ARCHIVES FOR *BLACK LIVES* IN PHILADELPHIA

ANTI-RACIST DESCRIPTION RESOURCES

*Created by Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia's
Anti-Racist Description Working Group*

October 2019

BACKGROUND

Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia (A4BLiP) is a loose association of archivists, librarians, and allied professionals in the Philadelphia and Delaware Valley area responding to the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement. One of its working groups, the Anti-Racist Description Working Group, is addressing anti-oppressive archival description. The project was inspired by Teressa Raiford, a Portland-based activist and founder of the organization Don't Shoot PDX, who collaborated with A4BLiP on a conference presentation at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon in 2017.

The working group, made up of mostly white women and professionals who work at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), have created metadata recommendations for archival professionals to address racist and anti-Black archival description. The recommendations are intended to combat the racist structures inherent in PWIs and in archival description of underrepresented and marginalized groups, in particular those in the Black community. This project came about to improve our work as [predominantly white] archivists who handle collections about, by, and for people of the Black diaspora.

The metadata recommendations were informed by a bibliography of sources members created at the outset of the project. Recognizing that this issue is neither new nor solved, the bibliography serves to gather and amplify the work of archivists across the field who are already theorizing and practicing anti-oppressive archival description. The group incorporated some of these works into an annotated bibliography meant to serve as a supplement to the recommendations. The metadata recommendations and bibliography are tools the working group hopes will help deepen understanding of the complex issue of describing marginalized communities and groups.

Due to the aforementioned nature of this working group (consisting of mostly white women), and in order to get community input, A4BLiP established a GoFundMe last December and successfully raised over $1,000 to pay Black archivists to review the recommendations and annotated bibliography before publishing. We thank the 28 individuals who donated to this fund. Potential reviewers were nominated by working group members (several are people with whom members have professional and/or personal relationships). Nine individuals, including archivists and allied professionals, ultimately reviewed the documents and offered feedback, which the working group then incorporated. The feedback we received during the review process was extraordinarily insightful, constructive, and essential to the success of this project. Thank you.

Like much of archival practice, this project and the work the group has produced is iterative. The resources the working group has created are by no means exhaustive, and the recommendations we make should be regularly reassessed for impact and omissions. A sustainable approach to anti-oppressive description means that we need to center people in all of our metadata practices and adapt our strategies for doing so over time. We welcome your feedback. You can reach us at a4blip@gmail.com.

CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Reviewers

We would like to thank the following individuals for reviewing the guidelines. Their extraordinarily insightful and constructive feedback was essential to the success of the project.

Krystal Appiah
Dorothy Berry
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS), the archives profession's content standard, empowers archivists "to develop and document a description policy based on specific local knowledge and consistent application of professional judgement."[1] [Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia (A4BLiP)](), as part of its commitment to anti-oppression values, especially our commitment to critically examine archival theory and practice, has compiled research and case studies created by archivists across the field into a set of best practice recommendations for an anti-oppressive approach to creating and remediating archival description. While there is no single set of recommendations that can address racism within archival description, we hope that this document will help synthesize and elevate important work archivists are doing surrounding ethical and anti-oppressive description. We urge our colleagues to hire and promote Black archivists and support Black students interested in archival careers through providing funded educational opportunities and paid internships with pathways to permanent positions, in addition to these best practices. A profession with more Black archivists will be a profession better equipped to create ethical, respectful, and accurate description of records created by and about Black people. While the following recommendations focus on Black communities, they can, in many cases, be applied more broadly to the description of records created by and about marginalized communities.

A4BLiP encourages white archivists and non-Black archivists of color who are combatting anti-Black archival description to first take time to familiarize yourself with anti-oppressive terms, concepts, and norms in order to deconstruct the white supremacist values that permeate American society, and by extension, the archival field.[3] Some helpful resources include:

» Layla F. Saad's book *Me and White Supremacy* https://www.meandwhitesupremacybook.com/
» Robin DiAngelo's book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard For White People To Talk About Racism*
» SAA's free online course Cultural Diversity Competency by Helen Wong Smith https://www.pathlms.com/saa/courses/4839

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[1] Society of American Archivists, "Introduction to Describing Archival Materials," *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)*, 2nd Ed. SAA, approved 2013, last updated July 2019, https://github.com/saa-ts-dacs/dacs/blob/master/06_part_I/01_introduction_to_describing_archival_materials.md.

[2] Chaitra Powell, Holly Smith, Shanee Murrain, and Skyla Hearn, "This [Black] Woman's Work: Exploring Archival Projects that Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker." *KULA: knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation studies* 2, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.5334/kula.25; Kellee E. Warren, "We Need these Bodies, but Not their Knowledge: Black Women in the Archival Science Professions and their Connection to the Archives of Enslaved Black Women in the French Antilles," Library Trends 64, no. 4 (2016): 776-794, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/622032.

[3] Thank you to Jasmine Clark for encouraging us to be more direct when talking about the white supremacist values that underlie our field and society.

A Note on Language

     Based on feedback from reviewers we have decided to capitalize the word Black when used in the context of identity and race. Our decision was based on thoughtful consideration of Black archivists' feedback, current style guides, and approaches used by contemporary Black writers and journalists.[4] We have chosen not to use the term African American because the archival materials that these recommendations apply to may describe Black people outside the United States. We have decided not to capitalize the word white, in accordance with common practice and contemporary style guides and because the capitalization of white is a practice commonly used by white supremacists. However, our annotated bibliography entries reflect the language conventions used by the authors of the articles themselves, which occasionally deviate from those used throughout the rest of this document.

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[4] Elahe Izadi, "When to Capitalize 'Black' and 'White,'" *DCentric* (blog), May 16, 2012, http://dcentric.wamu.org/2011/10/when-to-capitalize-Black-and-white/; "White, white," *The Diversity Style Guide*, ed. Rachele Kanigel, accessed 2019, https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/white-white/; Lori L. Tharps, "The Case for Black with a Capital B," *The New York Times*, November 19, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/opinion/the-case-for-Black-with-a-capital-b.html; Gabrielle Foreman, *Activists Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

METADATA RECOMMENDATIONS

We acknowledge the reality that individual processing archivists may not have the authority to apply all of the methods described here. The following recommendations include those that are actionable in the day-to-day process of descriptive work, as well as those that require advocating for and implementing broader institutional changes at an administrative level. We encourage readers to take action where they can.[5]

Voice and Style

» Unlearn the "neutral" voice of traditional archival description.[6] Rather than striving for an "objective" voice, which reinforces existing power structures, base description in the question (as posed by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor): "Is the descriptive language I am using respectful to the larger communities of people invested in this record?"[7] Decenter "neutrality" and "objectivity" in favor of "respect" and "care."[8]

» Avoid passive voice (or passive language in linked data predicates[9]) when describing oppressive relationships. Use active voice in order to embed responsibility within description.

> For example, consider the difference between these two sentences:
>
> 1) "Four Kent State University students were killed on May 4, 1970, during a clash between the Ohio National Guard and a crowd gathered to protest the Vietnam War."
>
> 2) "Members of the Ohio National Guard killed four Kent State University students during a mass protest against the Vietnam War."

[5] Thank you to Dorothy Berry for encouraging us to consider the difference between guidelines, recommendations, and manifestos, as well as the power required to implement institutional change.

[6] Sam Winn, "The Hubris of Neutrality in Archives," Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, Newark, NJ, April 2017, https://medium.com/on-archivy/the-hubris-of-neutrality-in-archives-8df6b523fe9f.

[7] Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," Archivaria 81 (Spring 2016): 23-43, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/687705.

[8] See Dominique Luster's formulation: "conscious language = kind language + compassionate language + mindful language + empowering language + respectful language + inclusive language." Dominique Luster, "Archives Have the Power to Boost Marginalized Voices," TEDxPittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, June 2018, https://youtube.com/watch?v=XsNPlBBi1IE.

[9] Scout Calvert, "Naming is Power: Omeka-S and Genealogical Data Models," DLF Forum, Pittsburgh, PA, October 2017, http://calvert4.msu.domains/presenting/modelingoikos.html#/.

