Creating a reparative cataloging community of practice in the WRLC

Potomac Technical Processing Librarians Annual Meeting
Friday, October 13, 2023
Presenters

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Consortial Network Zone Manager
The controlled vocabularies and descriptions we use or encounter in our work contain prejudicial, biased, and/or dehumanizing terms. Our usage of any of these terms today does not reflect our approval of said terms.

Unfortunately, we cannot discuss the need of the work or the work of reparative description itself without acknowledging that these terms exist and may or may not currently be the authorized terms in the controlled vocabularies we use.
Outline

- About Reparative Cataloging
- About the WRLC
- Establishing the Subgroup
- Engagement and representation
About Reparative Cataloging
Reparative Cataloging

- Inclusive and conscientious description
- Radical cataloging
- Decolonizing the catalog
- Critical cataloging
- Ethical cataloging
- Critical cataloging and archival description
- Reporative description
- Radical librarianship
Definition of reparative description

**n.**
remediation of practices or data that exclude, silence, harm, or mischaracterize marginalized people in the data created or used by archivists to identify or characterize archival resources

**adj.**
relating to remediation of practices or data that exclude, silence, harm, or mischaracterize marginalized people in the data created or used by archivists to identify or characterize archival resources


Photo by Waldemar on Unsplash
Why we do the work

Controlled vocabularies & descriptions can contain language that is:

- Demeaning or dehumanizing
- Outdated (but not offensive)
- Offensive
- Not appropriately descriptive
- Not inclusive
- Doesn’t exist as authorized heading
Comprised of nine universities in DC and Virginia; WRLC headquarters in Maryland
- 2 public universities (George Mason and the University of the District of Columbia)
- 2 HBCUs (University of the District of Columbia and Howard University)
- Gallaudet - university for the deaf & hard of hearing community
- Religious affiliations (Marymount, Georgetown, Catholic University)

Libraries include
- Law, medical, and general education
- Variety of specialty items and collections
No one can focus solely on reparative work

Larger universities are understaffed
Smaller universities may be fully staffed, but have small staffs
All are overworked and overwhelmed

WRLC Partner Staffing Trends
Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC)

- Steering committee - makes decisions & issues charges
  - Underneath the Steering Committee are various other committees, including the **Metadata Committee**
  - Committee membership = 1 representative per institution OR 1 representative per Institution Zone
WRLC & Alma
Institution Zone (IZ) Inventory, like holdings records, item records, and electronic portfolios
Managed by individual institutions

Network Zone (NZ) Shared bibliographic records
Managed by the WRLC Consortial Network Zone Manager and individual institutions

Community Zone (CZ) Bibliographic data (primarily electronic resources)
Global authority records
Managed by Ex Libris
Establishing the Subgroup
Reparative Cataloging in the WRLC

Metadata Committee discussed the LCSH *Illegal aliens*; they voted to add the supplemental heading *Undocumented immigrants*.

Wider discussion on reparative cataloging in the WRLC.

Each individual institution can decide to display the original heading in the patron-facing catalog.

Creation of the Reparative Cataloging Subgroup.
Reparative Cataloging Subgroup

- Began with 11 librarians from 7 institutions
- Membership is volunteer, open to all library staff
- Monthly meetings
  - Open to all, not just members
  - Recorded and posted on WRLC’s Basecamp
- Chairs selected on yearly term
- No official charge
Engagement & Representation
Where do we start?

Let’s do a survey!

Questions:

- What work is your institution currently doing?
- What guidance/work do you expect from the WRLC Reparative Cataloging Committee?
- Is there a policy in place to report concerns?

Response themes:

- “Not sure”
- Collaboration on work
- Centralization on work
- Clarity on what’s going on elsewhere
Collect and archive DEI statements

- American University Library Diversity & Inclusion
- Catholic University of America mission statement
- Howard Law Social Justice Guide
- GW Libraries & Academic Innovation
- Georgetown University Library SMR: Racial Justice
- George Mason University Libraries: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

"The need for this [Social Justice] guide was determined by HUSL Library in response to the Spring 2020 international protests for justice and equality, and ongoing conversations of diversity, implicit bias, and inclusion in the legal profession and legal education."
- HU Law Social Justice Guide

"Georgetown University Library ...is committed to embracing the broader goals of racial reconciliation and healing across our nation, and affirming in word and deed the transcendent dignity and worth of every human person."
- GT Library’s Statement on Racial Justice

