A PCC PLAYLIST OF DEI IN METADATA

PUBLICATION INFO

Title: Fixing the record : a PCC playlist of DEI in metadata
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Date: October 2026
Place: Spokane, Washington
Subjects: Library metadata -- Social aspects.
Cataloging -- Social aspects.
Program for Cooperative Cataloging.
Genre: Zines
Note: Created for the 2026 Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) National Conference

DEDICATION

Dedicated with love to Scott Carlson, Cory Lampert, Darnelle Melvin, and Anne Washington, the authors of the excellent 2020 book Linked Data for the Perplexed Librarian, who know that metadata has soul. And funk.

LICENSE

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DROP THE NEEDLE

We all have concerns about DEI in our work in libraries. Whether we think DEI has been made meaningless by mealy-mouth administrators, or we're afraid to say "DEI" because it'll get flagged by some red-state bureaucrat looking to make our lives and our patrons' lives miserable, those three letters in that sequence have taken on an enormous cultural weight.

Let's start from the idea that improving diversity, equity, and inclusion within our library metadata is a valuable service to our patrons. If you agree, this zine is for you!

Ok, ok, so we're not actually "fixing" the (bibliographic) record so much as we're working towards better: slowly, deliberately, collaboratively. Read on to learn more and find out how you can help.

MUSIC BREAKS

In this zine, I'll be sharing some tracks from the soul/funk playlist that I frequently use while editing metadata. Find a link to the playlist at the end of the zine.

♪ TALKIN' LOUD AND SAYIN' NOTHING BY JAMES BROWN (1970)

We'll kick it off with Soul Brother No. 1, James Brown. Hard to choose just one, but in Talkin' Loud and Sayin' Nothing, he gets right to the heart of it.

♫ Like a dull knife
Just ain't cutting ♫

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: DEI IN LIBRARY METADATA

DEI work in library metadata can look like a lot of different things, from short discrete projects to completely reinventing our standards.

So what do we mean by DEI work with library metadata? It's things like...

- reviewing catalogs for problematic terminology; replacing or adding alternate terms
- implementing local or community-developed vocabularies, like Homosaurus or the Anchor Archive Zine Thesaurus
- providing content advisories or creating notes addressing offensive terminology or content
- reviewing Cutter numbers and classification practices
- implementing or improving non-English subject headings or keywords
- developing inclusive metadata policies
- creating public-facing communication about reparative work being done
- writing articles or case studies documenting local work
- organizing reading groups to discuss and be inspired by other projects
- participating or organizing cultural humility or anti-bias training
- writing open letters and sharing concerns in collective efforts

SAMPLES (EXAMPLE PROJECTS)

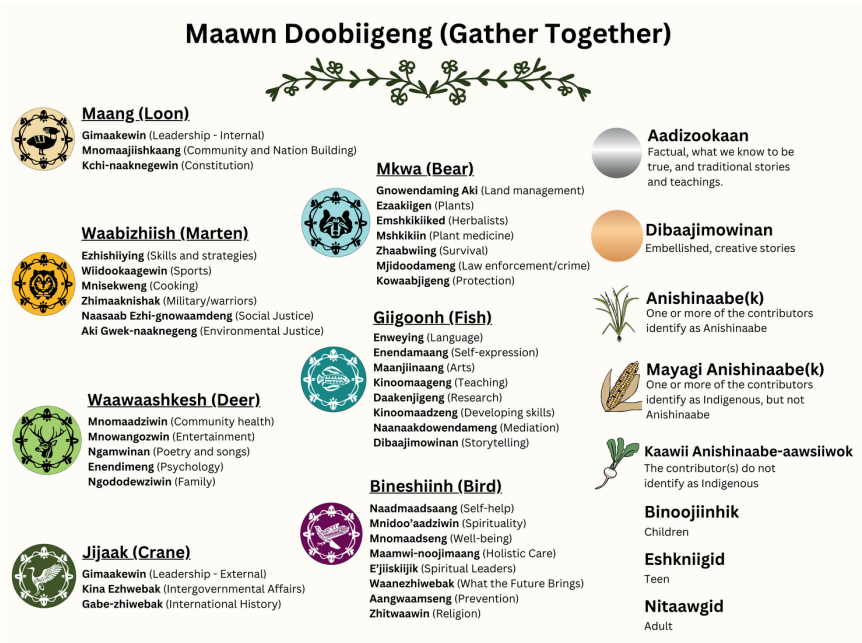
- The Mrs. Project: One popular DEI metadata project is often referred to as “the Mrs. Project.” It was common practice for centuries to refer to women with their married names, like calling Eleanor Roosevelt “Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt.” The Mrs. Project aims to research women authors, investigating to see if their non-married name can be found and adding that information to their name authority record and/or finding aids.

