

Notes from the OCLC Cataloging Community Meeting on 9 June 2023

[Access the slides and recording](#)

Session: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Presenters

- Betsy Kanalley, Geospatial Products and Services Program Manager, USDA Forest Service
- Kate James, Program Coordinator, Metadata Engagement, OCLC
- Margaret Breidenbaugh, Library Specialist, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College
- Maya Espersen, Cataloging Coordinator, Aurora Public Library (Colorado)
- Grace McGann, Associate Product Manager, Delivery Services, OCLC

Presentation summary

Betsy Kanalley of the USDA Forest Service opened her presentation on the processes for approving geographic names for federal use with a history of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN). It was established by President Benjamin Harrison in 1890 in an era of federal mapping and charting. The BGN was reestablished in 1947 and codified in law under the Department of the Interior. There are two standing committees (domestic and foreign), two advisory committees (Antarctic and undersea), and several subcommittees and special committees.

The BGN considers proposals for new names and changes to existing names and these recommendations can come from the general public, scholars, and organizations. BGN staff prepare case briefs for each proposal and then reach out to stakeholders for their opinions. Decisions are made using established principles, policies, and procedures (PPP) the most important being local use. Once a proposal is approved, the names are added to/changed in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS).

Kanalley then began presenting the issues surrounding the review of MARC 650 place names that include a derogatory term for Indigenous North American women (abbreviated as "Sq---"). Each term has to be reviewed separately to determine a new name; until new names are approved, the "Sq---" abbreviation will replace the offensive term on government websites. If "Sq---" was used in a commemorative name to honor a particular person, it is more difficult to remove the term.

The second presentation on reparative geographic name changes in cataloging records was delivered by Kate James of OCLC. Place names are split between the name and subject authority files. Countries, counties, cities, and towns appear in the name authority file and act like corporate headings. The place names for natural places like rivers and mountains appear in the subject authority file. Natural places have cross references on a single authority record in

451 notes. For example, Mount McKinley was renamed Mount Denali in 2015 in order to use a more culturally appropriate term. In the authority record for “Denali, Mount (Alaska)” (sh 85082617), “Mount McKinley (Alaska)” appears as a cross reference. However, the agency for the Denali National Park and Preserve is a corporate body, and although the agency’s former name Mount McKinley National Park hasn’t been used officially since 1980, the use of the former name is still appropriate in bibliographic records for documents produced before 1980. This is why there are separate authority records for the former and current names of the agency (no2019158674 and no2005119225, respectively) and why the cross references are recorded in 510 fields.

James then described the case of the Sycamore Run Watershed in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Formerly known as the “Sq--- Run Watershed” [abbreviation used by notetaker], the authority record (sh 94009023) includes the former name of the watershed (without abbreviation) in a 451 field with a 688 field (Application History Note) to document when the name was changed. As with the Denali National Park and Preserve, there is a corporate body associated with the watershed that used the original name with its pejorative term and therefore its associated authority record must persist as “Sq--- Run Area Watershed Association” (n 80025214) [abbreviation used by notetaker].

The third presentation was delivered jointly by Margaret Breidenbaugh of Cincinnati State Technical and Community College and Maya Espersen of Aurora Public Library (Colorado), two of the co-chairs of the SACO Gender and Sexuality Funnel. The Funnel, which started in June 2022, includes 65 members from across the United States and Canada. The Funnel has requested several changes to existing LCSH including:

- Gender identity disorder -> Gender dysphoria
- Sexual reorientation programs -> Conversion therapy
- Gays -> Gay people
- Sanitary napkins -> Pads (Menstruation)
- Pregnant women -> Pregnant persons

The SACO Gender and Sexuality Funnel is also working with the SACO Comics and Fiction Funnel to develop more inclusive subject headings to describe romance fiction beyond “Man-woman relationships--Fiction.”

The final presentation on rapid harm reduction through locally defined subjects in WorldCat Discovery was delivered by Grace McGann of OCLC. This project was inspired by OCLC’s report [Reimagine Descriptive Workflows](#) which offered a framework of guidance for inclusive and reparative metadata work. McGann described how reparative bibliographic description requires culturally contextual solutions rather than a “one-size-fits-all” approach. In WorldCat Discovery, it is now possible to define locally preferred subject terms to replace potentially harmful terms still used in LCSH in the display. Additionally, it is possible to have WorldCat Discovery warn patrons that problematic terms may appear in a search result. McGann stated that future development will allow libraries to define search expansions that support the locally preferred subjects.

