
```

The Iowa State University library took two actions to address this. First, cataloging unit members were instructed to change any newly acquired titles with N-Cutters in their existing MARC records to their B-
Cutter equivalents. Some resources arrive at the library shelf-ready, meaning the records are supplied by vendors, and the physical items typically bypass the cataloging unit. To ensure that local practices were followed consistently, it was decided that all materials with subject matter related to DEI should be forwarded to the cataloging unit.

The second part of the process was to retroactively reclassify existing materials. To avoid creating a split collection—with legacy titles shelved under N-Cutter classification numbers and recent ones shelved under B-Cutter classification numbers—existing N-Cutter titles needed to be identified and assigned new classification numbers. We used an Alma Analytics report that was created by Mark K. Ehlert at St. Thomas University Library and shared with the Alma community.\(^\text{12}\) The Analytics feature in Alma was used to retrieve titles with N-Cutter classification numbers in the subfield h (\(\text{h}\)) of the 852 field in the MARC holdings record (see example in Figure 4.3). These titles were then retrieved from the stacks, and the books were brought to cataloging to be assigned new call numbers. Most of these obsolete classification numbers were corrected in batch, first by scanning the barcodes on the books to add them to sets and then by using normalization rules to programmatically change call numbers in both the bibliographic and holdings records.

In some cases, obsolete N-Cutter classification numbers were mapped to multiple numbers, thus requiring catalogers to decide which current number best suited the individual title. After the records were updated, the titles were sent to be relabeled and returned to the collection. For books that were out on loan during the initial conversion, the Iowa State University library added a note to the item record instructing circulation staff to forward the item to cataloging after it was returned so it could be updated. This work could serve as a model for similar retroactive conversion projects involving classification number reassignment.

![Figure 4.3. Example of 856 with N-Cutter classification number (subfield \(h\) in bold)](image)

### Alternative classification

The process of updating comprehensive classification schemes can be lengthy. Another option may be to proactively embrace alternative systems. By locally customizing existing classification schemes—or even, as discussed in this chapter’s second case study, developing new ones—libraries can move beyond strict adherence to national standards and spearhead advancements in DEI and library classification. “For some libraries, it is possible to mitigate the shortcomings of dominant classification schemes by creating policy or by making local additions to the schemes themselves,” thus allowing for improvements to be made for specific subject matter rather than a rewriting of an entire scheme.\(^\text{13}\)

Alternative classification can serve as an excellent method for concentrating on specific areas of marginalized communities or topics that are not well addressed by existing systems. An early example dates back to the 1930s with Dorothy Porter, a pioneering librarian at Howard University who adjusted her library’s use of DDC “to make Africana materials more easily accessible.” At that time, DDC placed all

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\(^{12}\) Mark K. Ehlert, reply to “N-cutters’ have been changed to ‘B-cutters,’” RADCAT@listserv.uga.edu, November 4, 2021, [https://listserv.uga.edu/scripts/wa-UGA.exe?SUBED1=RADCAT](https://listserv.uga.edu/scripts/wa-UGA.exe?SUBED1=RADCAT). Although Iowa State used Ex Libris Alma to retrieve and update records, other Integrated Library Systems (ILSs) can perform similar functions.

\(^{13}\) Sahadath, “Classifying the Margins,” 15.
resources related to people of African ancestry under 325 and 326, the respective classification numbers for colonialism and slavery. Porter created a modified version of DDC to more effectively capture works related to Black people.\textsuperscript{14} Another example is the Library and Archives Canada FC class, which is used for Canadian History, and its PS8000 class, which is used for Canadian literature. These extensions to the LCC schedules have “allowed for a more thorough and detailed organization of materials specific to Canadian collections, which are otherwise given less treatment in the basic LC scheme.”\textsuperscript{15}

We recommend several steps for libraries considering alternative classification:

1. **Identify** a subject area that may benefit from alternative classification.
2. **Research** existing alternative classification schemes.
3. **Create** a new system if existing alternative classifications are inadequate.
4. **Implement** the new system into your library’s workflow and discovery layers.

The following section discusses several things to consider during this process.

**Implementing alternative classification schemes**

After your institution has done the necessary research and decided to use alternative classification, the next step is to incorporate the scheme into your systems and workflows. For consistency, it is important to document the circumstances in which to apply alternative headings, as well as how to do so. Below are some questions to assist with this process.

- **Which records will be targeted for alternative classification?**
  Will you target all new records, all existing records, or records for selected collections or types of resources? Will the alternative classification system be used for electronic resources that won’t have a physical call number?

- **Which alternative scheme will be used?**
  If using an existing scheme, will it be used in full or in part? If using a locally developed system, or revising an existing one, a schedule will need to be created with a defined hierarchy and clear procedures. How will this be created? Will it be shared only with library staff, or will it be publicly available?

- **How will you identify the targeted records?**
  Will you use an automated process to identify records containing specified problematic classification numbers? When automation is not possible, you may wish to browse certain sections of your library’s shelf list. LC Correlations could be used to identify both LCC and DDC numbers commonly used for specific topics.

- **How will you update the targeted records?**
  To make the changes, will you use an automated process, such as an integrated library system (ILS) normalization rule that automatically changes the existing classification number to its corresponding


\textsuperscript{15} Sahadath, "Classifying the Margins," 15.
alternative?\textsuperscript{16} If so, will you use a batch editing tool such as MarcEdit, OpenRefine, or spreadsheets to make global changes? Moreover, will catalogers and metadata creators be instructed to update classification numbers manually in certain scenarios?

- **How will changes be made to call numbers for physical materials?**
  How will your library coordinate the updating of call numbers for physical resources? Who will need to be involved in the process? What shifting work will be necessary to ensure that all germane titles are shelved together under the new scheme?

- **How will records for new resources be addressed?**
  How will metadata and cataloging staff be instructed to use alternative classification numbers? Which library staff will need to be part of the process? For example, if many of the materials arrive at the library shelf-ready (i.e., they bypass the cataloging department), will receiving staff know the criteria for forwarding resources to cataloging?

- **Will the alternative system be revised in the future?**
  Will periodic reviews and revisions of the new classification system take place? Will the library have a system for reporting feedback to technical services? For example, if a user informs a public service librarian of an issue regarding the new system, does the library have a process of recording this for future consideration?

### Case study: The Brian Deer Classification system

One example of alternative classification enhancing inclusivity is the Brian Deer Classification system (BDC). Brian Deer, the system’s eponymous creator, was a librarian and Mohawk. While earning his MLIS at McGill University, he determined that the existing mainstream classification systems were inadequate for describing Indigenous communities. In the 1970s he developed an early version of his system to organize the collection of the National Indian Brotherhood and Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCICO) in Vancouver, British Columbia.\textsuperscript{17}

Tomren discusses several advantages BDC has over mainstream schemes such as DDC and LCC. First, its relatively simple design allows for easier implementation, which assisted Indigenous libraries because they “often had a small staff and limited resources to devote to cataloging.”\textsuperscript{18} It allows catalogers to use subclasses to organize narrower topics, such as allowing Indigenous communities to be collocated by “related cultures rather than being simply listed alphabetically as in LCC or grouped linguistically as in DDC.” Finally, it uses endonyms rather than exonyms to describe Indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{19}

Another advantage of BDC is its malleability. Deer “believed the classification system used in a particular library should be designed to reflect the concerns of local Indigenous people.” He therefore did not attempt to develop a scheme that could “be applied to all topics of interest to the Indigenous peoples of North America.”