♪ WINDMILLS OF YOUR MIND BY BARBARA LEWIS (1970)

I adore this version of this song—haunting and powerful.

♫ Round like a circle in a spiral
Like a wheel within a wheel
Never-ending or beginning
On an ever spinning reel ♫

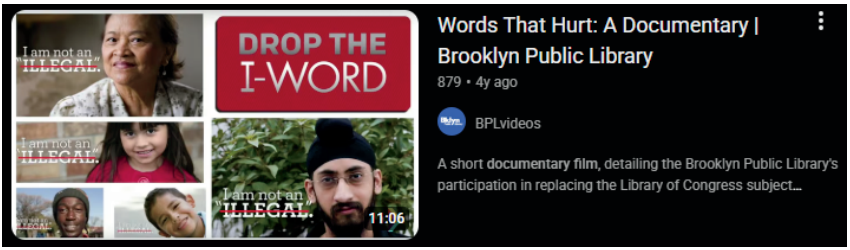
- Indigenous classification: Multiple libraries dedicated to Indigenous collections have created their own classification systems. In 2024, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Libraries in Michigan created the Maawn Doobiigeng (Gather Together) classification. Maawn Doobiigeng is based on the seven original animal clans of the Anishinaabek. This system replaced Dewey and the Library of Congress Classification previously in use at the tribal library.



Explore the classification at saginaw.ploud.net/MaawnDoobiigeng

- Homosaurus: Many libraries have begun adding local headings from Homosaurus to describe resources relating to LGBTQIA topics, to address the shortcomings of the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) relating to anything remotely queer.

- Sharing the word: Creating public-facing communication about reparative metadata work being done is so valuable in explaining the values that we are striving to live up to in our work, even (especially) when it's behind the scenes. A great example is Words That Hurt: A Documentary, an 11-minute video from 2022 describing how Brooklyn Public Library worked to replace the "Illegal aliens" LCSH from their catalogs, and importantly, why that matters to their diverse patrons. Watch it on YouTube.



♪ THE WOLF BY DARONDO (1972)

Darondo is better known for his song Didn't I, which was on Breaking Bad, but I love this slow burner with a funky guitar riff.

♫ Then the weather changed
The people got cold ♫

THE CREW: THE PROGRAM FOR COOPERATIVE CATALOGING

A lot of important library metadata work gets done within PCC. The Program for Cooperative Cataloging is an international group of members who care deeply about contributing to the shared metadata records that libraries use to describe their collections as well as shaping the shared standards that describe how those records should be created and formatted.

Some aspects of PCC are coordinated out of the Library of Congress, such as training and hosting documentation, but the PCC is independent of LC —LC is just one of the many members of PCC.

THE FIVE TRACKS OF PCC

PCC includes five component programs:

- BIBCO: Librarians who contribute to BIBCO create bibliographic records that conform to a high standard of quality and thoroughness.
- CONSER: CONSER librarians catalog serials and integrating resources and help guide the metadata standards relating to these materials.
- NACO: Name Authority Cooperative librarians contribute to the shared LC Name Authority file, which compiles personal, corporate, and conference names to clarify which creator is responsible for which resources.
- SACO: Librarians who are part of the Subject Authority Cooperative make additions and revisions to LC's controlled vocabularies, such as the LC Subject Headings or LC Genre Form Terms.
- EMCO: The new Entity Management Cooperative is an effort to more thoughtfully manage the linked data entities that librarians are creating in their day-to-day work.