» Focus on the humanity of an individual before their identity/ies:

For example, consider the difference between "documents the business dealings of a Black woman named Maria in 18th century Mexico" and "documents the business dealings of Maria, a Black woman in 18th century Mexico."[10]

» Refrain from writing flowery, valorizing biographical notes for collection creators.[11] Evaluate existing biographical notes, especially those describing white males, for aggrandizing language and remove it.[12]

» Remove and refrain from including evaluative terms like "preeminent," "renowned," "genius," or "seminal" that serve to praise collection creators. Ask yourself: Does including this piece of information help users better understand the collection, or is it there only to justify the collection creator's stature?

» Excerpt from a "what not to do" example: "In addition to his work as a lawyer, Hays wrote an astounding number of books and articles. As a gifted writer and eloquent debater, he added his perspective to virtually every individual rights issue of his day. His autobiography, entitled City Lawyer: the Autobiography of a Law Practice (1942), provides a colorful account of his more noteworthy cases, and his articles and book reviews demonstrate his wide-ranging knowledge of a nation and a world experiencing dramatic change in the way individual rights were perceived."[13]

» Use accurate and strong language such as lynching, rape, murder, and hate mail when they are appropriate. Do not let your discomfort with the terms censor the material. It is okay to be uncomfortable with racist material. It is not okay to privilege your discomfort above accurate description.

» Describe relationships of power when they are important for understanding the context of records. Racism, slurs, white supremacy, colonialism, and histories of oppression are important context.

» For example, "Thomas Jefferson was a known enslaver despite his legacy as a supporter of individual rights."

Community Collaboration and Expanding Audiences

» Expand the range of audiences considered when writing archival description to include a plurality of audiences. Evaluate local descriptive practices and policies using the criteria: Which audiences does this description center? Which audiences does it exclude?

» For academic archives, this could look like making description more comprehensible for undergraduates, genealogists/family historians, and local community members. For archives collecting Spanish-language material, this could mean considering whether English-language finding aids are serving users. This could also look like minimizing archival jargon.

» For academic archives, reach out to institutional scholars who have expertise in relevant subject areas to get input on description.[14]

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[10] Thank you to Rachel Elizabeth Winston for this excellent suggestion and example.

[11] Jarrett M. Drake, "RadTech Meets RadArch: Towards A New Principle for Archives and Archival Description," Radcliffe Workshop on Technology & Archival Processing, Cambridge, MA, April 2016, https://medium.com/on-archivy/radtech-meets-radarch-towards-a-new-principle-for-archives-and-archival-description-568f133e4325.

[12] A sample XQuery for locating this type of language within EAD files can be found here: https://github.com/kellybolding/scripts/blob/master/terms_of_aggrandizement.xquery.

[13] Arthur Garfield Hays Papers, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, https://findingaids.princeton.edu/collections/MC072.

[14] Thanks to Dorothy Berry for pointing out how rarely Africana studies faculty are consulted as opposed to scholars who study European cultures.

- » Describe records in a way that supports the information-seeking needs of stakeholder communities, not just academic scholars.
  - » Develop and maintain relationships with community members/stakeholders in order to learn language that the audience recognizes and uses to refer to itself.
  - » Consider the needs of family historians and genealogists who may not be seeking "a fact or date, but to create a larger narrative, connect with others in the past and in the present, and to find coherence in one's own life;" provide opportunities for genealogists and other researchers who may want to "give back" by contributing description or connect socially with one another.[17]
  - » (Re-)describers should be empathetic towards those who may have emotional ties to people documented in records. Be careful about language choice and center the humanity of people documented in the records.
  - » Take into account potential human rights uses of records, as well as the interests of survivors of abuses. This involves avoiding the inclusion of information or linkages that could put living persons at risk, providing descriptions in languages used by stakeholder communities, and creating metadata about the intentional destruction or accidental preservation of records, which could be mobilized as evidence in human rights proceedings.[18]
  - » Consider the option of not naming people should they decide to withhold naming or if naming them could cause harm. For highly surveilled and dispossessed communities, visibility can be a form of violence. The harm that is inflicted on Black communities, which in many cases are human rights abuses, is not always evident to those outside of those communities.[19]
- » When drafting archivist-supplied description and notes,[20] use terminology that Black people use to describe themselves, while recognizing that the Black community is not a monolith, and different people will have different and sometimes conflicting preferences. Be mindful that terminology changes over time, so description will be an iterative process.[21]
  - » For living collection creators or subjects, ask them for their preference.
  - » Observe and take cues from the language of current historians, writers, artists, and others who are from (or descended from), specialize in, and have working relationships with the particular communities you're describing.[22] For older records, this means consulting with experts who are knowledgeable about specific communities existing in a certain place and point in time.

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[15] See Dominique Luster's work with the Teenie Harris Archive (https://cmoa.org/art/teenie-harris-archive/) for an example of collaborating with stakeholder communities on description.

[16] Jeffrey T. Huber and Mary L. Gillaspy, "Social Constructs and Disease: Implications for a Controlled Vocabulary for HIV/AIDS," *Library Trends* 47, no. 2 (Fall, 1998): 190-208, https://search.proquest.com/docview/220437703?accountid=13314; Erin Baucom, "An Exploration into Archival Descriptions of LGBTQ Materials," *American Archivist* 81, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2018): 65-83, https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-81.1.65.

[17] Elizabeth Yakel, "Seeking Information, Seeking Connections, Seeking Meaning: Genealogists and Family Historians," *Information Research: An International Electronic Journal* 10, no. 1 (October 2004), http://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper205.html. Zakiya Collier suggests that archivists consider using an informal survey or similar method to provide stakeholder patrons with a means to assess the accuracy orhelpfulness of the language in finding aids, or that archivists develop the practice of simply asking patrons about their experience using the finding aid.

[18] Stacy Wood, Kathy Carbone, Marika Cifor, Anne Gilliland, and Ricardo Punzalan. "Mobilizing Records: Re-Framing Archival Description to Support Human Rights," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (October 2014): 397-419, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9233-1.

[19] Thank you to Zakiya Collier for this suggestion.

[20] For a discussion of different approaches towards language in archivist-supplied vs. creator-supplied description, see the section of this document below on "Handling Racist Folder Titles and Creator-Sourced Description."

[21] Thank you to Krystal Appiah for highlighting the importance of iteration.

[22] We acknowledge that, while credentials matter, they may take different forms; academic degrees and job experience are one way of gaining expertise, but so are community organizing, activism, and other methods for building knowledge of particular communities outside of institutional structures. We thank Jasmine Clark, Zakiya Collier, and Dorothy Berry for provoking us to think more deeply about who, in particular, we consult for knowledge about specific communities.

- » When consulting with community members, be mindful of individual biases; and make an effort to not solely rely on one voice or representative from a particular community. One method for gathering more representative feedback could involve a peer or community review process. [23]
- » If you ask people from marginalized communities to help with description, be respectful of their time/labor and provide compensation. Do your homework first, and don't ask others to provide information you can easily find yourself. Pay them for their work.
- » Consult alternative cataloging schemes created by the subjects of the records being described when and if they are available, and cite them in a processing note or other part of the finding aid. As noted above, Black people are not monolithic, and care should be taken when consulting alternative classification schemes to ensure that the schemes consulted truly represent and apply to the community the archivist is describing.[24]
- » Make sure institution-created description is assessed by outside communities.[25]
  - » Provide a feedback mechanism such as creating a highly visible "Suggest a Correction" button or comment form on online finding aids, and make it clear that you welcome this kind of feedback.
  - » Provide mechanisms for users to annotate finding aids.[26]
  - » Organize focus groups with community members and incorporate feedback into archival description.
  - » For description to be assessed by outside communities, it must be discoverable. If online finding aids are difficult to locate and access, or if description exists on websites that are hard to navigate, community members may be less likely to interact with them.[27]
- » Ensure that Black individuals appear in name authority files, such as the Library of Congress Name Authority File (LCNAF) and Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC), which may involve collaborating with external communities, especially in cases where your institution lacks relevant expertise. Acknowledge that this will involve dedicating institutional and professional time and resources to co-organizing meetings and events with community members and/or providing cataloging or name authority work services if requested by communities.
- » Be mindful of how individuals are described in authority records, and educate yourself and staff on compassionate and anti-oppressive creation of such records. As one example of harmful name authority creation, one institution associated the only known related date, 1832, with an enslaved individual -- the date that the institution itself had purchased him. By using "Fl. 1832" as a distinguishing characteristic, the institution was centering that transaction as the most significant event in the individual's life.[28] Resource Description and Access (RDA) allows for more expanded differentiation methods for names, no longer limited to use of dates. Make use of events, places, occupations, and other known signifiers that humanize rather than dehumanize Black individuals.