URLs mentioned during the event

National Archives Catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

The Sq___ Ridge Lava Bed Wilderness Study Area: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/oregon-washington/sq-ridge-lava-bed-wsa>

NASA to Reexamine Nicknames for Cosmic Objects: <https://www.nasa.gov/feature/nasa-to-reexamine-nicknames-for-cosmic-objects>

PCC SACO Funnels: <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/funnelsaco.html>

Sexual Fluidity and the Diversity of Sexual Orientation:
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/sexual-fluidity-and-the-diversity-of-sexual-orientation-202203312717>

We Are Here: LGBTQ+ Adult Population in United States Reaches At Least 20 Million, According to Human Rights Campaign Foundation Report: <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/we-are-here-lgbtq-adult-population-in-united-states-reaches-at-least-20-million-according-to-human-rights-campaign-foundation-report>

Homosaurus Vocabulary Terms: <https://homosaurus.org/v3>

The Cataloging Lab: <https://cataloginglab.org/>

Metadata Best Practices for Trans and Gender Diverse Resources:
<https://zenodo.org/record/6687044>

Reimagine Descriptive Workflows: A Community-informed Agenda for Reparative and Inclusive Descriptive Practice: <https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2022/reimagine-descriptive-workflows.html>

Audience questions

Is the process the same for non-U.S. names?

Kanalley: No, it is not the same. The Foreign Names Committee collects names from a number of different sources and depending on the audience, they have different names, in particular because most other countries are multilingual. The State Department plays a role with certain countries if we might not acknowledge the political government. A good example right now is that Turkey is spelled differently [Türkiye] but because we don't recognize the Erdoğan government, we still call it Turkey as per the State Department, but we don't make decisions about whether the name is accepted or not. Interestingly, a lot of the way the Foreign Names Committee works informs a lot of our policy on Indigenous names. We have 574 federally recognized tribes. They are governments, we have government-to-government relationships and so land that's under the jurisdiction of tribes, we don't vote on those names. If they tell us this is the name of that place, we add it to our database. That's kind of the way the Foreign Names Committee handles foreign names.

Does anyone review celestial body or feature names for derogatory names?

Kanalley: There used to be an extraterrestrial committee and it did disband but there actually is an entity within the U.S. Geological Survey that handles stars and planets and these kinds of extraterrestrial names, so I would imagine they are looking out for derogatory names. I think the only thing I could offer to do is get that contact information and maybe share that answer out. I think that scientists are the ones who are naming those features, but derogatory names work their way into a lot of stuff and there were probably some old, old commemorative names that we'd like to get rid of.

Are these just federal lands you are working with or is this all geographic places in the nation?

Kanalley: Thank you for the opportunity to clarify that question. It is for all places in the United States. So, all of those names, I can't tell you what number but there were a fair number that were not on federal lands. There is a community in southern California that is suing the federal government because of the name that was selected for their locale. It was an Sq--- Valley that got changed to Yokuts Valley. That community continues to call themselves Sq--- Valley on their maps and produce it on their signs. But if I want to map that area as a federal entity, I have to say Yokuts Valley, I have to publish it with Yokuts. It's all the United States and its insular areas and territories but it's just federal use. If you want to name a pond in your backyard and put up a sign, you're welcome to do that. I just can't use that name if it's not in the GNIS.

If someone wants to find information through USGS about a feature but they only know the derogatory name, are they still able to search using that name, even if the offensive term is suppressed? In other words, would a search redirect the person to the new place name?

Kanalley: Yes.

The heading Alhambra (Granada, Spain) is in the subject file (sh 86000112). However, its field number is 110, indicating it's a corporate heading. This causes problems in our system as it's indexed in the subject index (based on the sh part of the authority record number) but the heading in the bibliographic records is indexed in the name index (based on the tag). Why this discrepancy for this heading?

