Conscious Editing at University of Houston Libraries

Leo Martin and Xiping Liu
Resource Description Librarians
Resource Management & Metadata (RMM)
Introductions and Overview

Who We Are

- Xiping Liu, Resource Description Librarian
- Leo Martin, Resource Description Librarian for Unique Formats and Materials

What We Do

- Members of the Resource Description Unit in RMM (Resource Management and Metadata)
- Create and edit bibliographic and authority records in our shared cataloging environment (Ex Libris Alma).
  - Bibliographic records describe resources the library has access to.
  - Authority records describe entities (people, corporate bodies, places, etc.) and concepts (subject headings, genre/form terms, etc.).
What is Conscious Editing?

- Conscious editing, or reparative description, is a culturally sensitive approach to carrying out evidence-based reparative work to library, museum, and archival metadata in both public and administrative spaces.

- "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"--reparative description (n.), American Archives Association.

- Conscious editing is often used interchangeably with following terms: inclusive description, critical cataloging, conscientious description... and several other interrelated terms. Note that each term also conveys a different facet of description.
UH Conscious Editing Working Group

- **UH-CEWG established in September 2021**
  - 1-hour monthly meetings during the fall and spring semesters.
  - Topics include ongoing conscious editing work, technical process for completing work, and assigning tasks to members.

- **Membership**
  - Xiping and Leo co-chair.
  - Members consists of technical services workers from UH-Main, UH-Downtown, UH-Clear Lake and UH Law Library.
  - An up to date list of current and former members is available on our local SharePoint page.
How Did We Get Here at UH Libraries

- Informed by earlier work, presentations, and ongoing initiatives here at UH Libraries.
  - Former colleagues from our department, RRM, and Special Collection library have presented on the topic.

- Screened *Change the Subject* documentary film ([YouTube](https://youtube.com)) or ([Dartmouth](https://dartmouth.edu)) May 2021
  - “The story of a group of college students, who from their first days at Dartmouth College, were committed to advancing and promoting the rights and dignity of undocumented peoples.”

- Watched Q&A with the directors and participants at Simmons University ([YouTube](https://youtube.com))
Initial Work

- Created a Microsoft Teams workspace
- Created a resource list with a list of terms in our Teams workspace
- Created a working list of harmful terms identified in the catalog and digital libraries
- Planned to work on subjects around “Aliens” and “Illegal aliens” first
## Working list of harmful terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Harmful term/Library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH)</th>
<th>Suggested term to replace the harmful term/UH Local Subject Heading</th>
<th>Alternative approach</th>
<th>Current use in the digital library</th>
<th>Current use in the library catalog</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>Illegal aliens; Addl: Noncitizens, Undocumented immigrants?</td>
<td>We do not have either term in DL or Cedar</td>
<td>1372 non-linked Institution Zone records and 45 linked community zone records include the subject Illegal aliens. For example: Illegal aliens $x United States; Illegal aliens $x United States $x History; Illegal aliens $x Employment $x United States.</td>
<td>597 non-linked Institution Zone records and 17 linked community zone records contain the subject “Aliens”</td>
<td>Set name: UH subject with “Illegal aliens” CZ. Set names: UH subject with “illegal aliens” CZ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliens</td>
<td>Noncitizens</td>
<td>We do not have either term in DL or Cedar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alien detention centers</td>
<td>Immigrant detention centers</td>
<td>We do not have either term in DL or Cedar</td>
<td>56 non-linked IZ records and 0 CZ record contain the subject “Alien detention centers”. For example; Alien detention centers $x United States.</td>
<td>65 non-linked IZ records and 2 CZ record contain the subject “Children of illegal aliens”. For example: Children of illegal aliens $x United States; Children of illegal aliens $x United States $x Law and legislation $x United States; Children of illegal aliens $x Education (Higher) $x United States.</td>
<td>Used together with other “Illegal aliens” subject and “Detention of persons”. Set name: UH subject with Alien detention centers CZ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of illegal aliens</td>
<td>Children of undocumented immigrants</td>
<td>We do not have either term in DL or Cedar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal alien children</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrant children</td>
<td>We do not have either term in DL or Cedar</td>
<td>78 non-linked IZ records and 1 CZ record contain the subject “illegal alien children”. For example: illegal alien children $x United States; illegal alien children $x Education (Higher) $x United States; illegal alien children $x Legal status, laws, etc. $x United States; illegal alien children $x Mexican-American Border Region.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Same records use “Unaccompanied Immigrant children” together with “illegal alien children”. Mostly UH has ebooks and GPO records. Set name: UH subject with illegal alien children CZ. Set names: UH subject with illegal alien children CZ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal aliens in literature</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants in literature</td>
<td>We do not have either term in DL or Cedar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Note:** The table above lists harmful terms and suggests replacements. The current use of these terms in various library catalogs is also indicated, along with additional notes for proper usage.