\textsuperscript{17} Jean Weihs, “A Tribute to Brian Deer,” *Technicalities* 39, no. 3 (2019): 11–12.
\textsuperscript{18} Holly Tomren, “Classification, Bias, and American Indian Materials” (unpublished manuscript, 2004), 21, \url{http://ailasacc.pbworks.com/f/BiasClassification2004.pdf}.
\textsuperscript{19} Tomren, 21.
and “created a new classification system for each library in which he worked.” Other institutions have continued to update the system to meet their users’ needs.

An example of local revision took place when staff at the UBCIC Resource Centre, where Brian Deer had created an early version of the system, found that multiple updates were needed. For example, the UBCIC acquired large numbers of resources related to environmental and ecological subjects, topics not covered sufficiently by their previous version of the BDC, and it was determined that subject expansion of the system was necessary to accommodate these newly acquired materials. In the previous version, for example, resources on coal developments were shelved under “Nc” (see Figure 4.4).

![Figure 4.4. Coal under UBCIC’s previous version of BDC](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ubcic/pages/1166/attachments/original/1507335846/UBCICClassification.pdf?1507335846)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N -- Energy &amp; resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nc -- Coal Developments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the revision, the subject was changed simply to “Coal” and given the more granular classification number “NRDE.FC” placing it under a more complex hierarchy (see Figure 4.5).

![Figure 4.5. Coal under UBCIC’s revised version of BDC](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ubcic/pages/1166/attachments/original/1507335846/UBCICClassification.pdf?1507335846)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N -- Nature &amp; Ecological Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NR -- Land-Based Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRD -- Land Use &amp; Resource Development [Modern/Contemporary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRDE -- Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRDE.F -- Fossil Fuels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRDE.FC -- Coal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, the top-level N section’s name was changed from “Natural Resources” to “Nature & Ecological Knowledge,” in order to “reflect the relationships Indigenous people have with the land and animals.” Similarly, “Wildlife Management” was replaced by “Wildlife Caretaking & Stewardship.”

Another example of local revision is the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute (ACCI) in Oujé-Bougoumou, Quebec, home to an Eenou community (who are part of the larger Cree peoples), which adopted

21. Weihs, 12.
23. Hierarchy derived from Cherry and Mukunda, 558, fig. 1.
24. Cherry and Mukunda, 558, fig. 1.
25. Figure derived from: “UBCIC Resource Centre Classification Plan [Draft],” July 14, 2015, 19, 24–25, [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ubcic/pages/1166/attachments/original/1507335846/UBCICClassification.pdf?1507335846](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ubcic/pages/1166/attachments/original/1507335846/UBCICClassification.pdf?1507335846).
the system. The UBCIC adjusted the system to dedicate special attention to British Columbia by classifying communities from that province separately from other North American Indigenous communities. Influenced by the UBCIC, the ACCI initially planned a similar approach based on Quebec; however, its collection was also focused on other Cree communities—who are not limited to Quebec but spread throughout several Canadian provinces and a U.S. state. Because dividing works by modern political borders would separate related resources in a way that undermined the scheme’s intent, a decision was made not to separate communities located in modern-day Quebec from communities located elsewhere.27

Work on the BDC shows the process that goes into creating an alternative classification system, as well as the benefits it can provide. BDC focuses on Indigenous communities in North America, particularly Canada, but similar methods could be used for other marginalized communities, especially when libraries manage specialized collections with materials related to these groups.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced readers to issues related to DEI in library classification. Two approaches that can make discovery systems more inclusive were discussed: ensuring that the shelf listing of library resources is up to date with recent developments and embracing alternative classification systems. The updating of the LCC N-Cutter numbers at the Iowa State University Library and the development and revisions of the Brian Deer Classification system were highlighted to illustrate these methods in practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| · 025.431: The Dewey blog  
[https://ddc.typepad.com/025431/](https://ddc.typepad.com/025431/)  
| · Classification Web, Library of Congress  
[https://classweb.org/](https://classweb.org/)  
| · Dewey Contributors  
[https://sites.google.com/view/deweycontributors](https://sites.google.com/view/deweycontributors)  
| · SACO – Subject Authority Cooperative Program, Program for Cooperative Cataloging  
[https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/](https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/)  
| · University of British Columbia, Brian Deer Classification System  
[https://guides.library.ubc.ca/Indigilibrarianship/briandeer](https://guides.library.ubc.ca/Indigilibrarianship/briandeer)  
| · WebDewey, OCLC  
[https://dewey.org/webdewey/login/login.html](https://dewey.org/webdewey/login/login.html)  |

Chapter 5

Subject Headings

Overview

By shifting focus from classification to subject headings, this chapter continues the discussion of subject metadata. As with the previous chapter, it provides a short introduction to the topic and its relation to DEI and access, and it describes two methods librarians can use to improve the inclusivity of their catalogs, along with case studies of their implementation.

Introduction to subject headings

Library subject headings are types of controlled vocabularies, which are “list[s] or database[s] of terms in which all terms or phrases representing a concept are brought together.”¹ Controlled vocabularies allow users to distinguish between words and terms that represent different concepts but use identical spelling (i.e., homographs). Joudrey, Taylor, and Wisser use the example “Mercury,” which can be used to refer to “a liquid metal, a planet, a car, or a Roman god.”² Conversely, these vocabularies allow libraries to collocate synonymous or near-synonymous words and terms (e.g., “Association football” is a variant of “Soccer”³) and differences in spelling or inflection (e.g., “Woodworking” is a variant of the LCSH “Woodwork”⁴).

Although controlled vocabularies are not used exclusively to convey subject content, that will be the focus of this chapter, with special attention paid to the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), a large, comprehensive controlled vocabulary that is intended to describe subject matter in all areas of knowledge.

This chapter cannot begin to summarize the wide range of opinions related to LCSH and DEI comprehensively; however, three issues identified by Olson are worth discussing at length: exclusions, marginalizations, and distortions.⁵ First, the author noted the issue of headings that are excluded, such as “Wicca,” which, at that time, lacked a heading and was placed under “Witchcraft,” making it difficult to find materials specific to Wicca. Also, “Witchcraft” is a narrower term of “Occultism” thus placing “Wicca” in this diabolical category. Next, the author discusses marginalizations, which occur when a subject is placed “outside of the cultural mainstream—making it ‘other’” [emphasis in original]. […] Examples of this practice are

headings for groups of people consisting only of adjectives, such as: *Handicapped, Poor and Aged* [emphasis in original]. What is included is what differentiates these groups from the mainstream. What is excluded is the fact that they are people.”

Finally, Olson discusses distortions, “[a] more subtle systemic problem [that] uses the structure of subject heading list to shift the meaning of a term in a particular direction.”

