

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Metadata – a panel discussion

Presenters

- Cynthia Whitacre, Senior Metadata Operations Manager, OCLC
- Jennifer W. Baxmeyer, Assistant University Librarian for Metadata Services, Princeton University,
- Celeste Brewer, Processing Archivist, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Yingwen Huang, Processing Archivist, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Kevin W. Schlottmann, Head of Archives Processing, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- Cory Lown, Application Development Project Lead, Duke University Libraries
- Lynn Whittenberger, Associate Head, Acquisitions and Discovery (Monographs), North Carolina State University

Presentation summary

Prior to introducing the speakers and their topics, Cynthia Whitacre spoke briefly about Juneteenth, including a historical overview and an update on this date's holiday status. She also shared an image of the Juneteenth flag and explained the significance of each element.

Jennifer W. Baxmeyer provided an update on the Mellon Grant with her presentation “Reimagining Descriptive Workflows, Generating Lasting, Meaningful Change in Libraries & Archives.”

Celeste Brewer, Yingwen Huang, and Keven Schlottmann shared how they identify married women by their full names in a presentation titled “Inclusive Description at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library.”

Cory Lown and Lynn Whittenberger discussed the topic “Remapping LC subject headings in TRLN discovery.”

URLs mentioned during the presentation:

[Native land map](#)

[Reimagine Descriptive Workflows](#)

[TRLN webpage](#)

[TRLN Newsletter / blog post](#)

[TRLN form](#)

[Baiké](#)

[Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia Anti-Racist Description Working Group. Anti-Racist Description Resources. October 2019.](#)

[TRLN- Feedback for Problematic Subject Headings](#)

[Library of Congress Pinyin Conversion Project - New Chinese Romanization Guidelines](#)

[Process for Adding and Revising Library of Congress Subject Headings](#)

Member questions

You indicated the container names are Chinese and English. I wonder, by English, do you mean Romanized? If so, do you prefer one specific system? And for the Chinese name, do you use simplified or traditional characters?

[Ying] The scope of the materials we have at Columbia are mostly from the Nationalist Period which is from 1911/1912 to 1949 before the Communists. So, most of the Chinese characters used at the time were traditional. After 1949 they started to use Simplified Chinese characters in mainland China, but they used Traditional Chinese characters in Hong Kong and Taiwan and also in some of the Southeast Asian countries. Because of the scope of the materials that we have at Columbia at RBML, I tend to use traditional and a lot of the original names from that time period are in the Wade-Giles system, so I tend to keep that name but in the biographical note, which is in the collection level description, I try to put in all the names, so for a name in Chinese, traditional, simplified, Pinyin, Wade-Giles, and I just go crazy, like 10 names and different kinds of transliteration or romanization, whatever I can find there. But then for records that are for materials after 1949 -- and it depends where the collection is from, for example, someone left mainland China and they passed away in Taiwan, and they sent their materials to Columbia for that collection -- we used traditional mainly when we do use Chinese description. It really is based on the context of that collection and the provenance and who that collection belongs to. In archives we tend to stay loyal to the provenance and the original order and all that. So yes, it depends on the context of the collection.

As the U.S. Congress has passed a resolution/law preserving "Illegal aliens" - how do you deal with using "Undocumented immigrants" - as local heading? If this is a local heading, when you disagree with LCSH, do you intend to create more local headings?

[Lynn] The answer is yes, and that really is the whole point of this project, to get input from our constituents, our member libraries, and our users about subject terms that they feel are dismissive or marginalizing or problematic in some way, and to identify better alternative terms that we could use. I think that is our responsibility as ethical catalogers and trying to be decent human beings. I think that is at least what we can do in our own small way to improve the catalog and improve our users experience of it. I don't know that the Library of Congress was particularly happy with the outcome of the "Illegal aliens" controversy. We can all make choices to change how we describe our materials, and I think that's what we are trying to do with this project.

Does this remapping only work for materials with MARC records in your catalog or does it also work on keywords (or whatever) in electronic resource records supplied via Central Data Index?