"We recognize that this is an ongoing process and aim to engage in diversity and inclusion as more than just numeric representation. We will continue to work on intentionally diversifying our personnel, services, and collections in meaningful ways."
- American University Library’s Diversity Statement
Ways we communicate

 Metadata Committee Basecamp
 Slack channel
 Heading replacement form

 WRLC Newsletter
 Google group
 Meeting recordings & minutes

 Our own institutional channels
 Peer to peer
Newsletter Updates

Reparative Cataloging at the WRLC

June Updates

Each month, members of the WRLC Reparative Cataloging Subgroup take turns sharing news related to reparative cataloging and recent updates to the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSHs). The Library of Congress does not have any updates or changes to LCSH for June 2023. However, the Subgroup has a couple of subject heading updates for our consortial catalog:

- Last month the Subgroup reviewed a proposal to change the subject heading “Problem children” to “Children with behavioral problems” as this is more respectful language and follows the person’s first language principle. This proposal was accepted by the Metadata Committee at their May 2023 meeting. A local authority record for “Children with behavioral problems” has been created and will be updated where possible in the consortial catalog.

→ Sent out monthly by WRLC HQ.
→ Subgroup members volunteer to write update

Update includes:
→ LCSH/LCGDT heading updates
→ Work around the profession
→ Workshops, presentations, etc
Adding a controlled vocabulary

Local practices: (WRLC)

- All Homosaurus subject headings linked to their respective Authority Record in the Alma Network Zone
- Institutions are already adding in Homosaurus terms
  - So is OCLC
- Identifiable by $$2 homoit in the subject field
- Display is optional, search is always functional

International linked data vocabulary of LGBTQ terms

https://homosaurus.org/
Adding a controlled vocabulary: Results
Subject Heading Replacements

1. Librarians/Staff/Users submit replacement suggestions
2. Reparative Cataloging Group and Metadata Committee decide on action
3. Reparative Cataloging Group and WRLC staff implement
We don’t have to choose what is important to the WRLC, WRLC members can identify to use what’s important or what they see.

Reported so far:
- Problem children -> Children w/behavioral problems
- Miscegenation -> Interracial relationships
- Women in STEM -> ????
Subgroup puts together proposals to the Metadata Committee that include:

- What was reported
- The authorized LCSH heading
- Preferred supplemental and/or replacement heading(s)
- Records impacted
- Proposed local authority records

Example of a proposal available: https://go.gwu.edu/PTPLrepcat
Local authority records

- Created as part of proposal
- Approved by Metadata Committee
- Added to NZ Local Authority list in Alma
- 16 local records added so far

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<td>450</td>
<td>$Sa Maladjusted children</td>
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<td>$Sw g $Sa Children</td>
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<td>550</td>
<td>$Sa Behavior disorders in children</td>
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<td>667</td>
<td>$Sa Local WRLC heading approved by the WRLC Metadata Committee on May 26, 2023. The Library of Congress subject heading &quot;Problem children&quot; is changed to &quot;Children with behavioral problems&quot; by the daily Preferred Term Correction job. For more information, see the &quot;Local WRLC Subject Headings&quot; section of the Network Zone Bibliographic Record Policies document.</td>
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<td>$Sa At the time this local authority record was added &quot;Problem children&quot; was the authorized Library of Congress Subject Heading.</td>
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<td>Original Heading</td>
<td>Replacement Heading</td>
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<td>Noncitizen detention centers</td>
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<td>Women noncitizens</td>
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<td>Problem children</td>
<td>Children with behavioral problems</td>
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<td>Church work with problem children</td>
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<td>Parents of problem children</td>
<td>Parents of children with behavioral problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers of problem children</td>
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<td>Physical education for problem children</td>
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<td>Miscegenation</td>
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<td>Interracial relationships in literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscegenation in motion pictures</td>
<td>Interracial relationships in motion pictures</td>
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Improvement & future work

- Tech services heavy, area we could improve
  - We make an effort to reach out to our non-tech services colleagues to get input
- SACO funnel to make LCSH heading changes to headings to topics important w/in WRLC
  - They report it using the form, we make a proposal to the metadata committee, etc
- Get an official charge

Photo by Tim Mossholder on Unsplash
Thank you!!

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Slides and other resources:
https://go.gwu.edu/PTPLrepcat