For example, the narrower headings for the subject heading “Feminism” fail to capture the diversity of feminist thought and movements by not including headings for liberal feminism as well as many of feminism’s more radical variants. As a result, the LCSH portrays feminism as “a dated white, middle-class liberal movement with a few in-your-face splinter groups.”

### Working within LCSH

As with LCC and DDC, LCSH is intended to be updated indefinitely to adapt to changing social norms, the dynamic nature of language, and the evolving needs of library users. Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO), a division of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, provides libraries with the opportunity to participate directly in these updates. Created in the 1990s, SACO allows members to propose changes to existing subject headings, which are then reviewed by Library of Congress staff who decide whether to approve the changes. Member libraries are expected to submit ten to twelve proposals annually; however, those unable to submit this number may also collaborate with other libraries through designated SACO funnels, which are “group[s] of libraries (or catalogers from various libraries) that have joined together to contribute subject authority records for inclusion in the Library of Congress Subject Headings.” Funnels can either be focused on a specific subject area or represent libraries in a geographic region.

An overview of the proposal process is on the Library of Congress website: “Process for Adding and Revising Library of Congress Subject Headings” (https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/lcsh-process.html). First, search the Library of Congress Subject Authority File (https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/lcsh-process.html) to ensure that the proposal has not already been effectively addressed by existing LCSHs. Second, research the subject of the proposed heading, focusing on how the subject is defined and described and what terms are used for it in the literature. Third, create or update the record for the proposal in accordance with rules provided in the Subject Headings Manual (SHM) (https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeSHM/freeshm.html), LC’s official documentation for subject authority records. Finally, submit the proposal using the instructions found in SHM under H 200: Preparation of Subject Heading Proposals (https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeSHM/H0200.pdf). Proposals are then reviewed by the Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division (PTCP), with rejected proposals announced on SACO’s Summaries of Decisions from Subject Editorial Meetings.

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7. Olson, 61.
8. Olson, 62.
(https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/cpsoed/cpsoeditorial.html), posted on the LCSH approved lists. Proposals also can be made by non-library workers, or libraries that are not SACO members, who may recommend changes by contacting the PTCP directly. The Library of Congress recommends subscribing to the RSS feed Library of Congress Subject Headings Approved Lists, which can be found on its website.

We recommend several practices for all libraries using LCSH to follow:

1. **Evaluate** choices critically when assigning subject headings.
2. **Follow** updates to LCSH.
3. **Connect** with your stakeholders (i.e., users, library staff, and community members) and involve them in the process when applicable.
4. **Know** your options for recommending changes or additions to LCSH, either as a SACO or non-SACO member library.
5. **Consider** using alternative subject headings (see below) if the problem cannot be adequately addressed using LCSH.

### Case study: Changing existing headings

A well-documented case study of changing headings through the SACO process took place with the revision of the LCSH “Illegal aliens” (see concise timeline of events in Figure 5.1). Although the term “illegal aliens” was widely accepted to describe undocumented immigrants in the past, in recent years, critics increasingly viewed the term as derogatory, and in 2013 the Associated Press announced that it was discontinuing its use. In early 2014 the recently founded Coalition for Immigration Reform, Equality and DREAMERs (CoFIREd), a student activist group at Dartmouth College, reached out to its library to request that the term be removed from its catalog.

In July of that year, Dartmouth’s library suggested updating five subject headings that included the term “illegal aliens” through SACO. The Library of Congress initially rejected the proposal on the ground that “illegal aliens is an inherently legal heading,” and “[m]ixing an inherently legal concept with one that is not inherently legal leads to problems with the structure and maintenance of LCSH, and makes assignment of headings difficult.” In June 2015 a representative from the Cataloging and Metadata Management Section (CaMMS) Subject Analysis Committee communicated with one of the librarians at Dartmouth to discuss

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20. CaMMS was a section of the American Library Association division Association for Library Collections and Technical Services.
additional options for addressing the issue. At the 2015 ALA Annual Meeting, the committee agreed to review the headings in question and recommend changes if warranted. At the 2016 ALA Midwinter Meeting, the “Resolution on Replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading ‘Illegal Aliens’ with ‘Undocumented Immigrants’” was submitted to ALA Council for consideration. With strong support from several professional organizations within ALA, the resolution passed “nearly unanimously.” In March 2016 the Library of Congress announced that it was replacing the subject heading “Illegal aliens” with “Noncitizens” and “Unauthorized immigration.”

But the story doesn’t end here. In an unusually high-profile affair for the normally low-key field of metadata and cataloging, the proposed changes drew ire of several members of the United States Congress, who criticized the Library of Congress’s revision as partisan. An initial attempt to prevent the update was HR 4926, “Stopping Partisan Policy at the Library of Congress Act,” which was introduced by Representative Diana Black and would have required retention of the terms, but it was not voted on. Ultimately, Congress did not require retention of the headings but included a provision in the 2017 appropriations that directed the Library of Congress to make the process for approving changes to subject headings more transparent.

While the headings were eventually changed in 2021, many individual libraries decided to revise the term locally in the interim. The next section briefly discusses how some libraries updated the subject headings in their catalogs independently of SACO and the official LCSH.

(ALCTS). The division merged with the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) and the Library Information Technology Association (LITA) in 2020 to form the new division Core.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>The Associated Press discontinues the use of “Illegal aliens.”&lt;sup&gt;27&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2014 | Student activists at Dartmouth College request that the term be removed from their university library’s catalog.<sup>28</sup>  
- Through SACO, Dartmouth’s library proposes several changes to subject headings containing “Illegal aliens.”<sup>29</sup>  
- Dartmouth’s proposal is rejected by the Library of Congress.<sup>30</sup> |
| 2015 | The CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee discusses the proposals with one of the librarians at Dartmouth. The committee agrees to review the headings and suggest changes if needed.<sup>31</sup> |
| 2016 | The ALA Council passes a resolution calling for the discontinuation of “Illegal aliens” in the LCSH.<sup>32</sup>  
- The Library of Congress announces that it is replacing the subject heading “Illegal aliens” with “Noncitizens” and “Unauthorized immigration.”<sup>33</sup> |
| 2017 | Members of the United States Congress add a provision to the 2017 appropriations directing the Library of Congress to make the process for updating LCSH terms more transparent.<sup>34</sup> |
| 2021 | “Illegal aliens” is replaced by the Library of Congress.<sup>35</sup> |

**Alternative subject headings**

In addition to LCSH, libraries can use alternative headings or even full alternative controlled vocabularies. This allows libraries to apply headings to local records without having to go through the SACO revision process, as well as tailor headings to local needs or specific niches.

Due to the long delay in replacing the LCSH “Illegal aliens,” many libraries and library consortia updated

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<sup>27</sup> Colford, “‘Illegal Immigrant’ No More.”  
<sup>28</sup> Fox, “Cataloging News,” 506–07.  
<sup>29</sup> Fox, 507.  
<sup>30</sup> “Summary of Decisions,” Program for Cooperative Cataloging.  
<sup>31</sup> Fox, “Cataloging News,” 508.  
<sup>32</sup> Fox, 508.  
<sup>33</sup> Library of Congress, *Cancel the Subject Heading*.  