♪ THE SILENT BOATMAN BY PARLIAMENT (1970)

Oh man, I love the Osmium album so much. The bagpipes on this song absolutely kill me every time.

♫ I'm waiting for the silent boatman
To ferry me across the unknown waters ♫

FINDING THE GROOVE: DEI WORK WITHIN PCC

DEI work happens in multiple places within PCC, but much of it originates from the Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility, also known as EDIBA. I've been a part of the EDIBA Committee since it was founded in 2021. I think we've done some pretty good work since then!

For example, when the leadership of PCC asked our committee to create a land acknowledgement statement, we investigated and pushed back on the request. We saw many conversations about how land acknowledgements risk becoming performative without other actions being taken. Instead of creating a land acknowledgement statement, EDIBA came up with a list of things that PCC should be doing to ensure that concrete improvements are made in metadata relating to Indigenous peoples.

Much of that work has been done by several task groups and includes things like:

- asking PCC members to prioritize reparative description of Indigenous group names and Indigenous individuals
- identifying and evaluating alternatives to LCSH such as the First Nations House of Learning subject headings and the First Nations, Métis and Inuit – Indigenous Ontologies (FNMIIO)
- investigating and reporting on which Indigenous scripts can't yet be displayed in library catalogs
- compiling a list of resources for PCC members to learn more about concerns related to Indigenous metadata
- advising LC in its project to revise Indigenous terminology (including the now-in-progress work on revising the "Indians of North America" subject headings and beyond)
- suggesting revisions to the E75-E99 classification in Library of Congress Classification, where Native American topics are relegated to a historical context

♪ WOUOKA BY REDBONE (1973)

Come and Get Your Love by Redbone gets all the attention, but have you heard the rest of their songs?? Catchy as hell.

♫ Our people must dance
Keep on dancing, keep on dancing ♫

AMPING UP: DEI WORK WITHIN PCC ON NAME AUTHORITIES

There's been a lot of very interesting DEI-related work happening within PCC in the past few years. For example, the EDIBA Advisory Committee published the Position Statement on Personal Data in Name Authority Records in 2023. This statement emphasized the cultural relativity of what's considered private data, and highlighted the harm that can be done (such as doxing and harassment) when catalogers create name authority records for authors and don't consider their privacy. That statement led to the formation of new task groups providing additional guidance and training for catalogers.

PCC has also had multiple task groups on gender, addressing how catalogers record the gender of authors or subjects in name authority records. These groups were formed based on the 2014 article "What's Gender Got to Do with It? A Critique of RDA 9.7" by Amber Billey, Emily Drabinski, and K. R. Roberto, which highlighted the problem that catalogers at that time were instructed to use one of three options: male, female, or not known. Although progress on those task groups was slower than the members would've liked, substantive change came out of them. Now, PCC guidance has changed, and catalogers are no longer recording gender for anyone. In fact, in 2025, the MARC field for gender was deleted from all records within the LC Name Authority File. That's real progress!

Work is being done in PCC on non-Latin scripts within authority records, too. These records have not been given the same treatment as records using Latin scripts—they're not benefitting from regular evaluation processes which ensure consistency and accuracy. In 2026, PCC announced a new pilot for non-Latin script variants, which will lead to better representation in our catalogs for resources and authors around the world.

Although subject authority work (like contributing to LCSH) gets much of the attention, name authority records are a big part of the value that metadata librarians add to our catalogs. Back in 2019, Tina Gross and I wrote a chapter named Authority Work as Outreach, suggesting that catalogers should be more transparent about the work we do when describing authors. From that suggestion, a PCC task group was created to create a new document: "Authority Control FAQs for Authors and Creators." This 2022 document describes why libraries do authority work and what authors should know about contributing their personal information. It also lets them know what to do if their info is wrong or they want info removed. I'm so proud of this document and only wish more people knew about it! You can find it at cataloginglab.org/authoritycontrol.

