Special Collections and Archives Outdated, Offensive and Harmful Language in Archival Description Policy

Last updated May 18, 2022

Overview

The Outdated, Offensive, and Harmful Language in Archival Description Policy details Cline Library Special Collections and Archives' (SCA) commitment to using inclusive and respectful language in archival description and lays out a framework for addressing offensive, outdated, or harmful language which may be present in SCA's existing products of archival description, such as finding aids and descriptive metadata.

To learn more about archival description at SCA more generally, please consult the [Arrangement and Description Policy](#).

Language Use in SCA's Archival Description

Archival description *(noun)* - Informational tools crafted to identify and represent an archival collection or a component thereof, used for the discovery and management of archival materials. Examples include finding aids, bibliographic records, and descriptive metadata. Descriptions often detail physical characteristics, formats, informational content, and functional purpose.

Archival description (verb) - The process of creating an informational tool to describe an archival collection or a component thereof. The process of describing archival reso urces can include analyzing, organizing, and recording details about the formal elements of a record or collection of records, such as creator, title, dates, extent, context, and contents, to

Outdated, Offensive, and Harmful Language in Descriptive Metadata

Controlled vocabulary - An enumerated list of terms preselected from natural language and chiefly used to aid discovery in information retrieval systems, including subject headings and authority records, such as the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH).

Descriptive metadata - Information that refers to the intellectual content of archival material and aids discovery of such materials; can include finding aids as well as structured data provided about digital surrogates within digital collections.

Digital collections - Digital collections are collections of digital surrogates of archival materials that are available for remote (digital) access over the internet. They may include analog materials that have been digitized, as well as items that are born -digitalred (i)4 (t (ngs)-14 1r)3 (e)-022 <</MCID 4 >>BDC 12445.512 10

SCA is committed to reparative description projects and practices to address offensive, outdated, and harmful language in its archival descriptions, particularly through the lens of the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials   .

As of 2022, SCA has begun a multi-year project, led by the Archivist for Discovery, to systematically review and update legacy finding aids to ensure that they adhere to contemporary archival descriptive standards and professional best practices, including remediating and/or updating outdated, offensive, and harmful language.

Similarly, SCA is working to implement new policies and procedures for the creation and maintenance of descriptive metadata for the Colorado Plateau Digital Collections, led by the Archivist for Discovery and Archivist for Digital Programs.