<sup>34</sup> 115 Congressional Record 4033 (2017).  
<sup>35</sup> American Library Association, “ALA Welcomes Removal.”
their discovery systems locally. In June 2019 the CaMMS Subject Analysis Committee created the SAC Working Group on Alternatives to LCSH “Illegal Aliens,” to study and report on this work. In September and October of 2019 the group distributed a survey for libraries and identified four common methods that were used to address this locally: “adding a new heading to the record in a local or MARC field without removing the corresponding “Illegal aliens” subject heading[,] replacing the “Illegal aliens” subject heading in bibliographic records[,] creating a local authority record in the backend library system[,] or creating a local authority record in the discovery system.”

It proceeds to discuss pros and cons of the various methods that libraries should consider when planning similar projects. For example, retaining the initial heading maintains its function as an access point but also keeps the offensive terminology visible to users. The group notes that some discovery systems can solve this problem by retaining the original heading as an access point while displaying only the updated version publicly. Thus, “when LC revises this heading in the official LCSH, libraries using this approach can use their traditional authority control methods to update bibliographic records as they normally would.”

Another option is to go beyond individual headings and embrace an alternative controlled vocabulary. This can help address broad subjects for which existing systems are largely inaccurate, considered offensive, or simply insufficient for describing specific demographic groups. Libraries can either adopt existing alternative systems or, as described in the case study below, actively develop new ones. An example of an alternative controlled vocabulary is the Homosaurus (https://homosaurus.org/), “an international linked data vocabulary of LGBTQ+ terms. Designed to enhance broad subject term vocabularies, the Homosaurus is a robust and cutting-edge thesaurus that advances the discoverability of LGBTQ+ resources and information.”

First developed by the IHLIA LGBT Heritage in 1997 for local use, it has been revised as three official versions—1 (2013), 2 (2019), and 3 (2021)—and has been changed from a flat to a hierarchical structure and made compatible with linked data technologies. As of August 2023, updates to the vocabulary were made by its editorial board.

We recommend several steps for libraries considering alternative subject headings:

1. **Identify** a subject area that may benefit from alternative subject headings.
2. **Research** existing alternative subject headings.
3. **Create** a new system if existing alternative subject headings are inadequate.
4. **Implement** the headings into your library’s workflow and discovery layers.

The following section discusses several things to consider during this process.

39. “IHLIA” was derived from the organization’s initial name “Internationaal Homo/Lesbisch Informatiecentrum en Archief.” The acronym was retained after the renaming. R. J. Davidson, “Consensus Social Movements: Strategic Interaction in Dutch LGBTI Politics” (PhD thesis, Amsterdam, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, 2021), xiii, https://hdl.handle.net/11245.1/cc522a57-8c30-44fe-9633-ac132dc2491d.
Implementing alternative subject headings

After your institution has done the necessary research and decided to use alternative headings, the next step is to incorporate them into your systems and workflows. For consistency, it is important to document the circumstances in which to apply alternative headings, as well as how to do so. Below are some questions to help with your decision making and documentation.

- **Which records will be targeted for alternative headings?**
  Will you target all new records, all existing records, or records for selected collections or types of resources? Will you consider MARC records and non-MARC records?

- **Which alternative headings will be used?**
  For consistent reference, it is a good idea to compile a list of problematic headings that you wish to supplement or replace with alternative terms. For examples, refer to OCLC’s local subject remapping template,\(^{41}\) the Triangle Research Libraries Network’s list of terms currently overlaid,\(^{42}\) Cataloging Lab’s list of Problem Headings\(^{43}\), and the University of Manitoba’s Changes to Library of Congress Subject Headings Related to Indigenous Peoples.\(^{44}\)

- **How will you identify the targeted records?**
  Will you use an automated process to identify records containing specified problematic headings? When automation is not possible, you may wish to perform searches for certain terms to understand their frequency. The results of your searches may help prioritize your efforts.

- **How will you update the targeted records?**
  To make the changes, will you use an automated process, such as an integrated library system (ILS) normalization rule that automatically applies alternative headings to records containing problematic headings?\(^{45}\) Will you use a batch editing tool such as MarcEdit, OpenRefine, or spreadsheets to make global changes? Moreover, will catalogers and metadata creators be instructed to add alternative terms manually in certain scenarios?

- **Which headings will display and/or function as an access point?**
  Will you add alternative terms as supplemental headings, replace problematic headings with alternative terms, or retain problematic headings for discovery but hide them from public view? The strategy of adding supplemental headings provides “the maximum subject and keyword access to bibliographic records.”\(^{46}\) However, you may wish to replace problematic headings entirely if your users are likely to

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consider them harmful. The third strategy combines the benefits of the first two but also depends on the functionality of your discovery platform.

- **Which field or element will be used to record alternative headings?**
  In MARC records, you could use a 650 field with a second indicator 7 and a subfield $2 indicating the source of the term, or you could use a locally defined field. In non-MARC records, depending on the granularity of your chosen scheme, you may be able to use the same subject element no matter the source of the term, or you may need to use a customized element. If possible, record a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) for the alternative term.\(^{47}\)

- **How will records for new materials be addressed?**
  Will alternative headings be applied continuously through an automated process? Will you assign alternative headings whenever new records are created? Will you perform a periodic review of existing records?

- **Will the alternative headings be revised in the future?**
  Will periodic reviews and revisions of the alternative headings take place? Will the library have a process for reporting feedback to technical services? For example, if a user informs a public service librarian of an issue regarding the new system, does the library have a process to record this information for future consideration?

### Case study: Subject headings for Iowa Indigenous Peoples

The Iowa State University Library began exploring methods to improve the inclusivity of library metadata that would be feasible with our limited time and budget. By researching previous and ongoing projects, we became aware of various initiatives involving the creation of vocabularies for Indigenous groups that used the names preferred by these communities.\(^{48}\) We decided that similar efforts would be valuable for the land that constitutes the modern state of Iowa. For the next two years, we researched preferred names for Indigenous nations related to Iowa and proposed alternative terms to the LCSH terms available for these peoples.\(^{49}\) We then consulted with these Indigenous communities to find out whether the proposed terms were appropriate. We offered reciprocity in the form of a LibGuide that highlighted books of interest from Iowa State’s collections,\(^{50}\) our digital press’s DEI commitment to work with authors from minoritized groups or in non-English languages, and free Interlibrary Loan for these communities.

We received responses from 62 percent (13 out of 21) of the communities we contacted. Responses

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47. i.e., “an identifier for some resource available on the Internet, such as a webpage, digital document, or application.” "URI," in *High Definition: A-Z Guide to Personal Technology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), https://search.credoreference.com/articles/Qm9va0FyddhGUm6MTc2OTQ2NQ==?aid=100725.


