Notes from the OCLC Cataloging Community Meeting on 3 February 2023

[Access the slides and recording](#)

Session: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Presenters

- Patricia Harpring, Managing Editor, Getty Vocabulary Program, Getty Research Institute
- Pamela Louderback, Professor/Broken Arrow Library Director, Northeastern State University
- Sara Levinson, Latin American and Iberian Cataloger, Resource Description & Management, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Presentation summary

Patricia Harpring of the Getty Institute opened her presentation on unbiased and inclusive terminology with an explanation of how to access the Getty vocabularies through their web interface. She also highlighted the availability of the vocabularies through relational tables, web service APIs, a SPARQL endpoint, and an OpenRefine reconciliation service. She provided a brief history of the Getty vocabularies and outlined the institution's guiding principle of open and equitable subject description which meets high standards for scholarship and research.

Harpring then began presenting the issues surrounding Getty's recent Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, noting that some of the challenges have not yet been resolved. One challenge was meeting a wide variety of user needs, including promoting consistency, providing unique identifiers, and assisting in retrieval and discovery. Harpring elaborated on what she called the "basics" of the Getty vocabularies. That is, they are targeted for users in museums, special collections, archives, libraries, and scholars who depend on them to enable research and discovery. The vocabularies are "authoritative," but not "authoritarian," meaning that users may utilize variant terms where they so choose, even when a preferred term is indicated. Finally, the vocabularies are compiled and vetted by expert contributors.

Following the basics, Harpring presented brief overviews of each of the Getty vocabularies, including their subject scope and layout on the web. These were: the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN), the Union List of Artist Names (ULAN), the Iconography Authority (IA), and the Cultural Objects Name Authority (CONA). Harpring emphasized how the interconnectedness of these vocabularies along with their multilingual terminologies facilitate the inclusion of diverse points of view. In the effort to make Getty vocabularies more inclusive and multicultural, Harpring explained the challenge of measuring multiculturality within the historical context of Western-centric terminologies. To that end, Getty analyzes where the vocabularies are being used geographically and consults with working groups involved in similar efforts. This communication includes other groups within the Getty institute, as well as related institutions in the library, archival, and museum community.

Returning to the "non-authoritative" principle, Harpring explained how the Getty vocabularies assist users in making informed decisions in term usage, rather than prescribing a single "correct" usage. This is achieved by indicating which terms are most used in authoritative sources for each language, contributor, and source, and utilizing flags to indicate where terms may be pejorative, outdated, or particular to a given culture. Harpring emphasized the importance of expert contributions in respectfully representing cultural preferences.

Another issue highlighted by Harpring was that of balancing personal privacy concerns with the scholarly need for disambiguation. This issue can be particularly difficult with respect to gender and sexuality, especially when concerning living people. Harpring noted that Getty does include gender information, unlike Library of Congress, since their goal is to provide biographical information, not just disambiguation. Harpring concluded by stating that future initiatives by Getty will continue to focus on broadening the inclusivity of the vocabularies and improving their interconnectivity to external vocabularies.

The second presentation was delivered jointly by Pamela Louderback of Northeastern State university and Sara Levinson of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Their presentation focused on the Latin American and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (LAIPA) SACO funnel project.

Levinson began the presentation by outlining the key funnel objective to provide a gateway through which non-catalogers and catalogers not in Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) institutions may propose new and corrected subject headings. The new and corrected headings are intended to improve access to resources on Latin America and indigenous peoples while correcting historical biases and misrepresentations. Levinson highlighted recent successes in adding additional cross references to authority records which enhance access, the updating of derogatory terms, and the creation of new headings for previously non-represented indigenous groups. Levinson noted that the body of authoritative sources were often limited at the time when many of the headings were initially established, and that new research has amplified support for updated terms.

Louderback then expanded on the historical challenges faced by the funnel group, including the misrepresentation or non-representation of peoples, the large number of different peoples in the Americas, and the fundamental flaw in the use of "Indian" in referring to indigenous peoples. The revision of terms has proceeded with significant input from indigenous groups, following the principle of "nothing about us without us." Notably, Library of Congress has agreed to waive literary warrant and instead base the authorized form of a heading on that which is chosen by the people it describes, using all other names as cross references.