Adam Schiff (attendee): Palaces are coded as corporate bodies in the 110 field.

Do you think someone missed the Sq-word Ridge Lava Bed in Oregon? It's still in the LC Authorities file.

James: Thank you for that question. I have quickly looked in both the name and subject authority files and I did find a subject heading for the Sq-word (which is actually spelled out in the heading) Ridge Lava Bed Wilderness. I did not find anything for the lava bed itself, if there even is a lava bed. I found this as a heading for the wilderness. The broader terms are "National parks and reserves—Oregon" and "Wilderness areas—Oregon," so keep that in mind. I searched in the GNIS database quickly and did not find it there, which doesn't entirely surprise me. There are some geographic names that aren't in the domestic name file either because they're excluded from the type of feature that the BGN names or just because nobody has requested adding them officially. I also saw in the subject authority record that it looks like the

name came from the work cataloged there. It says “675 GeoRef” and so I’m assuming that was the GNIS names authority database. I think that this might be the type of thing that they don’t usually name. I know they don’t often name wilderness areas at all. Sometimes national parks and reserves are not named by the BGN; sometimes they are named by acts of Congress. I don’t think that anyone missed anything. I think that they probably were not able to find a name change in GNIS so they left it as is because they weren’t sure that a change of name had actually happened. Of course, anybody who is a member of SACO is welcome to do their own research on this subject. If they are able to find in an authoritative source, even if it’s not GNIS because it’s not something that’s in there, but they’re able to find in an authoritative source that the name has changed, then they could do a subject heading proposal to change the authorized heading.

As a member of SACO, we also have to research literary warrant, meaning the terminology is used in a work which we are cataloging. How do you balance this with replacement for offensive terms or new terms?

Breidenbaugh: That’s a great question. I think this is something that anyone in our SACO and NACO communities could easily speak to. First, I want to tear apart what the term “literary warrant” even means because we now live in the age of social media where a lot of what is happening to “official terminology” is taking place and unfolding before our eyes on Twitter posts and on Facebook feeds. A lot of the terminology that we’re now exploring doesn’t have the necessary traditional literary warrant and that kind of complicates the process a little bit. LC is looking for published sources, right? For example, if we’re looking at terminology that is deconstructing the idea that homosexuality is a mental illness, which is something that used to be in the DSM psychology manual, we’re obviously going to look to the latest edition of DSM (the DSM-5-TR) to see what the latest descriptions of homosexuality are, which obviously is that it’s not a mental illness. It is simply a sexuality. We try to balance the types of sources that we’re looking at and we are trying to sneak in some of those more ephemeral sources such as social media posts.

For the Gender and Sexuality Funnel: How would we best catalog resources from the past that we may today identify as LGBTQ+ but was not at the time it was produced? Would we apply modern labels to the past?

Breidenbaugh: I think this is an incredibly subjective and even more important question to grapple with. Obviously, we don’t want to be presentist as we are interrogating sources but at the same time, we have to remember that there was and still is a situation in many places in the world where it was not safe to speak openly about one’s sexuality or gender identity. As historians are able to prove that, for example, a work of literature may actually have been an allegory for being a lesbian, then we can say apply those terms as subject headings to cataloging records. I think back to some of the examples we saw in the presentation earlier today in which a 245 field contains an offensive term and yet the field that contains the subject heading includes the updated language. I think we can use a similar approach when thinking about the title of the work versus what the subject of the work might be.

If the underlying data doesn't change, can you search for both the new term and the replaced term and still get the item?

McGann: Great question. Currently, if you did a subject search, it would be retrieved using the old term. With the development that we're doing right now, it would be able to be retrieved with both the new term and the old term with the way the library would define the search expansions. They could basically make a rule that if my user searches by my library's supported inclusive term, then they will return these results. In the background, the old term will be used, and all the correct records are pulled but alternatively, if they search with an unsupported term, they could have a search expansion to include the new term if they wanted to as well. Currently, no, you retrieve things using the old methods but that's something we're working on because we want this to be a much more comprehensive feature and replacement.

Is there any estimated time of arrival on when the search expansion will happen?

McGann: Also a great question. We currently have this on our roadmap as the July to September range.

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