

Ethical cataloging:

Thinking critically about
collections and description

Violet Fox and Gretchen Neidhardt
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Introductions

- Gretchen Neidhardt, Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, Chicago History Museum (@geriatricgretch)
- Violet Fox, Editor, Dewey Decimal Classification (@violetbfox)
- Participants - please introduce yourselves in the chat



Gretchen and
Tom Petty and
Dolly Purrton

northwest
Chicago



Violet and
Otto the Otter

central
Minnesota



Code of Conduct

- OLAC is dedicated to providing an online conference experience free from all forms of harassment and inclusive of all people.
 - Including your pronouns in your displayed WebEx username
 - Using welcoming language, for instance by honoring pronoun preferences and favoring gender-neutral collective nouns (“people,” not “guys”)
 - Listening as much as you speak and remembering that colleagues may have expertise you are unaware of
 - Encouraging and yielding the floor to those whose viewpoints may be under-represented in a group
 - Accepting critique graciously and offering it constructively
 - Giving credit where it is due
 - Seeking concrete ways to make online resources more universally accessible
 - Staying alert, as Active Bystanders, to the welfare of those around you.
- Can be accessed under on OLAC’s Conference Experience page:
<https://olacinc.org/2020conference/conference-experience>

Background

- What is ethical cataloging?
 - Please share your ideas in the chat!
- When did ethical cataloging discussions begin?
- If we're neutral, what part do our ethics have to play in cataloging?



Activity 1

- We'll look at a digital image and its bibliographic record
- Think about the following questions
 1. Which MARC fields would you focus on for critical cataloging? What would you change?
 2. What are the implications of changing these records?
 3. What parts of this record would you consider part of the historical record? How might you indicate that?
 4. If you were cataloging this item from scratch, what would you do differently?
 5. What types of institutional language review policies do you or could you have in place, and how would this record be affected?



Title: [Two children with handicaps standing in front of a classroom blackboard, together holding a pumpkin] [graphic].

Author/creator: Chicago Daily News, Inc., photographer.

Pub./made: 1905.

Phys. desc: 1 negative : b&w, glass ; 5 x 7 in.

Restricted: Restriction: Original negatives are fragile and not available to researchers. Please consult the online image instead.

Summary: Image of two children with handicaps standing in front of a blackboard in a classroom in Chicago, Illinois. Together they are holding a pumpkin.

Note: This photonegative taken by a Chicago Daily News photographer may have been published in the newspaper.

Action staff: Cataloging and digitizing 1999-2001 supported by a grant from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Subj topic: People with disabilities -- Illinois -- Chicago -- 1900-1909. lctgm; Classrooms -- Illinois -- Chicago -- 1900-1909. lctgm

Subject geo: Chicago (Ill.) -- 1900-1909.

Form/genre: Group portraits; Dry plate negatives; Gelatin dry plate negatives.



Case studies

- “Illegal aliens” changes and tracking at Chicago History Museum
 - How to track within the authority record
- Person-centered descriptive language changes at CHM
 - Including language changes regarding African American and Black people, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and more to come
- Local solutions
 - Local vocabularies
 - Context and disclaimers
- Petitions for subject heading changes
 - Easier to ask for a “use for” rather than a request to change preferred term (unlikely, though)
 - Can try to find another controlled vocabulary that uses it
 - Or put in manually as 650 _7 term (local vocabulary)
- Name authority work, particularly Columbia’s recent project

BREAK

10 minutes



Survey results

20 responses to our quick 3-question survey

Frequently mentioned topics

- Subject headings
 - “Illegal aliens”
 - Race/ethnicity terms
- Genre terms
- Authority records



Logistics and Barriers

- Getting started
- Addressing resistance
- Funding, staff size
- Community outreach
- Consortial memberships



Activity 2

Scenario: Scholar gets in contact; they're going through a divorce & they want their name changed on works based in your library. All their works have their married name on the book.

Questions to consider:

- Who will make this decision within your library?
- How will you deal with the bib record (100 & 245 fields)?
- How will you deal with the authority record?
- How will you deal with the physical book?
- Does your answer change for different reasons for wanting to change their name?

Wrap up

This is just the beginning!

Consider using the #critcat hashtag to collocate these conversations.

Find more resources at the Cataloging Ethics Bibliography created by Karen Snow and Beth Shoemaker, available at <https://sites.google.com/view/cataloging-ethics/home>

Get in touch with us at neidhardt@chicagohistory.org & violetfox@gmail.com.