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[23] Thank you to Zakiya Collier for this suggestion.

[24] Some examples of alternative schemes developed by specific communities include: Sandra Littletree and Cheryl A. Metoyer, "Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 53, no. 5-6 (2015): 640–657,https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1010113; Ann M. Doyle, Kimberly Lawson, and Sarah Dupont, "Indigenization of Knowledge Organization at Xwi7xwa Library," *Journal of Library and Information Studies* 13, no. 2 (December 2015), 107-134, https://doi.org/10.6182/jlis.2015.13(2).107; Alissa Cherry and Keshav Mukunda, "A Case Study in Indigenous Classification," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly,* 53, no. 5-6 (2015): 548-567, https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1008717; Annie Bossum and Ashley Dunn, "Implementing the Brian Deer Classification Scheme for Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Center," *Collection Management*, 42, no. 3-4 (2017): 280-293, https://doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2017.1340858; Jean Elder Cazort, *A Handbook for the Organization of Black Materials*, prepared for the Institute on the Selection, Organization, and Use of Materials by and about the Negro (Nashville, TN: Fisk University, 1971).

[25] Gloria Gonzalez and Jasmine Jones. "Access & Diversity: How to Create Practical, Ethical, Minimal Archival Description," Intersections: Technology and Public Services in Special Collections Symposium, University Park, PA, August 2017, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U6T3TOhOlROccSHYAxSsd5l6blh2dO7CwS60mf26kWU.

[26] Michelle Light and Tom Hyry, "Colophons and Annotations: New Directions for the Finding Aid," *American Archivist* 65, no. 2 (2002): 216-230, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40294207.

[27] Thank you to Rachel Elizabeth Winston for making this point.

[28] Thank you to Krystal Appiah for this example.

» Acknowledge that any efforts by PWIs to collaborate with Black communities and institutions on description projects will require explicitly "addressing institutional legacies [of racism] at [these] predominantly white institutions."[29] Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the dominance of whiteness and white supremacy in archives and the library field goes beyond PWIs -- and that the work of helping to address and fix this imbalance of power may not be of primary importance to communities focused on their daily survival. Before reaching out to potential collaborators, institutional partners should be able to concretely articulate how projects will benefit participating communities rather than solely co-opting the knowledge of those communities for institutional gain. Finding ways to build trust and to contribute back to the communities in ways that help sustain their survival and goals should be part of the partnership. Once potential collaborators are engaged, institutional partners must remain open to projects changing and evolving based on the expressed needs of community partners.[30]

Auditing Legacy Description and Reparative Processing

» Revisit legacy description to provide better name access for Black people where possible, including names of subjects as well as creators of records. Acknowledging the limits of provenance-based description,[31] describe the subjects of documents about oppressed or marginalized peoples at least to the extent that you describe the creators of documents. Consider the extent to which describing a person by name is an act of affirming humanity.[32]

  » At the same time, when describing living creators or subjects, consider that over-description has the potential to put people from groups already subject to inordinate amounts of surveillance[33] at greater risk. Whenever possible, consult the person(s) implicated before including personal information[34] that could possibly put them at risk.

» Audit past harmful description practices and implement taxonomic reparations when appropriate.[35] This might include:

  » Devoting the necessary time, staffing, and financial resources to remediate racist descriptive practices.
  » Taking the time to locate and describe hidden voices and to correct past failures to respectfully describe the histories of Black communities. Following a More Product, Less Process (MPLP) or iterative processing approach, this means considering past failures of care and the possibility of uncovering hidden voices among the factors for deciding when prioritizing which collections -- or portions of collections -- should receive work above and beyond baseline processing tiers.[36]
  » Integrating remediation of racist language in finding aids into regular legacy description cleanup projects.

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[29] Powell, et al., "This [Black] Woman's Work."

[30] Thanks to Dorothy Berry, Zakiya Collier, and Rachel Elizabeth Winston for their edits and suggestions for this section.

[31] Drake, "RadTech Meets RadArch;" Dorothy Berry, "Hide and Seek: Organizing Hidden Collections for *Umbra Search African American History*," *Acid Free* 5 (Fall 2017), http://www.laacollective.org/work/hide-and-seek-organizing-hidden-collections-for-umbra-search-african-american-history.

[32] Alexis Antracoli and Katy Rawdon, "What's in a Name?: Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia and the Impact of Names and Name Authorities in Archival Description," in *Ethical Questions in Name Authority Control*, ed. Jane Sandberg, (Sacramento, Litwin Press, 2019).

[33] Victor M. Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

[34] The Contribution Terms of Service for A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland provide an example of a metadata policy that is cognizant of this risk: http://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/terms. For a discussion of the reasoning behind these terms, see: Stacie M. Williams and Jarrett Drake, "Power to the People: Documenting Police Violence in Cleveland," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017), http://libraryjuicepress.com/journals/index.php/jclis/article/view/33.

[35] Melissa Adler, "The Case for Taxonomic Reparations," *Knowledge Organization* 43, no. 8 (2016): 630-640, https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2016-8-630.

[36] Kelly Bolding, "Reparative Processing: A Case Study in Auditing Legacy Description for Racism," Midwest Archives Conference, March 24, 2018, https://drive.google.com/open?id=1MhOXx5ZlVjb_8pfvvFquMqLsUUlOHFFMT4js5EP4qnA.

» When replacing racist terms from archivist-supplied description, refraining from removing entirely language that would help researchers discover Black subjects in archival collections, particularly in collections that are predominantly white[37] (i.e. do not simply delete the word "negro" without using a different descriptor).
» Paying attention to and removing racist physical descriptions of individuals and descriptions that inappropriately assign emotions or motives to subjects.[38]
» When surfacing under-described records of marginalized groups, take care to make these records discoverable without further other-izing them or tokenizing people described in the records. For example, at Princeton, the Association of Princeton Puerto Rican Alumni Records were described in a large artificial collection of subject files. Archivists removed them from this collection and created a separate finding aid[39] for the records as appropriate for an organizational records collection.

» When updating racist language or contextualization in finding aids, always preserve a copy of previous description so that future researchers can explore the history of the finding aid,[40] as well as documentation of the rationale behind changes. Methods for doing this include:
» Preserving old hard copies or PDFs of finding aids
» Creating a publicly accessible collection of legacy finding aids
» Making use of local tools for tracking processing documentation, which could include collection management software, physical or digital collection files, version control software and commit notes, or others, as available
» Provide a note and/or link in the current finding aid that indicates the existence of legacy finding aids, why they were kept, and how to access them.

Handling Racist Folder Titles and Creator-Sourced Description

» Consider your audience and the potential for harm when making decisions about whether to preserve problematic creator-supplied language. In most cases, preserve but contextualize creator-sourced original description when racism is an important context for understanding records.[41] If you choose to maintain some or all racist creator-based description, draw a distinction between the creator-supplied description and archivist-supplied description via quotation marks, processing information note, scope and content note, and/or another method. Other helpful actions may include:
» Utilizing a series-level note explaining that creator-based folder titles were or were not maintained, recognizing that some language is outdated/offensive, and explaining WHY you chose to maintain or not maintain those labels. Creating standardized institutional language that can be reused may be helpful.
» Recognizing that a processing note will not alone be sufficient to communicate to most users.

[37] Anna B. Loewenthal, "Comparing Representations of Race in Finding Aids Over Time," Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015, https://doi.org/10.17615/xjty-ya81.