Louderback further expanded on historical challenges facing the funnel. She noted in particular the pejorative implications of the Library of Congress schedules in determining indigenous art as "Primitive Art." She also pointed out the problematic use of the work "Indian," most notably that it is not favored by the peoples it intends to represent. Furthermore, she pointed out, this flawed historical term creates confusion between representations of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and those from the country of India. Levinson then explained some of the projects currently in progress for the LAIPA funnel, including populating terms for tribal nations where no cross references exist, best practice documentation, and collaboration with the African American funnel where interests overlap.

Louderback concluded by highlighting LAIPA's vision for the future. This includes addressing historical misrepresentations, increasing access to materials, providing an outlet for the self-representation of indigenous voices, and helping to re-organize the Library of Congress schedules.

URLs mentioned during the event

The Getty Research Institute: https://www.getty.edu/

The Getty Vocabularies Online: https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/

Getty Vocabularies: Issues Surrounding Diversity and Inclusion: https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/Vocabs_unbiased_terminology.pdf

Getty Editorial Guidelines: https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/guidelines/index.html

Latin American and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (LAIPA) funnel: https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/laipafun.html

Change the Subject Documentary: https://www.library.dartmouth.edu/digital/digital-collections/change-the-subject

Audience questions

Is an artist's gender in ULAN entered by default or is it only included when an artist specifically states their gender?

It is not entered by default. Editorial policy states that gender should be listed as "unknown" if it does not appear in an authoritative source. Full instructions are available in the Getty editorial guidelines documentation.

How much self-agency do living artists have over how they're described in ULAN or Getty vocabularies in general? Can they access their description, or would they have to contact Getty to update it?

Getty has a small editorial staff, so it relies on the contributor community (which could include the artists themselves) to provide term descriptions. Please contact vocab@getty.edu to request or suggest changes.

Does Getty have a publicly accessible policy statement regarding the use of gender in authority data? Are small(er) public libraries using Getty vocabularies? I am curious how widespread this vocabulary is.

The Getty as a whole does not have a policy. The ULAN has guidelines in its editorial policy.

For Patricia [Harpring] - curious about the logistics of the work. Apologies if I missed this, but are there dedicated staff specifically focusing on identifying/implementing changes towards more inclusive language? How does this work interact with other projects/departments?

This question was answered with a previous response. Getty has a small editorial staff, so it relies on the contributor community to provide term descriptions.

What about tribes that are extinct, or otherwise not able to comment?

In this case, we must use whatever resources have been published about them. If there is any indication that the group may have joined another, or that there are any living descendants, we try to get in touch with them.

If I create an added entry for a name from ULAN that's not in NAF, how should it be tagged?

I believe this is referring to a MARC record, so a policy for this is not included in Getty guidelines. [In MARC subject fields, one would use $2 ulan with second indicator 7.]

I'm interested if there is any kind of timeline for LC's review of authorities pertaining to tribal nations? Even a broad timeline?

There is no timeline publicly available at this point, but they are actively working on it.

Is the historic reluctance of [Library of Congress] to change terms partially related, at least in part, to political climate? I am thinking here of the documentary "Change the subject" and the reaction of Congress about the questions raised by this documentary.

I cannot speak for Library of Congress. I believe that in the library world, we have been moving in this direction and the "weight" of it has finally moved LC to change. However, the process has been slowly taking place over the past forty years. Documentaries like *Change the Subject*, Black Lives Matter, and all sorts of things that have happened in the United States and around the world have provided a light into some of the darkness and has brought this topic to the forefront. Library of Congress is prudent and wants to make the right decisions, so it is going to take time.

When an artwork is signed by an artist under their dead name, what happens to the dead name in the description of the work? How do we honor their desire to eliminate their previous identity when it is on the art?

That is a cataloging question that museums must address. ULAN would use all names available for a person for the purpose of accessibility, though the dead name would be flagged as "avoid use."

Are you also working to change fixed fields for music? E.g., Form of composition "chant, religious other than Christian" Format & music parts also cause trouble for us.

Attendee comment in chat: I have heard that the Music funnel is working on it.

What about the use of terms like mythology, legends, folklore about religions?

There has already been some work to change "mythology" to "religion" in the schedules.

Following up on the LC timeline question for Pamela [Louderback] and Sara [Levinson]: Since it could be a while, are the proposed changes available somewhere if individual institutions are interested in/able to move faster than LC in updating our catalogs?

There are shared documents available through the funnel website. Anyone who is interested in attending meetings or participating in the group's work may reach out through the funnel website.