50. “Resources and Services for Iowa Indigenous Peoples,” Iowa State University Research and Course Guides, Iowa State University Library, last modified March 26, 2024, https://go.iastate.edu/UAREL3.
indicated most of the proposed terms were acceptable, but we did receive several spelling corrections and different preferred terms. A list of these vocabulary terms and their LCSH counterparts is maintained and publicly available in a Google Sheet.\footnote{51} We chose to supplement the existing LCSH in our Alma MARC records and digital collections metadata rather than replace it. Some of our rationale for taking this approach included ensuring searchability as well as possible future work where we would suppress display of the outdated LCSH terms. For now, the LCSH terms remain on our records, in anticipation of the Library of Congress’s plan to improve its terms for Indigenous groups\footnote{52}

Figure 5.2 provides an example of two of our local supplemental terms for the Ioway and the Meskwaki; the LCSH equivalent for the former is Iowa Indians.\footnote{53} For the latter, catalogers often applied two LCSH terms, Fox Indians and Sauk Indians.\footnote{54}

| Figure 5.2. MARC examples of our local, supplemental terms for two Indigenous nations |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 650 ##                           | $a$ Ioway (North American Indigenous peoples) $2 local          |
| 650 ##                           | $a$ Meskwaki (North American Indigenous peoples) $2 local       |

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 compare the change in public display before and after the supplemental headings were added. A set of Alma normalization rule stanzas are available in GitHub;\footnote{55} Alma libraries are welcome to use them to include culturally appropriate subject terms for these Iowa Indigenous nations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sac, Fox, and Iowa Indians.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>Sauk Indians ›</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox Indians ›</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iowa Indians ›</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Figure 5.3. Public display before adding the local supplemental headings |

\footnote{51}{\small Iowa State University Library Metadata Services, Subject Headings for Iowa Indigenous Peoples, June 20, 2022, \url{https://go.iastate.edu/JTJXQL}.}
\footnote{52}{\small “Subject Headings for Indigenous Peoples,” Cataloging and Acquisitions, Library of Congress, last modified July 26, 2023, \url{https://www.loc.gov/aba/cataloging/subject/indigenous.html}.}
\footnote{53}{\small “Iowa Indians,” LCSH, last modified June 7, 2011, \url{https://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects/sh85067858.html}.}
\footnote{54}{\small “Fox Indians,” LCSH, last modified April 14, 2011, \url{https://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects/sh85051119.html}; and “Sauk Indians (Algonquian),” LCSH, last modified November 23, 2021, \url{https://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects/sh85117717}. Note that the parenthetical suffix with Algonquin was added in LCSH in 2021 after this phase of our work had been completed.}
\footnote{55}{\small Metadata Services @ Iowa State University, “add-supplemental-heading-for-american-indian-community.txt,” GitHub repository, 2021, \url{https://go.iastate.edu/JAMTVS}.}
Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of DEI and library subject headings. Following a brief introduction, it discussed how libraries can increase the inclusivity of their headings both with LCSH and by using, or even developing, alternative subject headings. Two case studies were discussed in detail: the update to the LCSH “Illegal aliens” and the Subject Headings for Iowa Indigenous Peoples project at the Iowa State University Library.

Resources

### General

- Homosaurus vocabulary site  
  [https://homosaurus.org/](https://homosaurus.org/)
- Library of Congress Linked Data Service  
  [https://id.loc.gov/](https://id.loc.gov/)
- SACO – Subject Authority Cooperative Program, Program for Cooperative Cataloging  
  [https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/](https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/)
- African American Subject Funnel Project  
  [https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/aframerfun.html](https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/aframerfun.html)
- African American Studies Librarians Interest Group (AASLIG): SACO African American Funnel Project  
- Hawaii/Pacific Subject Authority Funnel Project  
  [https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/hawaiifun.html](https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/hawaiifun.html)
- The Cataloging Lab, List of Alternative Vocabularies  
  [https://cataloginglab.org/list-of-alternative-vocabularies/](https://cataloginglab.org/list-of-alternative-vocabularies/)
- The Cataloging Lab, List of Problem Headings  
  [https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/](https://cataloginglab.org/problem-lcsh/)
• OCLC, Create Locally Preferred Subjects for Display and Search Expansion
  https://help.oclc.org/Discovery_and_Reference/WorldCat_Discovery/Display_local_data/
  Create_locally_preferred_subjects_for_display_and_search Expansion

• Triangle Research Libraries Network, TRLN Discovery Subject Remapping
  https://trln.org/resources/subject-remapping/

Related to the Iowa State University NAIP Project

• Alma normalization rules, add-supplemental-heading-for-american-indian-community.txt
  https://go.iastate.edu/JAMTVS

• Resources and Services for Iowa Indigenous Peoples
  https://go.iastate.edu/UAREL3

• Subject Headings for Iowa Indigenous peoples
  https://go.iastate.edu/JTJXQL
Chapter 6

Accessibility

Overview

This chapter focuses on accessibility metadata for physical and digital resources. It explores accessibility metadata in MARC and highlights the emerging importance of web accessibility. Examples include best practices for accessibility metadata, such as using alt text and extended description for images; audio description, captions, and transcripts for audiovisual resources; optical character recognition (OCR) for digitized text, and language information for digital resources.

Accessibility and accessibility metadata

Accessibility refers to providing flexibility (i.e., multiple modalities) to enable users, including those with disabilities, to readily access a resource. It entails several concepts, such as “flexibility, customization, universality, usability, interoperability, reusability, and navigability.”1 Accessibility is integral for creating inclusive environments within libraries and ensuring equitable access to diverse user groups. This chapter covers the contemporary practices to enhance accessibility in library environments, and it may differ from other chapters as it includes both MARC and non-MARC metadata examples to improve accessibility. It also provides key considerations, best practices, and concrete examples of accessibility metadata through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Accessibility metadata is information that provides details about the accessibility of resources, both digital and physical.2 This metadata is critical for users with disabilities, including people who are blind or have low vision, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and those with neurodiversity needs. The inclusion of accessibility metadata ensures that people can effectively search for, locate, access, and use resources in various formats. While the significance of accessibility metadata has been particularly evident in the digital realm, it is equally essential for physical materials, such as books, magazines, journals, newspapers, maps, and audiovisual materials, to enhance inclusivity across all types of library collections. As more emphasis is placed on making digital content that is born-accessible, the need for comprehensive accessibility metadata for both digital and physical resources becomes increasingly apparent.

Accessibility metadata in MARC

Metadata for physical and electronic library resources is traditionally encoded in the MARC 21 (Machine Readable Cataloging) format. In 2018, two new fields were introduced in MARC 21 specifically for accessibility: 341 for Accessibility Content and 532 for Accessibility Note.

The MARC 341 field, which can be repeated, provides details regarding how the content of a resource can be accessed through textual, visual, auditory, and/or tactile means. Thus, it is important to employ controlled language within the field. Currently, the terms acceptable in subfield $a$ are restricted to textual, visual, auditory, or tactile. On the other hand, the MARC 532 field includes written details about a resource's accessibility features, potential risks, and shortcomings, encompassing technical specifics related to accessibility. This field can be employed to provide additional information or to clarify details found in the MARC 341 field, which focuses on the content's accessibility.3

Both MARC fields are essential components of bibliographic records designed to capture information about the accessibility features of a resource. In addition, these two fields are instrumental in enhancing the discoverability and usability of library collections for all users.4

Figure 6.1 is an example of a MARC record for fields 341 and 532 that outlines the accessibility features of a DVD.