[38] For an example from a postcard collection where African American children were described as "look[ing] on blankly", see Annie Tang's presentation slides from "Toward Culturally Competent Archival (Re)Description of Marginalized Histories," Society of American Archivists, Washington, DC, August 2018, https://archives2018.sched.com/event/ESld/101-toward-culturally-competent-archival-redescription-of-marginalized-histories.

[39] Association of Princeton Puerto Rican Alumni Records, Princeton University Archives, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, https://findingaids.princeton.edu/collections/AC461.

[40] Michelle Caswell, "Teaching to Dismantle White Supremacy in Archives," *The Library Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (July 2017): 222-235. https://doi.org/10.1086/692299. See also: Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," The *Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 83, no. 2 (April 2013): 94-111, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/669547.

[41] For a discussion of pitfalls of ill-informed attempts to remove racist language that result in further obscuring the context of archival materials about African Americans, see: Dorothy Berry's presentation at "Toward Culturally Competent Archival (Re)Description of Marginalized Histories," Society of American Archivists, Washington, DC, August 2018.

- » For collections or discovery portals where users may be harmed by encountering offensive language, it may be appropriate to replace offensive language in primary user-facing description. For an example of this approach, refer to the language policy for the Find & Connect website on child welfare in Australia.[42]
- » Make a distinction between the institutional voice/archivist's voice and the voice of the collection creator (ex. don't use the same racist terms a creator may have used in folder titles in scope and content notes or other notes that are supplied by the archivist.)
- » Research how the community being described feels about certain terms, and weigh MPLP-type re-use of creator description against the use of terms that are harmful. Finding other institutions that have grappled with similar collections may help. Where possible, speak directly with creators/subjects who may be harmed by legacy description to determine whether the language should be maintained or changed. In some cases, this research may not be possible, and even when making informed decisions about terminology, it is still possible to do harm.

Describing Slavery Records

- » Use "enslaved" or "captive" [person/woman/man/child/laborer] rather than "slave" when describing people held in bondage.[43] Use "enslaver" to describe people who held others in bondage.[44]
- » Avoid lumping the experiences of all people of African origins or descent in the early Americas together. Use "free [person|man|woman] of color" (often abbreviated as "f.p.c," "f.m.c," or "f.w.c" on documents), "freed[person|man|woman]," or another term to describe those who were not enslaved during a period when slavery existed in that society. Note that terminology differs depending on geographic location or language, and conduct research to avoid using anachronistic or geographically or linguistically inaccurate terms.[45]
- » If you have item-level description for a deed of purchase for an enslaved person and the seller and purchaser's names are included, include the name of the person being sold. Humanize these documents from all sides -- not just from the side of the creator.
- » Use available information to name enslaved people; in most cases, this information will be incomplete. This means that describers may have to push past their discomfort in creating what the profession views as incomplete records or description.[46] Whenever possible, record names by which enslaved or formerly enslaved people identified as the primary part of the name rather than using an enslaver's name as the primary entry. Enslavers' names may be included as supplemental information to support the identification of enslaved individuals but should not supplant the names of enslaved people, even when only their first names are known.[47]

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[42] Find & Connect Web Resource Project for the Commonwealth of Australia. "Language Policy: The Words We Use." Find & Connect, approved August 2017, https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/about/policies/language-policy-the-words-we-use/.

[43] Gabrielle P. Foreman, "Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help." Crowdsourced document, accessed August 22, 2018, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A4TEdDgYslX-hlKezLodMIM71My3KTN0zxRv0IQTOQs.

[44] Foreman et al., "Writing about Slavery;" "The Afterlife of Slavery: Language and Ethics," LaTanya S. Autry, "The Afterlife of Slavery: Language & Ethics" (wakelet), July 2018, https://wakelet.com/wake/f589cdc4-7512-43ff-a489-5ed48062179f.

[45] See: Foreman et al., "Writing about Slavery:" "Avoid using 'people of color' as a blanket term when writing about Black people or other specific groups - unless you are referencing Cuba, where 'gente de color' was a legitimate term used by peoples of African descent in the nineteenth century."

[46] Thank you to Krystal Appiah for this important insight.

[47] This advice deviates from guidance given in: David E. Paterson, "A Perspective on Indexing Slaves' Names," *American Archivist* 64, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2001): 132–142, http://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/aarc.64.1.th18g8t6282h4283. Especially since contemporary search systems support keyword searching of enslaver names that may be included in other parts of description, there is no reason to use enslaver names as a primary entry when describing enslaved people. Although the working group read Paterson's article while conducting research for this project, this article does not appear in the group's bibliography because we do not feel that it advances the group's mission of furthering anti-oppressive archival description.

» Describe records of slavery such that the descriptions support the information-seeking practices of Black researchers and genealogists[48] investigating the histories of enslaved persons rather than focusing solely on the data points valued at the point of record creation.

    » In addition to providing more detailed finding aids, when possible, that include the names of enslaved persons, indicate the presence of enslaved people in both slavery-focused and non-slavery-focused collections, even when documentation is fragmentary. Even minimal descriptions can make enslaved historical subjects more discoverable to researchers and counter outdated assumptions that "the Black past is unknowable."[49]

    » Link to finding aids and other resources at other institutions documenting the same enslavers, enslaved persons, and land.[50]

    » When determining whether to preserve original order or description for slavery collections, factor in the role record-keeping systems played in facilitating the slavery economy and consider whether there is a need to take mediating steps to support secondary use by persons dehumanized by the original functions of records and circumvent the "bureaucratic" logic of a repressive regime.[51] Mediating steps may include, but are certainly not limited to, additional description and extra effort to surface the names of enslaved persons in archival description and description that clearly identifies that records were kept to facilitate a repressive regime.

Subjects and Classification

» Do not rely on Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) exclusively when creating subject access points. Thoughtfully consult appropriate alternative classification schemes as described above in the Community Collaboration and Access section.[52]

» Consider avoiding LCSH terms if they are harmful to the people they describe. If you are uncertain, do research to determine whether the subject heading is considered harmful. If terms are not used, consider how this may affect access. Balance access with language usage thoughtfully. Consider working with groups such as the Cataloging Lab[53] to actively try to change harmful headings.

» If you decide to use an LCSH subject heading that is harmful, explain why you have done this in the processing note. For example, you may choose to include a subject heading considered harmful so that you are able to provide access in the short term and update the heading when it is changed through the cooperative cataloging program.

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[48] For case studies by Black genealogists using archival records to locate ancestors, see: Tony Burroughs, "Finding African Americans on the 1870 Census," *Heritage Quest* (January/February 2001): 50-56, http://www.tonyburroughs.com/uploads/1/3/2/8/13281200/finding_african_americans_on_the_1870_census.pdf.

[49] Carole Merritt, "Slave Family Records: An Abundance of Material," *Georgia Archive* 6 (Spring 1978): 16-21, https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=http://paperity.org/p/81423121/georgia-archive-vi-issue-1&httpsredir=1&article=1230&context=georgia_archive. For a discussion of the effects on Black researchers who are told by archivists that records do not exist on their research topic when fragmentary records do exist, see: Kellee E. Warren, "We Need these Bodies."

[50] Thank you to Zakiya Collier for this suggestion.

[51] Wood, et al., 2014.

[52] For a case study, see: Dorothy Berry, "Digitizing and Enhancing Description Across Collections to Make African American Materials More Discoverable on Umbra Search African American History," The Design for Diversity Learning Toolkit, Northeastern University Library, 2018, https://des4div.library.northeastern.edu/digitizing-and-enhancing-description-across-collections-to-make-african-american-materials-more-discoverable-on-umbra-search-african-american-history/.

[53] The Cataloging Lab, http://cataloginglab.org/.

Transparency

» Description should acknowledge shortcomings with regards to collecting gaps, as well as institutional responsibility for creating those gaps.

  » Especially for collections a repository is responsible for assembling, describe the policies and practices that led to the current composition to the collection, and related gaps,[54] in the scope and content note.

  » Make collection development policies public and have them regularly reviewed by outside communities.

» Always include a processing information note so that researchers can see who described a collection and when. If descriptive language was updated to address racist terminology, indicate this in the processing note if it is not already indicated in other descriptive notes that users are more likely to encounter when navigating collection descriptions.

