Statement on Inclusive Description

Contact: Natalie Sommerville

Unit: Resource Description Department, Adopted by the Duke University Technical Services Division in October 2020

Date last reviewed: 04 Mar 2021
Date of next review: 30 Nov 2022

Duke University Libraries Technical Services acknowledges that the creation and management of metadata are not neutral activities. We further acknowledge that the framework of national and international standards in which we work has served to uphold white supremacy, marginalization of sexual orientations and gender identities, and colonialism, among other forms of oppression. While we will continue to work within the parameters of national and international standards and organizations, we pledge as creators and managers to make metadata more inclusive by:

1. Questioning the hierarchical structures of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and Library of Congress Classification (LCC), which replicate the valuation of white, male, cis-gender, and imperialistic voices and by examining our own biases and discomfort as we seek to make description more inclusive and reflective of marginalized people and groups.

2. Proposing changes and additions to LCSH and LCC that promote more inclusive and accurate access to works by and about marginalized groups, as well as promote dismantling of its biased hierarchical structure. We will accomplish this through our participation in the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). Further, we will seek opportunities to partner with other institutions who are similarly committed to improving LCSH.

3. Keeping abreast of and implementing vocabularies from alternative subject and genre thesauri to create a discovery environment in which library users can more easily find and access marginalized voices. Further, we will work to ensure that the alternative thesauri we use are supported by our authority control service so that headings receive the same automated correction as LCSH has for years.

4. Working within our local consortium, the Triangle Research Libraries Network, to ensure that subject terminology in all metadata, regardless of how it enters the catalog, is mapped to language that is inclusive and not harmful to members of groups that have been disadvantaged by multiple forms of oppression.

5. Including descriptive metadata in the original script for works in languages that do not use the Latin alphabet. We will also seek to implement projects that remediate legacy metadata lacking non-Latin scripts, thereby creating a discovery environment in which users can more easily discover resources regardless of language or script.