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**Additional Information:**

- Illegal aliens: The term is used to refer to unauthorized immigrants in the United States.
- Noncitizens: Refers to individuals who are not citizens of the United States.
- Undocumented immigrants: Individuals who have entered the United States illegally.
- Alien detention centers: Facilities where immigrants are detained while awaiting deportation.
- Children of illegal aliens: The children of unauthorized immigrants who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States.
- Illegal alien children: Children of unauthorized immigrants who are not citizens or permanent residents of the United States.
Workflow for Updating Terms in Alma

Planning Phase

UH-CEWG Meets to Discuss Terms in Alma
- Co-chairs meet, plan agenda
- Agenda posted to Teams page
- UH-CEWG meets over Teams
- Co-chairs introduce terms for discussion, members provide feedback and devise action plan
- Additional discussions over Teams, planning bibliographic file maintenance (BFM)

Action Phase

Records for BFM Retrieved from OCLC
- Members search for selected term(s) and create sets in Alma production
- Set exported as a spreadsheet
- OCLC numbers extracted and inserted into a .txt text file.
- In OCLC Connexion, OCLC #s batch searched, records found and exported as .MRC file

Testing Phase

Testing Conducted in Alma Sandbox
- In Alma Sandbox, .MRC file with affected records is uploaded
- Special Alma normalization rules for imported records are created to “flip,” add, and/or remove selected subject terms only
- Terms are checked in Primo to ensure public display is affected by changes

Implementation Phase

BFM Completed in Alma Production
- Alma norm rules for import file are added to production
- .MRC file for BFM uploaded with special norm rules
- Affected terms are changed
- Members check Alma for errors
- Co-chairs and system manager discuss any errors/challenges with BFM over Teams.
Remediation Work Process

- Discussion and decision making around “Aliens” and “Illegal aliens” subject headings
  - Suppress “Aliens” and “Illegal aliens” terms in Primo display.
  - Add “Noncitizens”, “Undocumented immigrants”, “Unauthorized immigration” to Primo display.

- Library of Congress’s update in December 2021 and our decision
  - “Aliens” → Noncitizens
  - “Illegal aliens” → Noncitizens + Illegal immigration
  - Decided to follow LC’s policy and add Mesh (National Library of Medicine) subject heading “Undocumented immigrants.”

- Batch update records in Alma
  - Alma’s PTC (Preferred Term Correction) job automatically flipped “Aliens” to “Noncitizens.”
  - Around 2000 records include “Illegal aliens”
    - Reloaded records with OCLC# from OCLC.
    - Used Alma’s normalization rules to update records without OCLC number.
Example: “Crossing over” by Rubén Martínez

Crossing over: a Mexican family on the migrant trail
Martínez, Rubén.