  » For example, while alerting users to the presence of problematic creator-supplied folder titles may be more appropriate in a series-level scope and content note, efforts to update subject headings and other collection-level processing decisions should be indicated in a collection-level processing note.

  » Also consider encoding processing notes at more granular levels of the finding aid, when applicable, to increase the likelihood that users will encounter them and avoid overly lengthy notes at the collection level.

» If your institution is systematically engaged in addressing racism in archival description and catalog records, consider publishing an online statement outlining principles and goals.[55] If your institution is not already engaged in this work, advocate for initiating efforts to address racism in archival description, to the extent that you have the privilege and authority to do so; this can include advocating to publish a statement as a method of holding your institution accountable, integrating guidelines for addressing racist description into processing manuals, or other achievable interventions.

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[54] For examples of digital collections that explicitly acknowledge gaps, refer to this crowdsourced document: Amalia S. Levi, "P3BH-WHDigital archives; digitized collections; DH projects that explicitly acknowledge and discuss archival silences in their content," 2018, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YKndOKpUECMR_P1ObBq3f8v_-YlfuGxC9qjlBD8C-dY.

[55] For examples, see Temple University Libraries' SCRC Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Archival Description and Cataloging: https://library.temple.edu/policies/14; and Swarthmore College's Search Collections page https://www.swarthmore.edu/friends-historical-library/search-collections.

ANTI-RACIST ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia (A4BLiP) Anti-Racist Description Working Group aims to provide archivists and other memory workers resources and a framework with which to approach description creation and revision. In particular, it seeks to address the othering and rendered invisibility of Black people in the archives, which persists today and continues to reinforce and normalize the white supremacist patriarchal society our archives reflect.[1] New descriptive practices of underrepresented groups have in recent years been elevated to a national platform due to the work of cultural heritage practitioners and members of the public alike. La Tanya S. Autry, Curator of Art and Civil Rights at Mississippi Museum of Art created the Social Justice and Museums Resource List; many archival repositories are partnering with underrepresented communities to build collections like the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal and Project STAND; and communities and activists are creating their own collections using digital humanities tools like the Chicana por Mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, DocNow, A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland, and the Borderlands Archives Cartography. The A4BLiP Anti-Racist Description Working Group hopes to contribute to the archival community's efforts to programmatically adopt ethical and inclusive description practices.

The citations included here represent a subset of titles selected from an extensive bibliography created and maintained by the Working Group. They focus on major themes and issues found in recent literature on archives and librarianship that critique descriptive theory and practice, including the concept of provenance and descriptive standards. These sources emphasize the role information professionals play and the power they wield in creating records, naming, and storytelling; and thus their participation in perpetuating, intentionally or not, oppressive structures and power dynamics. While the focus of this Working Group is to specifically address anti-Black description, the group attempted to include a number of resources on the ways in which archives oppress and erase through description and how archivists can change those practices. This meant including articles that do not focus specifically on Black experiences or collections, but that address other aspects of identity that have been erased in the archives. By doing so, our intention is not to collapse the various axes on which individuals experience oppression, often in intersecting ways. The group acknowledges that to experience oppression based on race is not the same as to experience oppression based on gender, sexuality, class, or ability, nor are any of these the same as experiencing oppression based on multiple identities at once. With this in mind, this bibliography includes some resources that are not specific to Black communities with the goal of seeking shared strategies, when appropriate, from those doing anti-oppressive description work in other areas.

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[56] Thank you to Dorothy Berry and Jasmine Clark for suggesting that we provide more detail about how archives have reinforced a white supremacist patriarchal society by erasing and othering marginalized groups.

Arroyo-Ramirez, Elvia, Molly Brown, Dinah Handel, Jasmine Jones, Shannon O'Neill, Rachel Mattson, Giordana Mecagni, Holly Smith, and Kelly Wooten."*Radical Empathy in Archival Practice.*" Presentation, Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Portland, OR, July 2017. https://archives2017.sched.com/event/ABGy/301-radical-empathy-in-archival-practice

Breakout session notes:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rYjZop2Hphd_796QBDm-8GV3rHRLX4H1U7noFzdrGl/edit
Mini-zine: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LryGuU1blZpk1Ts2L3nfNe40NY1Ck82r/view

At SAA 2017, a group of nine archivists delivered lightning talks and facilitated a dialogue in response to Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's article "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives." Presentations touched on ethical collaboration and partnerships, secondary trauma and suspended grief, archival education and horizontal mentorship, vendor control of marginalized histories, and emotional labor, among other topics. The speakers collectively posited a fifth affective relationship, the relationship between archivist and archivist, in addition to the four outlined by Caswell and Cifor. While many of the talks were relevant to an ethical approach towards description, of particular relevance for this project is Holly Smith's discussion of her work documenting the history of Black women at Spelman College, in which she provided strategies for how archivists can responsibly collaborate with and document diverse communities without co-opting their voices. Giordana Mecagni's talk also critiqued institutions that purchase and digitize materials documenting the histories of Black, activist, and other marginalized communities only to keep them behind a paywall, arguing instead for decolonized digital archives that are accountable to the communities they document. Breakout session notes include strategies discussed by small groups about how to apply radical empathy and an ethics of care to various aspects of their work as archivists.

Berry, Dorothy. "Digitizing and Enhancing Description Across Collections to Make African American Materials More Discoverable on Umbra Search African American History." The Design for Diversity Learning Toolkit. (2018). https://des4div.library.northeastern.edu/digitizing-and-enhancing-description-across-collections-to-make-african-american-materials-more-discoverable-on-umbra-search-african-american-history/

Berry presents a case study on a project undertaken at University of Minnesota Libraries to digitize and enhance description of African American materials through the aggregated Umbra Search African American History platform. She describes challenges surrounding locating materials related to African Americans, making decisions about whether to use problematic subject headings in order to support access, rights management, MPLP processing approaches, and the need to sometimes defy traditional archival description practices in order to appropriately contextualize materials within search aggregator displays. Berry's case study also embodies a critique of the archival principle of provenance: she notes, the "digital landscape provides an opportunity to look at materials outside the context of their collections without having to physically re-order, disrupting concepts of respect des fonds which historically favor people with the power and privilege to securely store and collect materials over time."

Brown, Richard Harvey, and Beth Davis-Brown. "The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness." History of the Human Sciences, 11 (1998): 17-32, doi.org/10.1177/095269519801100402.

This article details the political choices archives, libraries, and museums wrestle with by providing examples of how national institutions have responded to the challenge of balancing ethical and moral questions surrounding the "politics of memory" with the more practical or "technical" concerns of operating a cultural heritage center. The authors focus on the power structures that influence the library, archive, and museum (LAM) community of professionals and the daily activities of running such institutions, concluding that "technical activities always are political, at least latently or potentially, even when they are not contested and made explicitly political." In the section on descriptive issues, Brown and Davis-Brown critique cataloging and classification systems for the ways in which they assume neutrality rather than accounting for the fact that they reflect dominant paradigms, as well as for their inability to keep up with cultural change. They also challenge

LAM professionals to make "political choices" about "allocating resources to keep up with new paradigms by reclassifying older material, or to invest in gathering new material to be classified according to the older system."

Caswell, Michelle. "Teaching to Dismantle White Supremacy in Archives," *The Library Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (July 2017): 222-235, doi.org/10.1086/692299.
    In this article, Caswell discusses concrete ways in which archivists can recognize and work to dismantle white supremacy in the archives per a class exercise she developed for her students. In terms of descriptive practices, the author suggests several approaches, including archivists educating themselves about the communities they describe; collaborating with communities to incorporate language they would use to describe themselves and compensating them for such work; hiring more archivists of color to do descriptive work; updating language in outdated finding aids and maintaining a record of such changes for review; hiring multi-linguists as archivists to author or translate finding aids into appropriate languages; and incorporating language courses in information science programs and as part of continuing education initiatives

Caswell, Michelle, and Marika Cifor. "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives." *Archivaria*. 81 (Spring 2016), pp. 23-43. https://archivaria.ca/archivar/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13557.
    Caswell and Cifor state that social justice in the archives has been addressed only through a legal rights-based framework, but insist that a feminist-ethics framework of care and connection should replace it. The concept of radical empathy -- a willingness to be affected and shaped by another's experience without appropriating the experiences of others -- should inform archival decision-making. Through this model, archivists would acknowledge the "relationships of care" that they build with creators, subjects, and users of records, and would thoughtfully describe records based on what language the creator would use and how that language would affect communities invested in the record. The article asks the archival community to open itself to a theoretical shift in how we describe, how we appraise and accession, and in who we perceive as our users.

