Inclusive Description at Columbia University Libraries: From Change the Subject to Action

Matthew Haugen (he/they), Rare Book Cataloger
Michele Wan (she), Special Collections Cataloging Librarian

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Introduction to inclusive description

Critical cataloging

Ethical description

Reparative description

Conscious editing
Introduction to inclusive description: Why it matters

- Respectful, accurate description with community input
- Diversity of collections
- De-centering perspectives that have traditionally been the focus

- Discoverability of resources by or about marginalized communities
- Increased utilization of resources
- Affirming experience for users
Introduction to inclusive description: Guiding principles

● Center respect and care for marginalized communities.
● Seek input of people from marginalized communities.
● Use terms that people use to describe themselves.
● Understand that this is an iterative process.
● Know that this can get messy; not always consensus.
● Document decision-making processes.
● Account for time and resources needed.
● Let this be everyone’s work.
Areas to consider

- Subject headings (e.g. LCSH)
- Classification systems (e.g. LCC)
- Archival descriptions
- Exhibit labels
- Language equity
- Gender in authority records
Introduction to inclusive description: More on LCSH

- **Derogatory, inaccurate, and outdated terms**
  - “Indians of North America,” “Sexual minorities”

- **White, male, and Christian as default**
  - “Women scientists,” “Jewish photographers,” “Black dolls”

- **Lack of person-first terminology**
  - “Poor,” “Slaves,” “Blacks,” “Invalids,” “Gays”

- **Language that minimizes impact of historical event**
  - “Japanese Americans–Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945”
Local Alternatives to “IA” in LCSH

- Bard College
- Brooklyn Public Library
- California Community Colleges
- California State University
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Dartmouth College
- Denver Public Library
- Duke University
- Great River Regional Library (Minnesota)
- Harvard University
- Hennepin County Library (Minnesota)
- Lawrence Public Library (Kansas)
- Michigan State University
- New York Public Library
- North Carolina Central University
- North Carolina State University
- OhioLink Consortium
- Regis University
- Simmons University
- SUNY Libraries Consortium
- Texas State University
- University of California Berkeley
- University of Colorado-Boulder
- University of Miami
- University of Minnesota
- University of North Carolina
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of San Francisco
- University of Texas
- Villanova University
- Williamsburg Regional Library (Virginia)
- Yale University
- ...and growing
Columbia’s Solution: Combined Efforts

Diversity & Inclusion Committee (D&I), Working Group on Collections and Description, 2020-21

Alex Whelan, Kae Bara Kratcha, Colleen Major, Rina Pantalony, Dylan Rosenlieb

Libraries Information Technology Department (LIT)

Stuart Marquis, Breck Witte

Original and Special Materials Cataloging Department (OSMC)

Matthew Haugen, Michele Wan, Alex Whelan, Melanie Wacker, Kate Harcourt, Susan Summer, Ryan Mendenhall, Robert Rendall

And Many Others: Kristen Hogan (Barnard), Kaneisha Gaston, Alex Gil, Lauran Hartley, Socrates Silva, Kevin Schlottmann, Library Leadership, Columbia Law Library, Hyacinth User Group, CLIO Unified Discovery Group, Student Library Advisory Committee, and more!
First Steps

October 2019: Issue Ticket created for CLIO (Columbia’s online catalog)

“Display acceptable subject terms using local cross references in CLIO”

November 2019: Change the Subject Event at Columbia

Documentary screening and Panel Discussion

Panelists: Jill Baron (Dartmouth), Melissa Padilla (Dartmouth), Jennifer Baxmeyer (Princeton), Amber Billey (Bard), Melanie Wacker (Columbia)

Organizers: Nicky Agate, Alex Gil, Matthew Haugen, Socrates Silva, Melanie Wacker
Choosing an Approach (OSMC, LIT, D&I)

Goals:
● Reduce harm
● Support retrieval
● Align with other institutions if possible

Options:
● Replace offensive LCSH terms directly in MARC records
● Add local terms alongside offensive LCSH terms in MARC records
● Replace offensive LCSH terms via display layer change in CLIO
● Issue statement on harmful cataloging language (forthcoming)
CLIO Specifications: Display Change (LIT)

Specifications:

1) Replace subject terms in patron OPAC display
For all records - Columbia Voyager records and records loaded from other sources

2) Support equivalent searching by LCSH or local subject terms

3) Display local subject terms in facets
1. Determine which terms to change, and choose preferred alternative labels
2. Add local variant to authority records in our Voyager ILS. Example:

   *LCSH Term:* 150 Children of illegal aliens

   *Local variant:* 450 Children of undocumented immigrants ‡5 NNC

   *Local note:* 667 Record edited locally for CLIO display change ‡5 NNC

3. Protect local edits during vendor processing (Backstage Library Works)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCSH</th>
<th>CUL Local Preferred Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aliens</td>
<td>Noncitizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal aliens</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alien detention centers</td>
<td>Immigrant detention centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of illegal aliens</td>
<td>Children of undocumented immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal alien children</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrant children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal aliens in literature</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants in literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women illegal aliens</td>
<td>Women undocumented immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alien criminals</td>
<td>Noncitizen criminals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens in motion pictures</td>
<td>Noncitizens in motion pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church work with aliens</td>
<td>Church work with noncitizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens in literature</td>
<td>Noncitizens in literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens in art</td>
<td>Noncitizens in art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCSH</td>
<td>CUL Local Preferred Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens in mass media</td>
<td>Noncitizens in mass media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alien property</td>
<td>Foreign-owned property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alien property (Greek law)</td>
<td>Foreign-owned property (Greek law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens (Greek law)</td>
<td>Noncitizens (Greek law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens (Jewish law)</td>
<td>Noncitizens (Jewish law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens (Islamic law)</td>
<td>Noncitizens (Islamic law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens (Roman law)</td>
<td>Noncitizens (Roman law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign workers (was Alien labor)</td>
<td>Noncitizen labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of foreign workers (was Children of alien laborers)</td>
<td>Children of noncitizen laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign worker certification (was Alien labor certification)</td>
<td>Noncitizen labor certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women foreign workers (was Women alien labor)</td>
<td>Women noncitizen labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign workers' families (was Alien laborers' families)</td>
<td>Noncitizen laborers' families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$x Officials and employees, Alien</td>
<td>$x Officials and employees, Noncitizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CLIO Implementation (LIT)

- Voyager ILS
  - local subjects
- Law Catalog
- ReCAP
- HathiTrust
- History Lab

Weekly Authority Extract → Authority Search Index → Bib Record Search Index

Bib records from multiple sources + Authority Tracings + Local Subjects

Local Subjects

CLIO (Blacklight)

CLIO

Catalog

Quicksearch

E-Journal Titles

Archives

U.S. Government Information

New Arrivals

Catalog

Search Columbia's catalog of over 18 million items for:
- books
- journals and newspaper titles
- audio and video recordings
- scores
- archival collections
- databases
- government documents
- maps and atlases

CLIO (Blacklight)

record display substitutions

searching, faceting
Before and After