[Lynn] So this does only apply to mapped subject headings, and right now I believe it's only applying to MARC 6xx fields. So, a lot might hinge on if you're importing your electronic records into your ILS and then porting them up to the discovery layer or pipelining them directly into the discovery index -- it might hinge on how those are mapped into the index as to whether remapping would happen. But that said, right now, I think it would be a mistake to try and remap words like "Illegal aliens" that appear outside of the subject headings, like in the title or notes.

[Cory] That's exactly right. At TRLN Discovery we are only dealing with MARC records, so the remapping is limited to MARC records that come from our ILSs.

Cory, in your last slide the "Dirty War..." example was listed in the subject list. Was that the FAST version of the subdivision, or the Library of Congress?

[Cory] Off the top of my head I don't know. As Lynn mentioned, the remapping happens at the full subdivision level, so if we wanted to remap that first term that isn't remapped "dirty war" we would have to add that exact string to the remapping file. I guess this is a good illustration that we're taking kind of a conservative approach with this, where not every occurrence of "dirty war" gets remapped, only the exact full subdivision string.

Does TRLN have an "alphabetical list" of headings feature (a.k.a. browse lists)? Do you provide cross-references from the problematic or harmful language term to the preferred language term?

[Cory] We don't currently have a browse list feature in the catalog, and this isn't a cross reference, really, but you can search for either term and find results in the catalog.

I have a question about documentation, description practices and resources for librarians and archivists. Does anyone know of a good (publicly available) example of a description manual for inclusive description practices for librarians and archivists?

[Celeste] The "Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia Anti-Racist Description Working Group. Anti-Racist Description Resources. October 2019" (see link above) is publicly available on Wordpress.com and while it is specific to anti-racist description, many of the principles it addresses are more general. In addition, it has an extensive bibliography that addresses plenty of intersectional issues and inclusive description more broadly, I think that's one good resource. I also think the reimagined descriptive workflows project that Jennifer spoke about at the beginning of this panel is going to provide more extensive guidance that is perhaps less archives specific, so I am really looking forward to that.

Penn is taking a similar approach. We have found that some records don't flip, due to minor errors. How much clean-up are you doing manually to make the flips work?

[Lynn] At the moment I think it's up to every institution. We haven't in a concerted way gone back and taken a look at the fallout from the flip and what hasn't remapped the way we want it, so that's a good suggestion that I'm going to bring back to the TRLN metadata team.

The solution you demonstrated is intriguing. My question is, how does your institution track the revised headings? Do you use a local authority file?

[Lynn] I'd really say the [YAML](#) remapping file that Cory showed a screenshot of is really where we keep a record of what remappings are there. Of course, we have the spreadsheet that I showed a picture of, but I would not consider that the place of record. It would be the YAML file that's associated with our discovery layer.

Have you considered notating the name of thesauri where the preferred terms come from on your GitHub site?

[Cory] It's not in the file on GitHub, we do have additional documentation that the metadata team maintains that includes additional information about where the updated term might come from and decisions that we've made along the way.

[Lynn] It might be worthwhile, since we do consider the YAML file to be our record of record, noting in there as well if it comes from another thesaurus.

Just out of curiosity, for the TRLN mapped headings, have any patrons ever commented on the mapped headings?

[Lynn] If they have, I haven't heard it.

[Cory] Same, I've not. It's possible, but it's not gotten back to me if they have.

Have you tried to enhance the LCSH via SACO before you establish your local subject heading?

[Lynn] In chat it was shared that Duke does try to submit SACO proposals, I believe UNC Chapel Hill does as well. NC State is not a SACO member, so we do not. But as I mentioned, sort of the mechanism that we're using now, if in the future, one of these subject headings would get changed the way we have the remapping works would allow for a graceful depreciation of that remapped term. And as the new term gets populated into our MARC records, then it would be indexed and displayed normally.

[Noted from chat] It is not necessary to be a SACO member to submit proposals.