Cifor, Marika. "Aligning Bodies: Collecting, Arranging, and Describing Hatred for a Critical Queer Archives." *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 756-775, https://muse.jhu.edu/.
    Cifor's paper identifies and criticises the effective erasure of meaning and affect in the archives through the use of distant or removed language for description, especially when that language does not align with the intent and politics of a collection. In particular, Cifor discusses the 'affect' -- defined by Cifor as a force that creates a relationship, conscious or otherwise -- that description can create or remove, framing this around the description of hate mail in an LGBT collection. The items were described by Cifor in "the ways I believed a professional archivist should" rather than by how the community would experience and describe them. This description removed the affect a user would experience and apply to their understanding of a collection, creating a 'false distance', and potentially hiding these affects. Cifor offers some examples of queer community-based archival description that describes hate mail and indeed, hatred, in a way that account for the affect the material would have on creators and subjects. The article acknowledges that it is just a first step, and that many case studies that explore its concepts will be necessary in order to learn how to apply them to archival practice.

Douglas, Jennifer. "Toward More Honest Description." American Archivist. 79:1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 26-55, doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.26.
    Douglas urges archivists to be more transparent about how collections are constructed including information about a collection's history as well as the intellectual and physical arrangement imposed upon it by creators and archivists. She notes that archivists have largely failed to make visible sufficient information about the evolution and construction of collections, especially their own interpretive role, due to "conventions in archival theory and practice that encourage archivists to present a more perfect picture of the fonds, one that is consistent with traditional notions of archives as impartial and natural and of archivists as objective and neutral." She also notes how the standardization of description has lent itself to "deceptive simplicity," arguing that it contributes to the passive, neutral tone of finding aids. To counter this issue, the author suggests including

information about the constructedness of collections, including the archivist's role in finding aids by utilizing custodial history and arrangement notes, and/or in supplemental documentation or "parallel texts" such as essays, footnotes, appendices, and colophons. She suggests archivists make better use of and prioritize existing descriptive standards or perhaps revise existing content standards to add new elements that allow for more robust and visible information about the history, or life cycle, of collections. Douglas also suggests archivists avoid using passive voice.

Drabinski, Emily. "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction." *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 83, no. 2 (April 2013): 94-111, http://jstor.org/stable/10.1086/669547.

In this article, Drabinski uses queer theory to critique a corrective approach to addressing problematic cataloging and classification issues. She encourages pedagogical interventions by librarians to help users interpret and critique these structures for themselves and other "queer interventions" that "highlight and make visible the contingency of cataloging decisions." This article could be read as an argument for why it is important to retain a record of old terms and biased description even as society progresses, so users can understand how language evolves and how bias was perpetuated over time.

Drake, Jarrett M. "RadTech Meets RadArch: Towards A New Principle for Archives and Archival Description." Paper presented at the Radcliffe Workshop on Technology & Archival Processing, April 2016, Cambridge, MA, https://medium.com/on-archivy/radtech-meets-radarch-towards-a-new-principle-for-archives-and-archival-description-568f133e4325.

In this presentation, Drake critiques the concept of provenance (respect des fonds) and argues that due to its origins in 19th-century Western society-defined by colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy-the principle is fraught with such biases and stuck in these narrowly-defined and elitist constructs. He emphasizes how technology, in particular the prevalence of born-digital records, is highlighting the limits of provenance in terms of shared creation and custody of documentation in the technical sense; and in a social sense, providing opportunities for individuals who previously did not have the ability to create records and name themselves. Drake argues that continued reliance on and adherence to this flawed and antiquated principle as a central tenet of archival practice and description entrenches the profession in colonialist, racist, and sexist practices. He calls for the development of new archival principle(s) to guide archival practice and description, and urges that this development occur "beyond the bounds of the archival profession" using an intersectional approach. He suggests that description should not be conducted in a top-down/colonialist manner; instead, this work should be more collaborative where creators are able to describe themselves and their records, and assert their own names or not.

Duff, Wendy, and Verne Harris. "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 263-285, http://yalearchivalreadinggroup.pbworks.com/f/Duff&Harris.pdf.

Duff and Harris call for a liberatory, creative, and flexible approach to archival description, one that moves beyond fonds and series-based systems, the two primary descriptive architectures, which the authors conclude are limited and insufficient. Taking a decidedly postmodernist view, they encourage archivists to acknowledge their inherent subjectivity as actors of a particular place and time and their role as records creators. These realities speak to the power archivists have wielded in purposefully or inadvertently perpetuating and replicating oppressive power relations through the records and stories they help preserve and narrate; records and stories, the authors contend, that are continually constructed. Duff and Harris encourage archivists to critique and problematize the basic tenets and concepts of the profession, in particular provenance and standardization and how they contribute to the inability of archivists to move beyond the violence that current archival practice perpetuates. They conclude that a new approach to archival description should be one "hospitable to deconstruction," that does the following: prioritizes transparency where archival intervention, archivists' biases, and the use of records are documented; takes all categories of users and their needs into account allows users to contribute their own stories; encourages archivists' engagement with marginalized and silenced communities; interrogates its own "de facto functioning as a medium of metanarrative."

Dunbar, Anthony W. "Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse: Getting the Conversation Started." *Archival Science* 6. no.1 (March 2006): 109-129, doi.org/10.1007/s10502-006-9022-6.

Dunbar focuses on three Critical Race Theory (CRT) methodological concepts: counterstories/ counternarrative, microaggressions, and social justice. These concepts can guide the archival profession by teaching archivists to identify bias within a record's content, context, and structure. This theory framework would challenge archivists to recognize who fills the roles of documenter vs. documented, and understand the power and agency that comes along with each role. When applying CRT to archival practice, archivists should identify culturally-constructed categories and build a counternarrative; recognize microaggressions in collections and interpretation; and actively bring multiple perspectives to the forefront of archival discourse.

Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

In her book, Marisa Fuentes takes archival fragments of stories of enslaved women in Barbados, most specifically in Bridgetown, and reconstructs them. Through these reconstructions, she explores the ways in which archives silence Black women's voices and presence in history and keep them hidden underneath a dominant white imperialist narrative reinforced by the historical record. Fuentes delves into these archival fragments to reveal the violence and control visited upon enslaved Black women in an urban context, and models how we should read past the white male narrative and look for the architecture of oppression on Black women revealed in the record fragments -- and understand their choices and lives based on that context.

Hogan, Kristen. "Breaking Secrets" in the Catalog: Proposing the Black Queer Studies Collection at the University of Texas at Austin." *Progressive Librarian* 34 (Fall 2010): 50-57, http://progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL/PL34_35/050.pdf.

Hogan describes the need for an intersectional approach to critical cataloging, one that creates and preserves context and that removes barriers created by traditional information organization practices, especially categorization and naming. Creating virtual collections, a practice presented using the Black Queer Studies Collection at UT Austin, is an option that allows catalogers to create significant context for materials without physically removing them to one location, which limits them to a single category. Hogan also points out that displaying relationships in records about who assigned and created vocabularies would acknowledge the power of naming in the record itself. The essay provides a case study for those who would like to follow the model of virtual collections, and also points out the challenges that arose in proposing the project, illuminating that buy-in is essential to changing practice.

Hughes-Watkins, Lae'l. "Moving Toward a Reparative Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*. 5.6. (2018), https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol5/iss1/6.

