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# Editorial

## Mary Beth Weber



The 2021 ALA Annual Conference is the first Annual with Core programs and meetings (note: there were also Core meetings at Midwinter 2021). This year there are many programs at Annual that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). These are important issues, and an integral part of our work.

The library where I am employed formed a DEI Committee in December 2020. Many of the vendors and organizations that serve libraries, such as Ex Libris and OCLC, have initiated DEI initiatives. ALA has an Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services and offers the Diversity in Publishing Showcase. Additionally, ALA has a Committee on Diversity, and Core has the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, chaired by Amber Billey. Organizations like the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and companies like Citi, General Motors, and Slack have DEI initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Many universities and colleges, as well as EDUCAUSE and the Association of Research Libraries, are focusing on DEI.<sup>2</sup>

DEI initiatives in libraries often focus on services, spaces, and staffing, yet there is also an important role that technical services professionals contribute to these initiatives. I have attended numerous programs in the past year that have addressed diversity, equity, and inclusion that have related to technical services' role in bringing about change. The New York Technical Services Librarians (NYTSL) and ARLIS/NY presented the program "Inclusive Description in New York City" to highlight current projects on inclusive description that are happening in NYC. In 2020, NYTSL hosted Barbara Fister's presentation "The Bigot in the Machine: Bias in Algorithmic Systems." I share a quote from Fister: "As language shifts, we shift our subject headings, trying to 'fix' the language so it is more accurate or less offensive."<sup>3</sup> The Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee (CESC), is composed of cataloging communities from the US, Canada and the UK, and has compiled a Code of Ethics for Cataloguers. The Program for Cooperative Cataloging has an Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that was charged in February 2021 to make "DEI and metadata ethics an integral part of PCC work."<sup>4</sup> The film *Change the Subject* raised awareness of how language can be harmful and negatively influence perception, and has led to a greater awareness of inappropriate or discriminatory subject headings and description.

It might seem that technical services work related to DEI is mostly related to resource description. However, it also includes collection development and management, and preservation. It is not enough for us to purchase materials about DEI, but also to purchase materials by individuals who are diverse. Libraries are now conducting diversity audits of their collections. In preservation, the need to preserve materials from the past must be balanced with the need to respond when racist or harmful content has been identified. UCLA's preservation blog discusses how conservators should not be required to process materials that may be harmful to their "mental and spiritual well-being."<sup>5</sup> Organizations may acknowledge bias in their archival collections and are making efforts to document more inclusive history, such as Carnegie Mellon's "What We Don't Have" exhibit.<sup>6</sup>

There are two papers in this issue that address DEI issues. A summary of this issue's content follows. I hope you enjoy it.

- In their paper “A Path for Moving Forward with Local Changes to the Library of Congress Subject Heading ‘Illegal aliens,’” Kelsey George, Erin Grant, Cate Kellett, and Karl Pettitt discuss events that followed LC’s 2014 decision to reject a proposal to change headings in the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) that refer to undocumented immigrants as “Illegal aliens.” Those events include the formation of a new SAC Working Group on Alternatives to LCSH “Illegal aliens” in 2019 to survey local institutions implementing changes to the subject heading and to chart a path for librarians to address the subject heading at the organizational-level. The working group presented their report at the 2020 ALA Annual Conference, and this paper builds upon that report and details next steps.
- “Representational Belonging in Collections: A Comparative Study of Leading Trade Publications in

Architecture,” by Emilee Mathews, explores how libraries reflect the communities that they serve. Her research analyzed a subset of periodical literature to measure how women are reflected, specifically women of color, in architecture library collections. The focus is on four major publishing outputs of architecture literature to obtain a sample the ratio of women leaders in featured architectural firms.

- Philip Hider and Gemma Steele discuss how providing access to literary works remains a challenge for catalogers and metadata librarians, despite the introduction of the *Guidelines on Subject Access to Individual Works of Fiction, Drama etc.* and the Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms. In their paper “LibraryThing and Literary Works Revisited: Are Social and Library Cataloging Just as Complementary as they were a Decade Ago?,” they examine how applying social cataloging to fiction and other belles-lettres might help meet this challenge.
- Book reviews courtesy of my colleague Elyssa Gould, *LRTS* book review editor.

## References

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5. Michelle C. Smith, “Thoughts on Conserving Racist Materials in Libraries,” *Preservation Blog*, September 29, 2020, <https://www.library.ucla.edu/blog/preservation/2020/09/29/thoughts-on-conserving-racist-materials-in-libraries>.
6. Katy Rank Lev, “What We Don’t Have In Our Archives: CMU Libraries Expands Initiatives to Document More Inclusive History,” Carnegie Mellon University News, November 30, 2020, <https://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2020/november/what-we-dont-have.html>.