♪ WHAT'S THE NAME OF THIS FUNK (SPIDER MAN) BY RAMSEY LEWIS (1975)

Yeah, the jazz pianist Ramsey Lewis! This song is super fun.

♫ Whats the name of this funk?
Spider Man
Whats the name of this funk?
Try to catch him if you can ♫

DIGGING INTO SUBJECT HEADINGS

Library of Congress Subject Headings are updated every month. Anyone can submit a proposal, through SACO, the Subject Authority Cooperative program within PCC.

If you'd like to be a part of revising LCSH, the easiest way is to join a SACO funnel. Funnels are informal groups of library workers who are interested in proposing additions and revisions to LCSH.

There are many subject-based funnels, such as:

- African American Funnel
- CJK (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) Funnel
- Gender & Sexuality Funnel
- Judaica Funnel
- Latin American and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Funnel
- Medical Funnel
- Middle East and Islamic Studies Funnel
- Slavic Funnel

Joining a funnel is a great way to learn more about how subject headings are proposed and reviewed. Funnel members work collaboratively towards substantive changes to the most used library controlled vocabulary in the world.

♪ BUSTIN' LOOSE BY CHUCK BROWN AND THE SOUL SEARCHERS (1979)

My time living in DC introduced me to the Godfather of Go-Go. Incredible music for locking in and getting things done.

♫ Keep what you got
Until you get what you need y'all ♫

WHAT'S ON DECK FOR DEI IN PCC?

There's still a lot to do to improve the DEI aspects of library metadata. One of the things the EDIBA Committee is working on is establishing a recognition award for people who are doing projects in this area. And by recognition, we mean ponying up some actual cash money for people doing this important work. We've been striving towards this goal for three years now, and we're trying to keep the faith that it will eventually happen.

The EDIBA Committee and other groups within PCC are also working on improving accessibility, whether it's ensuring our meetings are truly open to all, or evaluating the technological accessibility of our library systems, or ensuring we're appropriately denoting the accessibility features of library resources (like, for example, closed captioning on DVDs).

We have a lot of work to do to ensure that PCC itself is a welcoming, inclusive environment. An environment where people of all backgrounds and expertise feel they belong. The current membership of PCC is pretty homogenous in a lot of ways—it primarily consists of librarians from well-resourced academic libraries. And although it is an international organization, PCC leadership and membership reflects U.S. librarianship as a whole in its lack of racial and ethnic diversity. In order to survive and thrive, PCC has to broaden its base.

Together with the PCC's Standing Committee on Membership and Programming, EDIBA will be suggesting some significant changes in the upcoming years to provide more pathways into participation in PCC. This might look like:

- establishing intern roles within committees
- finding ways to liaison with library schools
- conducting interviews/focus groups to identify structural barriers to participation
- enacting quotas for new task groups to include at least some non-university representation
- instituting a new formal mentorship program for BIPOC librarians

And, you know, maybe, writing fun zines that explain this work and why people should care about it??? ;)

HOW TO GET IN THE MIX

What does it take to be a part of this work? Just curiosity and excitement to help make change! There's little to no barriers to joining a PCC committee, just your interest and capacity to serve on a committee or a short-term task group. Becoming part of a SACO funnel is as easy as emailing the chair and asking when the next meeting will be.

Is there something related to DEI work in library metadata that you're curious about? Want to share an idea or give feedback? Get in touch with the EDBIA committee through this anonymous feedback form!

tinyurl.com/
PCCEDIBAfeedback

♪ THINK (ABOUT IT) BY LYN COLLINS (1972)

Think (About It) sounds so fresh, but very familiar,
since it's been sampled in eleventy billion songs.

♫ But let me tell you something
The sisters are not going for that no more ♫

♪ (DON'T WORRY) IF THERE'S A HELL BELOW, WE'RE ALL GOING TO GO
BY CURTIS MAYFIELD (1970)

Our last words are from the Gentle Genius.

♫ But they don't know
There can be no show
And if there's hell below
We're all gonna go ♫

WHAT'S IN THE CRATES?

Find the playlist with all the songs mentioned in this zine (plus bonus tracks!).

violetbfox.info/fixing