In this article, Hughes-Watkins presents a theoretical and practical framework for creating a "reparative archive," while presenting as a case study the Black Campus Movement (BCM) Collection Development Project Initiative at Kent State University. Building on a literature review of recent scholarship on social justice and community archives, she critiques archival practices at mainstream institutions, academic repositories in particular, which have historically focused on documenting those with wealth and power, thereby creating a "systemic defect within traditional archives that has led to the marginalization, erasure, and oppression of historically underrepresented communities." Hughes-Watkins defines "reparative" as work that institutions who have historically disenfranchised certain communities can conduct as a means of materially repairing for past actions. While her case study focuses primarily on acquisition, advocacy, and utilization, her framework is also readily applicable to reparative approaches to description work.

Iacovino, Livia. "Rethinking Archival, Ethical and Legal Frameworks for records of Indigenous Australian
        Communities: A Participant Relationship Model of Rights and Responsibilities." *Archival Science*. 10, no. 4
        (December 2010): 353-372, doi.org/10.1007/s10502-010-9120-3.
        Iacovino argues for a more participatory model of archiving, one in which the subjects revealed in
collections, not just the 'creators', are given agency and ownership of records in which their information and
knowledge is found. In the participant model, the creator of a collection is no longer acknowledged as the only
source of the records. This argument is framed around the effort in Australia to perform legal and
archival reform of records regarding Indigenous Australian communities. The legal framework does not account
for subjects of records to have significant rights of ownership, impeding change and positioning subjects as
having no influence on their own information. Iacovino presents a strong case for a participant model for
archives, expanding beyond its application to Indigenous Australians, while also acknowledging the barriers in
place that challenge the process to change traditional archival ideas of ownership.

Kapitan, Alex. Radical Copyeditor (blog), https://radicalcopyeditor.com/.
        Alex Kapitan's blog is dedicated to providing examples of radical copyediting: how to use more sensitive
language, be more aware of context, and take greater care with description. The blog addresses topics like white
supremacy, "person-first" language, self-identification, and also features a dedicated Transgender Style Guide.
One of the primary principles of the blog is to acknowledge the impact of language and take the steps necessary
to avoid harm. While not directly related to archival description, there are many useful examples that can be
applied to finding aid narratives. The one weakness of the blog could be that it is difficult to tell where Kapitan is
building their style guides from: personal experience, anecdotes, or directly from the communities they describe.

Kaplan, Elisabeth. "'Many Paths to Partial Truths': Archives, Anthropology, and the Power of Representation."
        Archival Science 2, no. 3 (2002): 209-220, doi.org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/10.1007/BF02435622.
        Kaplan compares the archival and anthropological fields, citing the similar roles of their practitioners as
would-be impartial selectors who nevertheless hold power over representation and influence interpretation.
Through writings from the anthropological field, Kaplan posits that the isolation of the archival profession and
its reluctance to move away from a positivist to a postmodernist approach has caused it to fall behind other
disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Kaplan places focus on the changes the anthropological field
has pursued in power and authorship and encourages the archival field to do the same. The article offers a
high-level critique and does not offer specific methods with which these changes might be made.

Larade, Sharon, and Johanne Pelletier. "Mediating in a Neutral Environment: Gender-Inclusive or Neutral
        Language in Archival Descriptions" *Archivaria*, 35 (1992): 99-109,
        https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/11889/12842.
        Rather than lay out a "blueprint for future 'safe' language" the authors create a discussion space for archivists
to contemplate their responsibility and responses to linguistic changes. The authors provide an overview of how
the United States and Canada have responded linguistically to second wave feminist critiques of sexist
terminology and syntax. Yet, with all of these changes and challenges to language the questions remains for
archivists: do the criteria for implementing descriptive standards create invisible barriers to the process of
incorporating new terminologies? As language continues to evolve and more marginalized groups describe
themselves in their own voice, how does the field move the responsibility off the shoulders of individual archives
and archivists?

Light, Michelle, and Tom Hyry. "Colophons and Annotations: New Directions for the Finding Aid,"
        American Archivist 65, no. 2 (2002): 216-230, doi.org/10.17723/aarc.65.2.l3h27j5x8716586q.
        In order to transform the finding aid, which "privileges the first reading of a collection, arresting its
evolution at a particular moment in time," into something more transparent and permeable, Light and Hyry
suggest archivists add colophons and annotations to description. Colophons, they explain, would serve as a
means for archivists to be more transparent and document their role as active participants in the shaping of the

historical record by including information about their editorial contributions, even providing biographical information about themselves, as well as information about a collection's history and provenance. Annotations, the authors point out, could expand the scope of finding aids (and perhaps even change them entirely) by allowing users the opportunity to contribute their own interpretations, thus incorporating subsequent or alternate readings of collection materials.

Littletree, Sandra, and Cheryl A. Metoyer. "Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective: The Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 53 (2015): 640-657, doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2015.1010113.

This case study regarding the Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology Project is an excellent example of how understanding the perspectives of described communities is essential to discovery and research of the materials. The knowledge organization project was based on indigenous philosophies and perspectives in recognition and response to the inadequate use of English language controlled vocabularies to describe American Indian subjects. Littletree and Metoyer provide examples of how existing vocabularies have failed researchers and subjects alike, describe the creation and foundation of the Thesaurus, and identify future research areas. This is a useful example that could be modeled to improve descriptive practices and create thoughtful vocabularies.

Long, Kara, Santi Thompson, Sarah Potvin & Monica Rivero. "The "Wicked Problem" of Neutral Description: Toward a Documentation Approach to Metadata Standards." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2017): 107-128, doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2016.1278419.

In this article, the authors use Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber's framework of "wicked problems," which posits that problems and solutions are ever-changing, and instead of focusing on a static solution, people should focus on the best solution for the time. The authors urge librarians, archivists, and information scientists to be explicit and document their framing and assumptions when creating metadata standards to dispel the myth of neutrality. To further transparency in creating standards, they argue that creators should publish their framing alongside their standard.

Luster, Dominique, Abdi Roble, Ellen Engseth, and Athena Jackson. "Culture, Competencies, and Colleagues: a Cafe on divers*" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Portland, OR, July 2017, http://sched.co/ABGn.

At the 2017 SAA session, "Culture, Competencies, and Colleagues: a Cafe on divers*," Luster presented the framework of conscious language and descriptive practices she used as the Teenie Harris Archivist. The Teenie Harris collection, a photographic collection which is available online, has titles that describe an image minutely. An issue Luster noticed was the lack of humanity in these descriptive titles and archival description practices in general.

Conscious language was described in this session as follows:
conscious language = kind language + compassionate language + mindful language + empowering language + respectful language + inclusive language

It takes into account the many intersections of identities humans can occupy: ability and disability, age, appearance, empowerment, ethnicity and race and nationality, gender and sex and sexuality, and health.

Maliniemi, Kaisa. "Public Records and Minorities: Problems and Possibilities for Sami and Kven."
    Archival Science 9, no. 1-2 (June 2009): 15-28,
      https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/docview/57739551?accountid=13314.
    Using the case study of the National Minorities in Public Records in Norway, a research project to record the Kven and Sámi peoples public record written in their respective languages, Maliniemi discusses how the archival record can further silence minority groups by improperly cataloguing and labeling their records. The author notes that the non-Norwegian language documents, while not labeled as such, were known entities by archival staff and researchers. However the language barrier and processing policies led to the Kven and Sámi peoples being treated as objects within the archival record instead of subjects and creators, often in their own language.

Matienzo, Mark A. "To Hell With Good Intentions: Linked Data, Community and the Power to Name."
    Presentation at the Library and Information Technology Association Forum, Minneapolis, MN, November
    2015, http://matienzo.org/2016/to-hell-with-good-intentions/.
    Mark Matienzo's keynote speech for the 2015 LITA Forum acknowledges the power of naming and warns of the potential for linked data to continue reproducing systematic oppression by assigning identity and shaping perception. Matienzo highlights that because "naming is fundamentally unavoidable in knowledge representation" that archivists and librarians must choose how to approach that process: with cooperation and collaboration, involving communities instead of speaking for them, or according to the pretense that libraries and archives are neutral and objective. Matienzo cites numerous other professionals in this keynote, which strengthens the piece by acknowledging all of the various experiences that went into forming it, and stresses that centralizing the process of naming in any context will overly concentrate that power -- pointing out that linked data's power is in the opportunity it gives to leverage decentralization. This speech highlights the point that any solution that relies on existing power structures will inherently reinforce them.