**Figure 6.1. MARC field 341—Accessibility Content**

| 341 0# | $a visual $b closed-caption $b audio-description $2 w3c |

In Figure 6.1:

- “$a visual” indicates that the accessibility feature pertains to the visual aspect.
- “$b closed-caption” specifies the presence of closed captioning.
- “$b audio-description” indicates the availability of audio descriptions.
- “$2 w3c” identifies the source of the accessibility terms according to W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) standards.

**Figure 6.2. MARC field 532—Accessibility Note**

| 532 1# | $a Closed captioning in English |

In Figure 6.2, “$a” indicates the main content of the field, which is the accessibility note, and the phrase “Closed captioning in English” is the actual content of the accessibility note. It specifies that the described item has closed captioning available, and the captions are provided in the English language.

It is worth noting that accessibility information was present in MARC records before the introduction of MARC fields 341 and 532. For instance, while MARC field 546 (Language Note) was primarily used to

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3. “Creating and Editing Accessibility Metadata MARC Tags for Library Staff,” Accessible Libraries, last modified October 17, 2023, [https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-metadata-for-library-staff/](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-metadata-for-library-staff/).

indicate language and script, it can also include information about accessibility features related to language, such as sign language, and subtitles or captions for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.⁵

### Figure 6.3. MARC field 546—Language Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>546 #5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a$ Open signed in American Sign language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 6.3, “$a$” specifies the content of the language note. “Open signed in American Sign language” is the content of the language note. It indicates that the described audio-visual resource is presented or performed in American Sign Language (ASL).

Another important MARC field related to accessibility is 655, which specifies genre/form terms associated with various types of materials.⁶

### Figure 6.4. MARC field 655—Index Term-Genre/Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>655 #7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a$ Video recordings for the hearing impaired $2$ lcgft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above example,

- “#7” indicates that the term used is taken from a specific controlled vocabulary or thesaurus. In this case, it’s referring to the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT).⁷
- “$a$ Video recordings for the hearing impaired” contains the actual genre/form term, which refers to video recordings specifically created for individuals with hearing impairments.
- “$2$ lcgft” specifies the source of the term, which is the LCGFT.

While the 655 field may not directly relate to accessibility, catalogers could still use it to provide additional information about the nature or format of resources, which would indirectly contribute to understanding the accessibility of those resources.

Historically, MARC records could include accessibility-related notes or statements about the resource, such as indications that a resource was available in Braille or as a talking book. These notes served as early forms of accessibility metadata in library cataloging.

To illustrate this historical accessibility information in MARC records, you can refer to examples in the Library of Congress’s National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) catalog (https://nlscatalog.loc.gov/), such as records that mention “Braille” or “talking book.” Each result in the NLS catalog provides a MARC view, allowing users to examine the accessibility-related information contained within the records.⁸

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In the above example, MARC field 530 is Additional Physical Form Available Note. This demonstrates that libraries have a longstanding commitment to providing accessibility information in their records, and the introduction of MARC 341 and 532 in 2018 further formalizes and standardizes this practice, enhancing the accessibility of library collections for all users. In 2023, significant progress was made in this area, including the development of a brand-new vocabulary of accessibility properties.9

Note: Examples of MARC records related to digital content can be found in the "Accessibility metadata for resources on the web" section below.

Accessibility metadata for resources on the web

With the rampant proliferation of content available on the web, accessibility metadata for digital resources is increasingly important. In some cases, as discussed in the Legal Compliance section, web accessibility is required by law.

As with metadata for traditional library resources, metadata for resources on the web can be encoded in MARC for discovery in a library catalog. However, digital resource metadata is often recorded using non-MARC metadata schemas such as Dublin Core and Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS). This section includes both MARC and non-MARC examples of accessibility metadata.

Legal compliance

In the European Union (EU), the Web Accessibility Directive has established policies for web accessibility, particularly for public-sector websites and mobile apps. Compliance with this directive is crucial for promoting inclusivity across the EU.10

In the United States, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued guidance on web accessibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).11 On April 8, 2024, the DOJ finalized a rule aimed at improving accessibility for web content and mobile applications for individuals with disabilities. This new rule sets clear and consistent standards for accessibility that state and local governments must follow for their websites and mobile apps. This initiative is part of the ongoing effort to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to essential public services, highlighting the importance of accessibility in the U.S. legal context.12

Additionally, many organizations, including educational institutions, have adopted policies and requirements aligned with international standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. These guidelines offer a comprehensive framework for achieving web accessibility and are widely recognized and adopted globally.\(^{13}\)

Ensuring that digital content is accessible to all individuals, regardless of their abilities, is a critical consideration for organizations and institutions.

**Best practices**

The following are some best practices to promote accessibility in metadata for non-physical resources, including e-books, e-journals, digital images, digital audiobooks, and streaming videos. The availability of these features/elements depends on the platform you or your institution uses.

1. Alt text for images
2. Extended description for images
3. Audio description for audiovisual content
4. Captions and subtitles for audiovisual content
5. Transcripts for audiovisual content
6. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for digitized text
7. Language information for digital resources

**Alternative text (alt text) for images**

Alternative Text (alt text) is a short description that conveys the “why” of an image. Its purpose is to provide descriptions of images, graphs, and other non-text content that can be read aloud by screen readers or other assistive technologies. It aids people with vision loss, including people with low vision and color blindness.

In addition to aiding accessibility, alt text contributes to search engine optimization (SEO). Search engines use alt text to understand the content of images, which can affect the ranking of your content in search results.\(^{14}\)

**Best practices for alt text**

Do:

- Be specific and succinct.
- Provide enough context.
- Indicate the purpose of logos, symbols, and buttons in the image.
- Know the different types of images to add an appropriate description. See Figure 6.6.

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• Check for spelling errors, because the screen reader tries to read the text contained in the alt text.
• Use proper grammar to enhance user experience.
• Capitalize the first letter.
• End with a period so that the screen reader pauses after reading alt text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 6.6. Types of images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informative images</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional images</strong> (linked images)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Images with text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decorative images</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avoid:

• Starting with “Photo of” or “Image of,” as screen readers automatically announce an image as an image.  
• Repeating information.
• Using the file name as an alt text.
• Using ampersands (&).
• Using all caps.
• Using technical terms and jargon.

Having discussed best practices for writing alt text to enhance accessibility, let’s now delve into a few approaches for incorporating alt text into images within digital content.

**Alt text in HTML**

In HTML, alt text to an image is added using the “alt” attribute with the “<img>” image tag. See Figure 6.7 for an example.

15. “Accessibility,” Siteimprove Help Center
In this example:

- **img tag**: This is the HTML tag for embedding images.
- **src attribute**: Specifies the source (file path or URL) of the image.
- **alt attribute**: Provides alternative text for the image.

The alt text is added directly to the image element in the HTML code. When the image is displayed on the web page, the alt text will be read by screen readers, providing an image description for users with vision loss and low vision.