Illegal immigration -- United States
Noncitizens -- United States -- Social conditions
Noncitizens -- United States
Noncitizens

Illegal immigration -- United States
Noncitizens -- United States -- Social conditions
Noncitizens -- United States
Noncitizens -- Social conditions
Noncitizens

Undocumented Immigrants
Biography

Both an award-winning journalist and a poet, Martínez tracks a migrant family from Mexico to the U.S. and shows how migrant culture is changing America. 13 illustrations. The U.S.-Mexican border is one of the most permeable boundaries in the world, breached daily by Mexicans in search of work. Thousands die crossing the line and those who reach “the other side” are branded illegals, undocumented and unprotected. Crossing Over puts a human face on the phenomenon, following the exodus of the Chávez clan, an extended Mexican family who lost three sons in a tragic border accident. Martínez follows the migrants’ progress from their small southern Mexican town of Chirán to California, Wisconsin, and Missouri where far from joining the melting pot, Martínez argues, the seven million migrants in the U.S. are creating a new culture that will alter both Mexico and the United States as the two countries come increasingly to resemble each other.
LGBTQ+ Terms in the Catalog

- **Homosaurus** ([website](#))
  - International linked data vocabulary of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) terms.
  - Added alongside existing LCSH and Mesh headings.

- **Addressing Issues with Trans/Transgender Terms in the Catalog:**
  - Sex change → Gender transition/Gender reassignment surgery/Gender transition--Hormone therapy.
  - Added new terms “Drag kings” and “Drag queens” to distinguish between existing “Female impersonators” & “Male impersonators” terms.
  - Add “LGBTQ+ people/youth” & “Transgender people” to existing LCSH terms.

- **“Sexual minorities” terms**
  - Sexual minorities → Add LGBTQ+ people $2 homoit.
  - Suppress “Sexual minorities” in public display.
Other Term Changes and Ongoing CE Work

- **LCSH “Blacks” → “Black people”; “Whites” → “White people”** ([Library of Congress Approved monthly list 12, December 17, 2021](link))
  
- **Cancellation of cutters for Negroes. Replacement cutters based on the word Blacks** ([Library of Congress Classification monthly list 06, June 18, 2021](link))
  
  - For example: D547.N4, “Negroes in World War I,” was replaced by D547.B64, “Black people in World War I.”

- **Concentration camps → Nazi concentration camps/Internment camps** ([Library of Congress Approved monthly list 04, April 17, 2021](link); Library of Congress Approved monthly list 06, June 18, 2021)
  
  - “Incarceration camps” added as a Use-for (UF) term in November 2011 ([link](link))
  
  - Full explanation of the creation of two distinctive terms is available [here](link)
Other Term Changes and Ongoing CE Work


● Added free-floating subdivision: “Forced removal of civilians” (May Subd Geog) to replace “Evacuation of civilians.” (Summary of Decisions, Editorial Meeting Number 2106)

● Slaves → Enslaved persons (upcoming announcement)

● LC Project Plan for LCSH Indigenous People Changes (including Indians of North America, Eskimos, for example)

● Remove the term “primitive” from all art and architecture headings (Library of Congress Approved monthly list 03, March 18, 2022)
  ○ For example: Art, Primitive (cancelled), use Art, Prehistoric
Ongoing and Proposed Work

- Remediation work is perpetual!

- Proposed changes to terms describing Indigenous peoples and groups, people with disabilities, and demographic/ethnic groups, etc.

- Ongoing discussion with recently formed group, UHAS (University of Houston Alma Stakeholders), on the public display (Primo) and overlap with UH-CEWG work.

- Post migration clean-up to address diacritics issues/errors within the catalog.
References

General Resources:

- Cataloging Lab (Violet)
- Change the Subject documentary

Library of Congress Resources:

- Library of Congress Linked Data Services
- Library of Congress Summaries of Decisions from Subject Editorial Meetings
- Library of Congress Subject Heading Approved Monthly Lists

Non-LC Controlled Vocabularies:

- FAST (Faceted Application of Subject Terminology)
- Homosaurus
Thank You!!

Please reach out via email with additional comments/questions:

Xiping Liu - xliu47@uh.edu

Leonard “Leo” Martin - lwmartin@uh.edu