Olson, Hope A. "The Power to Name: Representation in Library Catalogs." *Signs* 26, no.3 (2001): 639-668.
    http://jstor.org/stable/3175535.
    Olson argues that, like other institutions, libraries are not neutral; libraries and thus the work of librarians, reflect and perpetuate the "marginalizations and exclusions of the society they serve." This includes the profession's systems of naming and categorization. Originally considered scientific and objective in nature, "...unbiased and universally applicable," in actuality these systems "hide their exclusions under the guise of neutrality." Olson asserts that like other languages, the LCSH is socially constructed and reflects social biases; though argues that this was largely unintentional. She argues that the profession needs to relinquish its exclusive authority to name and incorporate voices that have been marginalized or are missing by creating spaces and allowing those communities to name themselves.

Olson, Hope A. and Rose Schlegl. "Standardization, Objectivity, and User Focus: A Meta-Analysis of Subject
    Access Critiques." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2001): 61-80,
    doi.org/10.1300/J104v32n02_06.
    Olson and Schlegl argue that the seeming ubiquity of the problem of biased subject headings suggests the need for more study and possible action at a fundamental level concerning commonly-held principles. They contend that the tenets of subject access, the focus on users, the quest for objectivity, and standardization practices used to achieve these goals relate to systemic problems in the field. From their analysis of recent literature, they conclude the following: "librarians have a laudable ethic of self-reflection"; standards for subject access have not eliminated negative biases; the problems of subject access are well documented and articulated; and that there are commonalities in these problems. They suggest three principles to keep in mind in order to address negative bias in subject access: 1) users are not homogenous; 2) objectivity as a notion is rigid and that professionals should focus on equity not equality in that they should consider the context of the topic and user; and 3) standards should be carefully and equitably applied.

Powell, Chaitra, Holly Smith, Shanee Murrain, and Skyla Hearn. "This [Black] Woman's Work: Exploring Archival Projects that Embrace the Identity of the Memory Worker." *KULA: knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation studies* 2(1): 5 (2018), doi.org/10.5334/kula.25.

This article describes challenges faced and approaches taken by archivists who work with African American collections in a variety of contexts, including predominantly white universities, Black colleges, and local community groups. The authors organize their examples around four principles—advocacy, collaboration, truth, and agency—which are reflected in their case studies on archival collaborations with Black communities. The authors also discuss throughout how their own identities as Black women inform their work and are "an asset to our profession, not a liability." Specific issues discussed include non-exploitative partnerships between institutions and communities; funding challenges; the risk of losing Black collections to predominantly white institutions that may tell Black stories with a "fractured lens;" and the emotional labor required of Black women in a predominantly white profession.

Ramirez, Mario H. "Being Assumed Not to Be: A Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative." *The American Archivist* 78, no. 2, (Fall/Winter 2015): 339-356, doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.78.2.339.

In response to Mark Greene's American Archivist article "A Critique of Social Justice as an Archival Imperative: What Is It We're Doing That's All That Important?" (2013), Mario H. Ramirez analyzes how Greene's white heteronormative identity, and more importantly the whiteness of the archival profession, leads to the dismissal of social justice critiques and efforts to combat the white power structure of the archival profession. Ramirez later reflects on the powerful ramifications the myth of neutrality and objectivity has on the field and the communities archivists claim to serve.

Rawson, K.J. "Accessing Transgender // Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics." *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 123-140, https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13234/14552.

Archival organizational systems tend to be slow to adapt to linguistic and categorical changes. When handling material from marginalized communities, such as the LGTBQIA community, archival terminology may in fact replicate societal bias and oppressive power structures. Rawson lays out the consequences of using the term transgender to describe collections that do not contain that language and vise versa. Due to the complex relationship between materials and their descriptions, access to certain collections may be frustrating to researchers; this is okay. At times it is more important to note the shifting of language that happens between the text itself and the record that claims to represent it. Questions archivists should ask include: "What language do the material speak? - What language do archives speak? - What language do researchers speak? - and finally Who does not speak the language of your archives?"

Roane, J. T. "Locating Black Queer Pasts," Black Perspectives, December 13, 2016. https://aaihs.org/locating-black-queer-pasts/.

Roane argues that black queer histories provide an opportunity to deconstruct dominant societal narratives by allowing us to "rethink...the very contours of reciprocity, intimacy, belonging, and collectivity." Recovering these histories, however, requires a "critical rearrangement of the events, details, memories, and facts we inherit about the past" as traditional scholarship through its naming practices has marginalized, dismissed, and discredited these narratives. To elucidate his point, Roane offers a glimpse into the life and work of activist Jon Paul Hammond. He explains that Hammond's harm-reductionist philosophy and efforts to empower drug users and HIV-positive people "to serve as their own representatives and to be full members of wider networks of community" had been influenced by discredited movements like Father Divine's International Peace Mission Movement. Roane uses Hammond's work as an example of the ability of members of black communities to "forge connection across differences" and to engage in the "practice of communion in spaces of death."

Tenney, Martha. "Equity, Justice, and Feminist Ethics of Care in Digital Archival Practice." Presentation given at the Digital Library Federation (DLF)/National Digital Stewardship Alliance (NDSA) annual conference, Pittsburgh, PA, October 2017.

Tenney's presentation at NDSA 2017 describes how archivists at Barnard College are integrating feminist and anti-racist practices into their work. When touching on description, she describes the limits of technology and a purely descriptive approach to addressing white supremacy and whiteness in the archives, especially at PWIs. Tenney warns that archivists may otherize or tokenize the records of marginalized people during the process of trying to surface under-described records. She also describes the difficulty of using only metadata to account for the contextualization of racism, slurs, white supremacy, and long histories of oppression. Tenney's presentation does not go into great detail about approaches to managing the limitations of institutions to address white supremacy, but makes some thought-provoking points worth exploring further.

Warren, Kellee E. "We Need these Bodies, but Not their Knowledge: Black Women in the Archival Science Professions and their Connection to the Archives of Enslaved Black Women in the French Antilles." *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 776-794, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/622032.

Warren's essay on black women in the archival profession and in the archives brings to the forefront the lack of consideration in the profession and society for black women as 'knowers': people whose knowledge and voice belong in the historical record. Beginning with appraisal, the experiences and voices of black women are controlled and silenced, narratives and identity-construction are formed by the dominant culture who select and describe collections, and then collections are only 'opened' with surveillance and gatekeeping. Warren explores the lack of records of experiences of enslaved black women in the French Antilles and reflects on the disposition of the records: few, hidden, geographically separate from the 'main' French Archives in Paris, and primarily economic -- records important to enslavers and the trade of slavery. Warren's essay includes numerous citations to other archivists, philosophers, and memory professions, including the museum field, which offers examples for selection practice transparency. Warren's essay is a blend of critical theory and practical steps towards dismantling white supremacy in the archives, and towards making space for voices other than the majority -- starting with archival education.

Wood, Stacy, Kathy Carbone, Marika Cifor, Anne Gilliland, and Ricardo Punzalan. "Mobilizing Records: Re-Framing Archival Description to Support Human Rights." *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 397-419, doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9233-1.

In this article, the authors ask what the practical challenges and possibilities of archival work are within a human rights framework. They urge archives to identify strategies for ameliorating past abuses and transform their institutional policies and standards in order to foster trust and transparency to set themselves apart from traditionally-oppressive structures and regimes. One way in which to do this, the authors argue, is to critique and rethink the concept of provenance, which they claim serves to silence victims of human rights abuses and obscure creators and subjects of records. They also note that this principle may be inapplicable in other cultures or in collecting based on community. The authors also emphasize that descriptive work should not be done solely by archivists using standards and authority files that are limited and problematic nature; rather all individuals, communities, and organizations should have the right to represent and describe themselves as they choose, as well as to reply to records or descriptions of records related to or about them in archives. They also argue that all potential users of archives must be taken into account and in particular that use by minority populations should be considered when describing collections in another language or script. Lastly, they urge archives to transition from repositories that provide a custodial relationship to those that provide stewardship.

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