**Alt text in content management systems (CMS)**

Adding alt text is a straightforward process on most CMS platforms. When you integrate an image into a webpage, there is typically a designated field where you can input your description. Some CMS platforms go a step further, offering additional resources or tips on creating effective alt text.20

In Figure 6.8, the alt text is included as a specific field within the CMS, ensuring that the image is accompanied by a descriptive textual representation of its content.

Additionally, it is worth noting that some platforms may extract alt text from metadata embedded in the image file itself. In such cases, if the alt text field is left blank, the platform may use alternative sources, such as the filename, image URL, or other embedded metadata, to provide a descriptive label for the image.21

**Extended description for images**

Extended descriptions are used to provide a detailed explanation of complex images (e.g., infographic images, charts, maps), videos, or other visual content. So, they are also referred to as long descriptions.22 Extended descriptions may include details about the content, context, and other relevant information that may not be fully understood by people with blindness and low vision.

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Unlike alt text, extended descriptions do not have a character limit. So extended descriptions are used to supplement information provided in the alt text. See Figure 6.9

![Figure 6.9. Alt text vs. extended description](image)

Extended descriptions must be formatted using headings to facilitate organization and logical flow of information. Creating tables from graphs and charts is an alternative way of providing extended descriptions.23

Alt text for images must be provided even when an extended description is included, where the alt text serves as a summary of information in the extended description.24

### Alt text and extended description in the IPTC metadata standard

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, accessibility and inclusivity have taken center stage. A recent development in this pursuit is the International Press Telecommunications Council (IPTC)'s Photo Metadata Standard, which introduces two crucial elements.

On October 27, 2021, the IPTC unveiled an updated Photo Metadata Standard featuring two essential properties: Alt Text (Accessibility) and Extended Description (Accessibility). These accessibility features will streamline the process for various platforms and software to meet WCAG standards and provide images that are accessible to all users. Integrating or embedding inclusive image descriptions into the photo's metadata will enable alt text and extended descriptions to accompany the image wherever it appears on the internet, in books, or within electronic publication (EPUB) documents.25

### Audio description for audiovisual resources

Audio description, also known as described video, is a form of narration that describes and provides additional information about the visual details or onscreen movements, such as facial expressions that are not conveyed through dialogue or sound effects.26 It is mainly intended for people who are blind or with low

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24. Caroline Desrosiers, "Image Description" (presentation, Accessibility Virtual Conference, NISO, March 29, 2023), [https://niso.org/events/accessibility](https://niso.org/events/accessibility).
vision to experience and enjoy the content as sighted individuals. Audio descriptions also can be beneficial for auditory learners or people with autism. Figure 6.10 lists different types of audio description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard audio description</th>
<th>Describes the visual elements of media in a concise and objective manner. As this description is integrated into the natural audio breaks, no additional time is added to the original version to accommodate the audio description.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended audio description</td>
<td>Provides additional details and contextual information beyond the standard audio description about the visual elements. It involves creating a version with more time to include detailed descriptions. In the extended version, the narrator’s voice interrupts the natural audio breaks to provide descriptions of the on-screen action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built-in audio description</td>
<td>Involves a speaker or narrator incorporating the audio description of visual elements and significant onscreen action directly into their script or talking points during the presentation or recording. This is considered a cost-effective approach as it eliminates adding a separate audio track (i.e., an extended audio description) or interrupting the audio during natural breaks (i.e., a standard audio description).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, MARC 21 field 341 is used to provide information about accessibility features in library resources. This field is crucial for making library resources accessible to individuals with disabilities, as it allows catalogers and users to easily identify and comprehend the accessibility features available in audiovisual materials. These features may include closed captions, subtitles, sign language, audio descriptions, and other forms of content that enhance the experience for individuals with sensory disabilities. Figure 6.11 shows the MARC record from field 341 and the Non-MARC record from MODS (Metadata Object Description Schema).

| MARC | 341 0# $a visual $d audioDescription $2 w3c |
| MODS | <accessCondition>Audio Descriptions Available</accessCondition> |

In the MARC example in Figure 6.11, subfield $a indicates the main content related to the sense of sight.

32. “341 - Accessibility Content (R),” MARC 21 Bibliographic.
In this case, it specifies a visual aspect of the resource. Subfield $d$ provides additional details or qualifiers related to the main content; it indicates that the resource has an audio description. Subfield $2$ specifies the source of information. In the non-MARC example, the MODS <accessCondition> element indicates a specific condition related to access, namely that audio descriptions are available for the described resource.

Captions for audiovisual resources

Captions provide a text-based representation of the spoken and non-spoken audio elements that are necessary to comprehend the content. They are primarily intended for people who are deaf and hard of hearing and those who prefer written information rather than listening to audio. Captions are timed to match the audio and are typically displayed in the media player when users enable them.33

While the terms “captions” and “subtitles” are often used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference between the two. Captions refer to transcriptions in the same language as spoken audio (e.g., English to English). Subtitles involve the translation of the spoken audio into a different language (e.g., English to Spanish).34 Figure 6.12 shows an example of MARC field 341 and a non-MARC element from Dublin Core.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARC</th>
<th>341 0# $a auditory $b captions $2 w3c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Core</td>
<td><a href="">dc:description</a>This item was captioned by Rev.com in conformance with WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility guidelines.&lt;/dc:description&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the MARC example, $a$ refers to the mode required to access the content of the resource, $b$ refers to textual assistive features and adaptations to access the content of the resource, and $2$ refers to the identification of the source of terms in subfield $b$. The Dublin Core example conveys that the described item (the resource associated with this metadata record) has been captioned by a service called Rev.com, and the captioning was done in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA.

Transcripts for audiovisual resources

A transcript is a textual version of the spoken and non-spoken content in an audio or video file. It is used to provide accessibility to people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people with blindness or low vision. A transcript can also be helpful for people who prefer reading rather than listening to the content or those who may not have access to headphones or speakers.35 There are three common types of transcripts: basic, descriptive, and interactive.36 See Figure 6.13 for a summary of these types.

Figure 6.13. Types of transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic transcript</th>
<th>Written form of all the audio information, including both spoken and non-spoken content, that is necessary for comprehending the material.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive transcript</td>
<td>Extension of the basic transcript that provides a more detailed description of the important audio (like laughter) and visual information (such as someone entering the room) that are relevant to the content—the text equivalent to the extended audio description. Descriptive transcripts are important for creating a more inclusive and accessible experience for a wider audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive transcript</td>
<td>Highlights the text as it is spoken in the video or audio file. This feature is built into the media player and allows users to select specific phrases in the transcript and jump to the corresponding point in the video. To enable this feature, the media player relies on the captions file.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While MARC does not have a specific field exclusively for transcripts, you can use various MARC fields to include information about the availability of transcripts in your catalog records. Figure 6.14 shows some examples of MARC fields you might use to describe the presence of transcripts and their language.

Figure 6.14. MARC and non-MARC metadata regarding transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARC</th>
<th>500 ## $a Transcripts available for each episode.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>546 ## $a Transcripts in English and Spanish.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 500 General Note field can be used to convey that transcripts are available for each episode of the described resource. Field 500 is used to include additional information that doesn’t fit into other specific fields in the MARC record, making the catalog record more informative for library staff and users. The 546 Language Note field conveys that the transcripts of the described resource are available in both English and Spanish. Field 546 is used to provide information about the language or languages used in the resource, helping catalog users understand the linguistic aspects of the resource, which can be important for individuals who are looking for materials in specific languages or need access to transcripts in a language they understand.

Figure 6.14 also shows how transcript information can be recorded in non-MARC metadata. The Dublin Core metadata in this example use the <dc:description> element to convey a detailed and informative textual description of a resource, specifically a collection of transcripts related to the Nixon Tapes. The description highlights the significance of the transcripts and hints at the availability of alternative views or presentations of the same content.

Optical character recognition (OCR) for digitized text

OCR is a technology that automatically recognizes and transcribes text from images and scanned documents into machine-readable text.\(^\text{39}\) Hence, OCR is considered an efficient and valuable accessibility metadata feature as it allows people with blindness and low vision who may rely on screen readers to access the content.\(^\text{40}\)

OCR algorithms are designed to analyze and interpret text from various sources, including handwritten text. However, recognizing handwritten text accurately can be more difficult than recognizing printed text because of the variations in handwriting styles and the lack of consistency.\(^\text{41}\)

Metadata information regarding OCR availability and its quality enhances the accessibility and usability of digital content to a wider range of users.\(^\text{42}\)

Like transcripts, MARC does not have a specific field solely dedicated to OCR. You can use various MARC fields to indicate that OCR has been applied to a resource, especially when describing digitized content. Figure 6.15 shows some MARC fields that can be relevant when discussing OCR in MARC records.

### Figure 6.15. MARC and non-MARC metadata regarding OCR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARC</th>
<th>Dublin Core</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500 ## $a Text generated through OCR; some errors may be present.</td>
<td><a href="">dc:description</a>Text converted to machine-readable format using OCR&lt;/dc:description&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>538 ## $a Text converted to machine-readable format using OCR; PDF format.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example, field 500 General Note is used to communicate that the text within the described resource was created through OCR, a technology that converts printed or handwritten text into machine-readable text. Since OCR is not error-proof, it is acknowledged that there might be some errors or inaccuracies in the converted text. This general note helps library staff and users understand the potential limitations of the text content in the resource.

In addition, field 538 System Details Note can be used to convey technical information, including accessibility information, about the resource. The example in Figure 6.15 mentions that the text content

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was converted into a machine-readable format using OCR and that the resource is in PDF format. This information is useful for understanding how the resource is presented and accessed in terms of its technical features.\(^43\)

This Dublin Core metadata in Figure 6.15 also provides information about the accessibility of the resource by indicating that the text has undergone OCR conversion. Similarly, metadata can be used to indicate that a handwritten item has been transcribed into machine-readable text. For example, Villanova University has inserted a value of “Transcribed” in the **Format** field of its digital library to indicate documents that include machine-readable transcriptions. This use of the Dublin Core `<dc:format>` element to record accessibility information contributes to a more user-friendly experience. Users can refine their searches efficiently using facets, making their interactions with the digital library more productive and satisfying.\(^44\)

### Language information for digital resources

Language metadata refers to information about the language used in the digital content. This information helps users to find content in their preferred language. It can be used to ensure that screen readers and other assistive technologies are configured to read the content in the appropriate language.

MARC field 041 Language Code is a versatile tool used to specify the languages associated with the content of a resource. Depending on the specific subfield codes used, it can convey various types of language-related information, including the original language, translations, subtitles, captions, and more.

MARC adheres to specific language code standards, typically using three-letter language codes, such as “eng” for English. MARC field 041 serves as a valuable tool for precisely identifying the languages used in a resource, facilitating the organization and access of multilingual materials.\(^45\) Figure 6.16 shows an example of MARC field 041, where $a$ refers to the **language code** of the text/sound track or separate title. This example indicates that the item is available in English, French, and Swahili languages.

**Figure 6.16. MARC and non-MARC metadata indicating languages of the resource**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARC</th>
<th>041 ## $a eng $a fre $a swa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Core</td>
<td><code>&lt;dc:language&gt;eng&lt;/dc:language&gt;</code></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the non-MARC example in Figure 6.16, the Dublin Core language element specifies that the language of the described resource is English.

### Conclusion

In summary, by incorporating the relevant metadata features, we not only enhance accessibility but also

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44. Rebecca Oviedo, "Transcribing History in Villanova University's Digital Library," Falvey Library, Villanova University, August 2020, [https://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/mini-exhibits/transcribing-history](https://exhibits.library.villanova.edu/mini-exhibits/transcribing-history).

become advocates for social justice and equity. Besides improving accessibility, a meticulous approach to metadata serves as a powerful tool to promote inclusivity and foster an equitable and just information environment for diverse communities. A librarian’s commitment to accessibility metadata is not just a technical necessity but an active step toward creating a more inclusive and fair society where every individual’s access to knowledge is acknowledged, respected, and facilitated through the conscientious curation of metadata.

### Resources

- **How to Meet WCAG (Quickref Reference)**
  [https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/quickref](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/quickref)

- **MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data, 341 – Accessibility Content**
  [https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd341.html](https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd341.html)

- **MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data, 532 – Accessibility Note**
  [https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd532.html](https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd532.html)

- **Schema.org, Accessibility Properties for Discoverability Vocabulary**
  [https://w3c.github.io/cg-reports/a11y-discov-vocab/CG-FINAL-vocabulary-20230718/](https://w3c.github.io/cg-reports/a11y-discov-vocab/CG-FINAL-vocabulary-20230718/)

- **Violet Fox and David Norris, Making Your Library’s Accessible Resources More Discoverable**

- **W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), Web Accessibility Laws & Policies**
  [https://www.w3.org/WAI/policies/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/policies/)

- **W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), Design and Develop Overview**
  [https://www.w3.org/WAI/design-develop/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/design-develop/)
Afterword

I am incredibly grateful to my coauthors for supporting my idea to write a practical how-to guide for DEI metadata. Everyone worked very hard on their chapters while also navigating busy schedules full of routine work, special projects, and job changes.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of resources with valuable advice from innovative and forward-thinking metadata creators, but these are scattered and not always easy to find, and they require time to review and synthesize. Nevertheless, this book would not be possible without the critical thinking, information sharing, and dedication of these people, and I share my deepest thanks to them for their important groundwork.

My vision was to produce a one-stop, readable reference, and to make it freely available through open access. Many thanks to Harrison W. Inefuku at Iowa State University Digital Press for supporting my idea and for turning our manuscript into a real e-book.

Readers are welcome to contact metadata@iastate.edu with feedback or questions related to this book.

Harriet E. Wintermute, May 2024
About the Authors

**Harriet E. Wintermute** is Chair of Acquisitions, Cataloging, Metadata, and E-Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries. Before her current role, Harriet led the Metadata Services department at Iowa State University. She has worked as cataloging and metadata librarian at UNL and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University. She has a BA in Computer Science from Wellesley College. Harriet obtained her MLIS and a graduate certificate in special collections at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she began her career in library metadata as a graduate student employee.

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